

SECRETS OF A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

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SECRETS
OF A
BEAUTIFUL LIFE

BY
J. R. MILLER, D.D.

Sixteenth Edition
completing fiftieth thousand

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**“Build it well, whate'er you do;
Build it straight, and strong, and true;
Build it clear, and high, and broad:
Build it for the eye of God.”**

AUTHOR'S NOTE

BY special arrangement with the author, Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton are bringing out in Great Britain the volumes designated by them "The Silent Times Series"—of which the present is the fifth from my pen.

The author desires to express his gratitude to the many readers of his books over the sea who have written him in such kindly way of the help which they have received from these volumes bearing on practical life.

J. R. MILLER.

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CHAPTER I

SECRETS OF A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

"We are but sketches of what one day,
After the hard lines pass away,
God, the Designer, would have us to be;
Only in charcoal, rude and rough,
The mere cartoons of His greater skill."

WE all want to make our lives beautiful. At least, one who has no such desire is not living worthily. We are God's children, and should live as those who have heaven's glory in their souls. We have within us immortal possibilities, and he is as one dead who does not strive to realise the beauty that is folded up in his life.

A beautiful life is one that fulfils its mission. "Every man's life is a plan of God" is a familiar saying. One who attains that for which he was made lives beautifully, however lowly his life

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may be. Completeness is beauty. The meaning of the root word for "sin" is, missing the mark. The aim is to keep God's commandments, to do God's will, to realise God's purpose. We miss the mark, and the beauty is marred. "Transgression" is a like word, meaning stepping out of the path, over the boundary—that is, not walking as God directs, failing to live according to the Divine plan and pattern. "Iniquity" has also a similar suggestion—unequalness, injustice, not according to the law of right, and therefore unbeautiful.

Thus the words which describe wrong-doing all suggest marring, spoiling, the failure to fulfil the perfect design. It is as if an architect were to make a plan for a perfect building, and the builder, through ignorance or carelessness, should spoil the house, not making it like the plan. The building is not beautiful when finished, because it is not what the architect intended it to be. A life which fulfils the Divine Architect's purpose, whether it be great and conspicuous, or lowly and obscure, is beautiful. We need not seek to do large things; the greatest thing

for any human life in this world is God's will for that life. That is the only true beauty.

There are some special words which may be said to hold the secret of beauty in a life. One is "victoriousness." Many people let themselves be defeated almost habitually. It begins in childhood. The lessons are hard, and the child does not master them. | It costs exertion to succeed in the games, and the boy indolently concludes that he cannot win, and does not do his best. The girl finds that she cannot play her exercises on the piano without a great deal of tiresome practice, and lets herself be defeated. It is hard to restrain temper and appetite in youth, and the young man gives up the struggle, and yields to the indulgence. Thus at the very beginning the battle is lost, and oftentimes all life afterward carries the debilitating effect. Always duty is too large, and lessons are too hard, and discipline is too severe, and passion is too strong. To its close the life is weak, never victorious, unable to cope with its environment. It is a fatal thing to form in youth the habit of permitting one's self to be defeated. Life

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then never can be what it might have become.

On the other hand, when the lesson of being victorious is learned in childhood, all is different. Studies are mastered ; exercises are played over, a hundred times, if need be, till they are played accurately ; games are not indolently lost for want of exertion. Later in life, when the lessons are larger and the discipline is sorer, and the tasks require more labour, and the battles test the soul to its last particle of strength, the habit of overcoming still avails and the life is ever victorious. The thought of giving up is never entertained for a moment. The Indians say that, when a man kills a foe, the strength of the slain enemy passes into the victor's arm. In the weird fancy lies a truth. Each defeat leaves us weaker for the next battle, but each conquest makes us stronger.

Pitiable indeed is the weakness of the vanquished spirit in the face of temptation, duty, toil, or sorrow. But it is possible for us always to be overcomers. We may meet duty with a quiet confidence that shall enable us to do it

well. We may be victorious in our struggles with temptation, keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. We may so relate ourselves to our conditions and our circumstances that we shall be masters, not slaves; that our very hindrances shall become helps to us, inspirers of courage and persistence.

"Stone walls do not a prison make."

Nothing makes a prison to a human life but a defeated, broken spirit. (The bird in its cage that sings all the while is not a captive.) God puts His children in no conditions in which He does not mean them to live sweetly and victoriously. So in any circumstances we may be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

We may be victorious also in sorrow. If we are not, we are living below our privilege as Christians. We sin when we lie crushed, refusing to be comforted in our grief. Sorrow hurts us if we meet it with resistance and rebellion. The secret of blessing in trial lies in acquiescence. This takes out of it its bitterness and

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its poison, and makes it a blessing to us. One writes of sorrow :

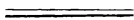
“ ‘Look thou beyond the evening sky,’ she said,
‘ Beyond the changing splendours of the day ;
Accept the pain, the weariness, the dread—
Accept and bid me stay.’

“ I turned and clasped her close with sudden strength ;
And slowly, sweetly, I became aware
Within my arms God’s angel stood at length,
White-robed and calm and fair.

“ And now I look beyond the evening star,
Beyond the changing splendour of the day ;
Knowing the pain He sends more precious far,
More beautiful than they !”

The lesson of victoriousness is one of the secrets of a beautiful life. It makes us master everywhere and in all things. Come what may, we are not overcome. Nothing hurts us ; all things help us. The common antagonisms of life build themselves into a ladder, up which we climb step by step, nearer God and nearer heaven. Christ was victorious in His life, and so may we be if we put our feet over in the prints of His shoes.

Another of the secrets of a beautiful life is found in the word "serving." Our Lord gave us the full truth when He said of His own mission, that He came, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." When we understand the meaning of this word, and then relate ourselves to all others about us in accordance with this standard, we begin to be a blessing to every one. Our thought then ever is, not what we can get of pleasure, of help, of profit, of comfort, of good in any form, from others, but what we can give to them. True loving is not receiving, but giving. The Christlike desire toward our friends is not that we may get something from them, that they may be of use to us, but that in some way we may be a blessing to them, may do them good. This feeling will restrain us from ever harming another in any way. It will keep us from offering temptation to another. It will make us watchful of our influence over others, lest in some way we cast a hurtful instead of a healing shadow upon them. It will also temper our demands of others, since we are seeking, not to be ministered unto, but



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to minister. It will turn the whole thought of our life from the mere seeking of happiness to the doing of good to others, the giving of happiness.

“Life were not worth the living,
If no one were the better
For having met thee on the way,
And known the sunshine of thy stay.
Give as thy God is giving;
To no one be a debtor!
So hearts shall faster beat for thee,
And faces beam thy light to see.”

Some people have a great deal of trouble looking after their rights, seeing that no one wrongs them, that they always get proper honour and attention from others, and that no injustice is ever done to them. We hear echoes of this human striving breaking out from the heart of certain great and splendid pageants, where the grand participants contend for precedence in rank, for degree of nobility, at the table or in the procession. We find it in much lowlier places, in society, and in the common walks, in the clamour for the highest distinction or for honour among men. We are spared all such

trouble if we have this law of serving deep in our hearts. Our only care then is that we do not ourselves wrong others, even if they have treated us unjustly or unkindly.

The highest rank with Christ is the fullest, truest serving. When we have learned this lesson, we are prepared to be a blessing to every life that touches ours, even for a moment, in passing—as when two ships meet, speak each other, and move each on its own way. Our entire attitude toward others is changed; we look upon every human being as one who possibly needs something we have to give, one to whom we have an errand of love, one whom we must wish God-speed, one for whom we must at least breathe a whispered prayer.

This is the heart of Christlikeness as interpreted in practical living. It is the real secret of happiness too; for it is more blessed to give than to receive—not more pleasant to nature, but more blessed. We vex ourselves then no longer about the lack of gratitude in others, about the exact balance of reciprocal attention or favour, about whose turn it is to call or write,

or whose place it is to take the first step toward reconciliation. Love keeps no debit and credit accounts, and seeks only to be always first in serving.

Another secret of sweet and happy Christian life is in learning to live by the day. It is the long stretches that tire us. We think of life as a whole, running on for years, and it seems too great for us. We cannot carry this load until we are threescore and ten. We cannot fight this battle continually for half a century. But really there are no long stretches. Life does not come to us in lifetimes; it comes only a day at a time. Even to-morrow is never ours till it becomes to-day, and we have nothing whatever to do with it, but to pass down to it a fair and good inheritance in to-day's work well done and to-day's life well lived.

It is a blessed secret, this of living by the day. Any one can carry his burden, however heavy, till nightfall. Any one can do his work, however hard, for one day. Any one can live sweetly, quietly, patiently, lovingly, and purely till the sun goes down. And this is all that

life really ever means to us—just one little day. “Do to-day’s duty, fight to-day’s temptation, and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them.” God gives us nights to shut down the curtain of darkness on our little days. We cannot see beyond, and we ought not to try to see beyond. Short horizons make life easier, and give us one of the blessed secrets of brave, true, holy living.

These are some of the secrets of a beautiful life. We ought not to be content to live otherwise than beautifully. We can live our life only once. We cannot go over it again to correct its mistakes or amend its faults. We ought therefore to live it well. And to do this we must begin at the beginning, and make every day radiant as it passes. Lost days must always remain blanks in the records, and stained days must carry their stains. Beautiful days make beautiful years, and beautiful years make a beautiful life at its close.

CHAPTER II

OUR DEBT TO OTHERS

"Brother, we are surely bound
On the same journey, and our eyes alike
Turn up and onward; wherefore, now thou risest,
Lean on mine arm, and let us for a space
Pursue the path together."

BUCHANAN.

THE true standard of greatness is service. It is not what our life is in gifts, in culture, in strength, but what we do with our life, that is the real test of character. Our Lord taught this truth when He said, "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." It has been well said: "He only is great of heart who floods the world with a great affection. He only is great of mind who stirs the world with great thoughts. He only is great of will who does something to

shape the world to a great career. And he is greatest who does the most of all these things and does them best." We are to hold all that is in us at the service of our fellow-men, in Christ's name.

St. Paul speaks of himself as debtor to every one, Greek and barbarian, wise and foolish. It was love that he owed—the only kind of debt that he believed in. "Owe no man anything," he said elsewhere, "save to love one another." Love is a debt which never can be altogether settled. You may pay it all off to-day, but to-morrow you will find it heavy as ever. It is a debt which everybody owes to everybody. Nor can it be paid off with any mere sentimental love. It cost St. Paul a great deal to settle his obligations and pay his debts to other men. There is a sort of philanthropic sentiment which some people have which does not cost them very much—an eloquent speech now and then in behalf of their pet cause, and perhaps an occasional contribution of money. But to pay his debts to men St. Paul gave up all he had, and then gave himself up to service,

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suffering, and sacrifice to the very uttermost. Loving always costs. We cannot save our own life and pay the debts of love we owe.

We are in debt to everybody. It is not hard to recognise this indebtedness to the gentle, cultured, well-to-do Greeks. Anybody can love them and be kind to them, they are so beautiful and sweet. The trouble is with the barbarians. They are not of "our set"; they are not refined. They are rude and wicked; they are heathens. It is not so hard, either, to love them in a philanthropic way as heathens, far off and out of our sight, as it is in a close, personal, practical way, when they come to live next door to us, and when we must meet them every day. But the truth is, we are as really debtors to these barbarians as we are to the Greeks. Perhaps our debt to them is even greater, because they need us more.

It is well that we should get a very clear idea of our true relation as Christians to all other people. We owe love to every one, and love always serves. Serving is an essential quality of love. Love does not stand among

people commanding attention and demanding to be ministered unto, exacting rights, honour, respect. Love seeks to give, to minister, to be of use, to do good to others. There are many people who want to have friends, meaning by friends pleasant persons who will come into their life to do things for them, who will minister to their comfort, who will advance their interests, who will flatter their vanity, who will make living easier for them. But that is not the way Christ would define friendship. He would put it just the other way. The true Christian desire is to be a friend to others, to do things for them, to minister to their comfort, to further their interests, to be a help and a blessing to them. That was St. Paul's thought when he said that he was a debtor to every man. He wanted to be every one's ministering friend. When a man stood before him, Paul's heart yearned to do him good in some way, went out to him in loving thought, longed to impart to him some spiritual gift, to add to his comfort, happiness, or usefulness. It is thus we should relate ourselves to every human being who

comes within our influence. To every person we meet we have an errand. One has put it well in the following lines :

" May every soul that touches mine—
Be it the slightest contact—get therefrom some good,
Some little grace, one kindly thought,
One inspiration yet unfelt, one bit of courage
For the darkening sky, one gleam of faith
To brave the thickening ills of life,
One glimpse of brighter skies beyond the gathering
 mists,
To make this life worth while,
And heaven a surer heritage."

This does not mean that we should be officious and obtrusive in pressing our help upon those we meet. There is a story of one whose prayer was that he might be permitted to do a great deal of good without even knowing it. That is the best helpfulness which flows out of the heart and life as light from a star, as fragrance from a flower. Love works most effectively when it works unconsciously, almost instinctively, inspired from within. Then it bestows its blessing or does its good unobtrusively. You do not know you are being helped.

Your friend does not come to you and say, "I want to cheer you up. I want to cure you of that bad habit. I want to give you more wisdom. I want to help you to be noble." If he came thus, announcing with flourish of trumpets his benevolent intention toward you, he would probably defeat his purpose. But he comes as your friend, with no programme, no heralding of his desire—comes simply loving you, and bringing into your life the best that is in his own life, sincerely yearning in some way to be a help to you. Then virtue passes from him to you, and new happiness and blessing come to you from him, you know not how. You have new courage, new gladness, new inspiration. Sin seems even more ignoble and unworthy, and holiness shines with brighter radiance. You are strengthened in your purpose to live worthily. You are more eager to make the most of your life. Thus love unconsciously, and without any definite plan, quickens and inspires another life to do its best. There is no other way of paying our debt to others which is so Christlike as this. Love gives

itself, its own very life, to become life to others.

"O Lord, that I could waste my life for others,
With no ends of mine own ;
That I could pour myself into my brothers,
And live for them alone !"

The whole drift of Christian teaching and impulse is on the line of this lesson. Our Lord's definitions and illustrations of love all emphasise this quality of helpful serving. "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister," was the saying that epitomised the whole motive of His own blessed life. The good Samaritan was the Master's ideal of the working of love in human experience. When asked who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven, His reply was very plain and clear—he who serves the most fully and the most unselfishly.

St. Paul, who so wondrously caught the spirit of his Master, has many words which show varying phases of the truth that love's very essential quality is unselfish helpfulness, the carrying of the life with all its rich gifts and

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powers in such a way that it may be a blessing to every other life it touches. "Love seeketh not its own." Its thought and service are for others. "Ye ought to help the weak." "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." There are those who are weak in body, and must lean on the strength of others. We oft-times see illustrations of this in homes where the invalid of the household draws the strength of all the family to his helping. But physical weakness is not the only weakness. There are those who are spiritually weak—feeble in purpose, broken by long sinning, until almost no strength remains in them, or enfeebled by sorrow. The law of love, that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, is quite as applicable in this sphere of life as in the case of physical weakness.

"Lift a little—lift a little !

**Many they who need thine aid,
Many lying on the roadside
'Neath misfortune's dreary shade.**

**"Pass not by, like priest and Levite,
Heedless of thy fellow-man;
But with heart and arms extended
Be the good Samaritan."**

In these late days men are doing wonderful things for those who are suffering from infirmities. They educate the blind, until the privation of blindness is almost blotted out. They teach the dumb to speak. They take imbeciles and the feeble-minded, and with almost infinite patience they find the soul, as it were, that lies hidden in the remote depths of the being, and call it out, oftentimes restoring to sanity and to usefulness lives that seemed hopelessly imbecile. This is very beautiful. It is all the work of Christianity. Heathen civilisations had no sympathy with weakness, and no patience with it. The sickly child, they said, would better die. The lame, the blind, the dumb, the insane, were simply cast out to perish. Christianity has filled the world with love. The other night four of the wisest physicians in a great city sat by a young child's crib through all the watches, doing all that science and skill

could do to save the little one's life. It is Christianity that has taught such lessons as this.

We want the same interest in the spiritual helping of those who are weak. Those who are strong should give of their strength to support and uphold the weak. Those who have experience should become guides to the inexperienced. Those who have been comforted should carry comfort to those who are sorrowing. We are to be to others what Jesus would be if He were in our place. The best that is in us should ever be at the service of even the least worthy who stand before us needing sympathy or help. If we have this feeling, we shall look at no human life with disdain. It will put an end to all our miserable pride, to all our petty tyrannies and despotisms. It will lead us to ask concerning every one who passes before us, not, "What can I get from this man for my own gain? How can I make him serve me?" but rather, "What can I do to help this brother of mine. to add to his happiness, to relieve his trouble, to put him in the way of

successful life, to comfort his sorrow, and to give him pleasure?"

If this were the habitual attitude of love, paradise would soon be restored. We live continually in the midst of great human needs, and every one has something to give, something that would help a little, at least, in supplying these needs. If we have but our five barley loaves, and bring them to our Master for His blessing, we can go forth and with them feed thousands.

Then we need not fear that in giving out our paltry store we shall impoverish ourselves. No, it is by selfishly withholding our little that impoverishment will come to us. Had the woman refused to feed the hungry stranger at her gate, her meal and oil would have sufficed for only one little day for herself and her son. But she recognised her debt to this wayfarer, and shared with him her scanty supply; and, lo! it lasted for them both through all the days of the famine. If we use what we have for ourselves alone, it will waste and soon be done, and we shall starve. But if we pay our debt of love,

and share our little, it will multiply, and will last unto the end. Ida Whipple Benham writes :

**"Keep it not idly by thee—hoard it not!
Thy friend hath need of it; behold, he stands
Waiting to take the bounty of thy hands;
Pay him the debt thou owest, long forgot,
Or—hast thou paid already—ease his lot
Of that which he would sell, or loaf, or lands—
Whate'er his need can spare and thine demands;
So shall thy wealth be clean and without spot.**

**"Dost thou not know? hast thou not understood?
The stagnant pool breeds pestilence, disease;
The hurrying stream bears bounty on its tide.
Pass on thy gold, a messenger of good;
Swift let it speed on gracious ministries;
Wing it with love and let its flight be wide."**

CHAPTER III

THE ABILITY OF FAITH

Nay, never falter; no great deed is done
By falterers who ask for certainty.
No good is certain but the steadfast mind,
The undivided will to seek the good;
'Tis that compels the elements and wrings
A human music from the indifferent air.
The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
Is to have been a hero. Say we fall!
We feed the high tradition of the world,
And leave our spirit in our children's breast."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

BECAUSE a thing is hard is no reason why we should not do it. The limit of duty is not the limit of human ability. We ought to do many things which, with our own strength alone, we cannot do. There is a realm of faith in which a Christian should live which is not under the sway of natural laws. The religion of Christ counts for little with us if it does

not enable us to do more than others who know not its secret. Our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Our achievements and attainments must be of a higher order than those of this world's people. The true spirit of Christian faith is one of quiet confidence in the presence of any duty, any requirement. It knows no impossibilities. It staggers at no command. It shrinks from no responsibility. It is crushed under no burden.

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When duty whispers low, 'Thou must,'
The youth replies, 'I can!'"

Two brothers came to the Master with a request that they might have the first place in His kingdom. They were thinking of earthly rank. The Master answered by asking them if they were able to accept His cup and baptism. They did not know what He meant, but they believed so utterly in Him that they calmly answered, "We are able."

This was a committal from which there could

be no withdrawal. It implied courage. They knew not to what future they were going, what it would cost them to be true to their pledge; but they faltered not. It implied love for their Master. This was the secret of it all. They could not be separated from Him. They would follow Him anywhere, they loved Him so. It implied faith. They did not know what the cup would be which they had solemnly promised to drink; but they believed in Christ, and in His love and wisdom, and were sure He would lead them only to what would be the truest and the best for them.

This is the lesson every follower of Christ should learn. To every call of the Master, to every allotment of duty, to every assignment of service, to every laying of the cross at our feet, to every requirement that He makes of us, our answer should be, "We are able." This is easy enough so long as only pleasant things are asked of us; but pleasant things do not test discipleship. We must be ready to say it when our expectation of honour in following Christ is suddenly dashed away and dishonour

appears in its place, and when it means the lifting of the dark cross upon our shoulders and bearing it after Him.

Hence the answer of all noble life to every call of duty is, "I am able." The question of ability is not to be considered. God never asks us to do anything we cannot do through the strength which He is ready also to give. It is thus that God's men have always answered God's calls. "Here am I," was the formula in the Old Testament times. Thus patriarchs and prophets and messengers responded when they heard the Divine voice calling their names. There was no hesitation. They did not linger to question their fitness or their ability. In New Testament days we find the same obedience. St. Paul is a noble illustration. It would seem that the motto of his life was, "I am ready." That was what he always said, whatever the Divine bidding. He was forewarned of chains at Jerusalem, and his friends begged him not to go. But his answer was, "I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Again, he was

thinking of Rome, that great metropolis of the heathen world, the centre of the world's power and splendour, and he wrote, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." He is in a dungeon, a prisoner for Christ, knowing that he will soon die as a martyr, and he writes to a friend, "I am ready to be offered."

An old missionary seal bore the representation of an ox standing between a plough and an altar, with the legend, "Ready for either." The meaning was that the missionary of Christ must be ready either for toil and service, or for sacrifice on the altar, if that should be the Lord's will. That was the spirit of St. Paul. He was ready for life, if Christ so willed; for life to the very extreme of self-denying, self-consuming service, if that were the call; for life in chains and in dungeons, if the Master led him to such sufferings. Or, he was ready for death, if by dying he could best glorify his Lord. This is the only true spirit of one who would follow Christ faithfully and fully. Whatever the call

of the Master may be, the instant answer of the servant should be, "I am ready. I am able."

There are many things in Christian duty which, if our little human strength were all we could command, would be impossibilities. Our Lord sent out His disciples to heal the sick and to raise the dead. They could do neither of these things, and they might have said, "We cannot cure fevers, nor open blind eyes, nor make lame men walk, nor restore the breath of life to the dead." Instead of saying this, however, their reply really was, "We are able"; and as they spoke in the name of Christ, power was in their words and in their touch, and miracles were wrought by them. St. Paul has a remarkable word which illustrates the same truth. He is speaking of the endurance of hardships. "I have learned," he says, "in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." Then a little further on he says, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." Here we have the confident "I am able," with its secret laid bare—"in Him that strengtheneth me."

This is the law of Christ's kingdom. Nothing is impossible with God. When He gives us a duty, He will give the strength we need to do it. When He sends one of His servants on an errand, He is ready to give power to perform the task, however hard it may be. When there is a battle to fight, He will inspire the heart and nerve the arm to fight it, so that we may become "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." We are so one with Christ that His strength is ours if He send us, and if we go in faith. We are ever strongest when we are weakest in ourselves, because the measure of our conscious weakness is the measure of the strength He imparts to us. This is a blessed secret. It puts the very power of God within our reach. We can do all things in Christ.

There are but two conditions—obedience and faith. The strength will not be given unless we obey. We must not wait to have it given before we will set out—it will not be given at all if we do this. No matter how difficult, how seemingly impossible, the duty may be, we must instantly obey, or no power will be forthcoming.

It is when we go forward confidently in the way of duty that the strength is given. There must also be faith. We cannot do these things ourselves ; there is not sufficient strength in us. But when we, without doubting, begin to do God's will, He will put His strength into us. Thus, whatever the task He gives, we may say with quiet confidence, "We are able." Whatever burden He lays upon us, we need not falter, nor fear to try to bear it. There is no Divine promise that the burden will be lifted away, but there is an assurance that we shall be sustained as we walk in faith beneath it.

But this sustaining comes not to him who falters and hesitates ; it comes to him only who goes forward firmly in the way that is marked out for him. It comes not to him who waits for the opening of the way before he will set out ; the way will open only to the feet of him who goes on unflinchingly and unquestioningly in obedience to the call of duty, regardless of high walls or shut gates or overflowing rivers crossing his path. The floods of the Jordan were not cut off while the pilgrim host lay back

in their camps, nor while they were moving down the green banks, nor even while they tarried close to the brink, waiting for a way to be made for them. It was not until the feet of the priests who led the host, moving firmly on, trod the very edge of the water, that the river opened to allow them to pass through to the land of promise. It never would have opened to feet that waited on the bank for it to open. It is so in all cases. There is a time for quiet, patient waiting—when we have done all we can. But there is a time when waiting is defeat and failure.

To none of us, if we are living earnestly, can life be easy. Duties are too large for our ability. Circumstances are hard. Our condition has its uncongenialities. Our tasks are more than our hands can perform. We are disposed to fret and to be discontented, and then to be discouraged, and to say we cannot live sweetly and beautifully where our lot is set. But this is never true. Difficulty never makes impossibility when we have the power of Christ from which to draw. No duties then are ever too

large. No burdens are ever too heavy. There is no environment in which we cannot live patiently and sweetly.

It is in the hard lot that we learn our best lessons, and do our best living. Certain birds, when they are to be taught to sing new songs, are shut up in a darkened cage. Then they are caused to hear in the darkness the sweet strains which they are to learn. By-and-by they begin to sing what they hear, and they are kept singing it over and over until they have fully learned it. Then the curtain is withdrawn, and now they sing the sweet songs in the sunshine. It is thus that God puts us sometimes into darkness where the conditions are hard. "How can we sing the Lord's songs here?" we ask. But Divine help comes to us, and grace ; and as we try to live gently, patiently, and lovingly, and to sing the songs of joy, we find we can do it in Christ who strengtheneth us. Then there is always blessing in victoriousness. However great the cost of noble living may be, the reward is always greater than the cost.

"How very hard it is to be
 A Christian! Hard for you and me,—
 Not the mere task of making real
 That duty up to its ideal,
 Effecting thus, complete and whole,
 A purpose of the human soul—
 For that is always hard to do;
 But hard, I mean, for me and you
 To realise it more or less,
 With even the moderate success
 Which commonly repays our strife
 To carry out the aims of life.
 'This aim is greater,' you will say,
 'And so more arduous in every way';
 But the importance of their fruits
 Still proves to man, in all pursuits,
 Proportional encouragement.'

Let us never disappoint God by saying in
 any place that we cannot live there beautifully.
 Let us rather accept the hardship, the struggle,
 the burden, the trying environment; and, helped
 by the Divine Spirit, let us learn to do always
 the things that please God. "When we ac-
 quiesce in a trouble," says Fénelon, "it is no
 longer such." Submission takes the bitterness
 out of pain, which becomes calamity when we
 resist and chafe. "Peace in this life springs

from acquiescence even in disagreeable things, not from exemption from bearing them." Acquiescence is the faith that gets the Divine strength which makes all things possible.

Oct 1923

CHAPTER IV

LIFE'S SECOND CHANCE

"Winter makes ready for the spring
By months of struggle and suffering;
And the victory won from the mortal strife
Strengthens the fibre and pulse of life.
How if the earth in its chill despair
Felt that the fight were too hard to bear,
Where were the bloom and the vintage then?
Where were the harvest for hungering men?"

SUSAN COOLIDGE.

IF we had but one chance in life, it would fare badly with most of us. We do scarcely anything perfectly the first time we try to do it. Nearly always do we fail. Not many lives are lived beautifully, without a break or a lapse, from childhood to age. If, therefore, the opportunity of choosing good came to us only once, and was then for ever withdrawn, few of us would make anything of our life. We are in

the habit of saying that opportunities never come twice to us. (One writes :

“ Never comes the chance that passed :
That one moment was its last,
Though thy life upon it hung,
Though thy death beneath it swung,
If thy future all the way
Now in darkness goes astray,
When the instant born of fate
Passes through the golden gate,
When the hour, but not the man,
Comes and goes from Nature's plan,—
Nevermore its countenance
Beams upon thy slow advance :
Nevermore that time shall be
Burden-bearer unto thee.
Weep and search o'er land and main,
Lost chance never comes again.”

This is all true, but it is not the whole truth. No single opportunity comes twice, but other opportunities come. Though we have failed once, that is not the end. The past is irrevocable ; but while there is even the smallest margin of life remaining, there is yet another chance.

Jeremiah tells us of visiting a potter's house,

and watching the potter as he wrought on the wheels. His work was marred in his hands in some way. But instead of throwing it away, he made it into another vessel. The second vessel was not so beautiful as the one the potter first intended to make, but it was useful. The clay had a second chance.

The prophet's parable had its first meaning for his own people, but its lesson is for all time. For one thing, it tells us that God has a plan for every life. The potter has a pattern after which he intends to fashion his vessel. For every human life there is a Divine pattern, something which God means it to become. This first thought of God for our lives is the very best thing possible for them.

We learn, again, from this ancient acted parable that our lives may be marred in the living, so that they shall never attain God's beautiful thought for them. There is a difference, however, between a lump of clay and a human life. The marring of the clay may be the potter's fault, or it may be the result of an accident; at least, it cannot be the fault of

the clay itself. (If a misshapen jar or bowl came into your hands, you would not say, "What a careless piece of clay it was that made itself into this irregular form!" Rather you would say, "What a careless potter it was that so spoiled this vessel, when he had the soft clay in his hands!") But when a life is marred, and fails of the beauty and nobleness which it was designed to have, you cannot blame God. You cannot say, "I was clay on the wheel, and the great Potter gave the wrong touch, and spoiled the loveliness that ought to have been wrought in my life." You are not clay, but a human soul. You have a will, and God does not shape you as the potter moulds his plastic clay. He works through your own will, and you can resist Him, and can defeat His purpose for your life, and spoil the noble design into which He would fashion you. The blotches in this fair world are all the sad work of human hands, never of God's hands.

But this is not all of the lesson. The potter took the clay again when the vessel

he meant to make was marred, and with it made another vessel. The second could not be so fine nor so large as the first would have been but for the marring. Yet it was better that there should be an inferior vessel made than that the clay should be thrown away. It is thus that God deals with human souls. He does not cast off the life that has failed of its first and best possibilities. Even in the ruins of a soul there are Divine elements, and so long as a little fragment remains God wants to give it still another chance.

It is said that one day Carlyle suddenly stopped at a street crossing, and, stooping down, picked up something out of the mud, even at the risk of being knocked down and run over by passing vehicles. With his bare hands he gently rubbed the mud off this thing which he had picked up, holding it as carefully and touching it as gently as if it had been something of great value. He took it to the pavement and laid it down on a clean spot on the curbstone. "That," said the old man, in a tone of sweetness he rarely used, "is only a crust

of bread. Yet I was taught by my mother never to waste anything, and, above all, bread, more precious than gold. I am sure that the little sparrows, or a hungry dog, will get nourishment from this bit of bread."

This is a suggestion of the way God looks upon a human life which bears His image. The merest fragment of life He regards as sacred. So long as there is the least trace of Divine possibility in a human soul, He is ready to make something out of it, to take it out of the mire and give it another chance. If, therefore, one has lost the opportunity to realise God's first thought for his life, there still remains another chance. "The vessel that he made was marred in the hands of the potter ; so he made it again—another vessel."

In Florence one of the treasures of art admired by thousands of visitors is Michael Angelo's representation in marble of the young David. The shepherd boy stands with firm foothold, the stone grasped tightly in his right hand, ready to be sped on its holy errand. When the statue was unveiled, three hundred

and fifty years ago, it caused an unparalleled sensation among all lovers of art. It is, indeed, a marvellous piece of sculpture.

But the strangely winning thing in the story of that statue is, that it was the stone's second chance. A sculptor began work on a noble piece of marble, but, lacking skill, he only hacked and marred the block. It was then abandoned as spoiled and worthless, and cast aside. For years it lay in a back yard, soiled and blackened, half hidden among the rubbish. At last Angelo saw it, and at once perceived its possibilities. Under his skilful hand the stone was cut into the fair and marvellous beauty which appears in the statue of David. Yet it is said that the completed work is not quite perfect; that because of the first cutting of the stone the final result is marred.

This is another form of the parable of the potter. From a spoiled and castaway block was hewn this splendid work of art. Though a life has been spoiled by unskilful hands, so that it seems as if all were lost, there is

one, the great Sculptor, who can take the marred, disfigured block, now lying soiled amid the world's rubbish, and from it carve yet a marvel of beauty—if not all that it might once have been, at least a very beautiful character.

There is a little poem that tells of a bird with a broken wing which one found in a woodland meadow :

Read

"I healed its wound, and each morning
It sang its old sweet strain ;
But the bird with the broken pinion
Never soared as high again.

"I found a young life broken
By sin's seductive art ;
And, touched with a childlike pity,
I took him to my heart.

"He lived with a noble purpose,
And struggled not in vain ;
But the life that sin had stricken
Never soared as high again.

"Yet the bird with the broken pinion
Kept another from the snare ;
And the life that sin had stricken
Raised another from despair."

This little poem teaches two lessons. One is,

that ~~the~~^a second chance is not so good as the first. The bird with the broken wing never soared as high again as it had soared before. The young life which sin had broken, but which grace had healed, never was quite so beautiful again as before it was stricken, never soared so high in its flight as it would have done if sin had not hurt it.

There is an impression among some people that a man is a better man after having tasted sin, after knowing evil by experience, then repenting, being forgiven, and restored. This is a mistaken impression. Innocence is far better than penitence, penitence is infinitely better than despair; but a life is never so beautiful after sin's fires have swept over it as it would have been if it had been kept untarnished, and had realised God's first thought for it. (The bird with the broken pinion never soared so high again.) There are some things we never get over. The wounds may be healed, but the scars remain. There are some losses we can never get back. Esau wept bitterly over the losing of his birthright, but wept in vain; he

never could get again what he had profanely bartered off for a trifle. Lost innocence never can be restored.

The other lesson which the poem teaches is the same we have found already in the parable of the potter. The bird with the broken pinion was not useless ; it kept another bird from the snare. Through its own hurt it had gotten a power of helpfulness which it never could have had without its experience of wounding and marring. The same is true of human lives which have failed and have fallen into sin.

"The life that sin had stricken
Raised another from despair."

There is no doubt that there is a work possible to those who have been hurt in sin's battle and have been lifted up again which they never could have done without the sad experience through which they have passed. John B. Gough never could have pleaded with such burning eloquence for temperance, as he did for so many years, if he had never himself known from experience the terrible bitterness of the

curse of strong drink. His own life was marred by the dissipation which marked his earlier years, and which dragged him down into debasement ; and he could never win the nobleness and beauty which would have been possible to him if he had never so failed and sinned against himself. But he took his second chance when the first was lost for ever, and grew into great strength of character and into abounding usefulness. It is even doubtful if he would ever have made so much of his life, had it not been for the losing of its first chance, and the imperilling of all, which wrought afterward in him as such mighty motives, impelling him to such heroic life and such noble service for his fellow-men.

The lesson is plain. It is for all of us. It is not for one great experience alone, but has its perpetual application ; for we are continually missing the things which are the first and the very best in life's opportunities. It is sad that we do this, and we should rigidly train ourselves to make the most we can of every chance in life that comes to us. But when we have failed,

we should not spend a moment in regret; for regret is vain and useless, and only helps to eat away the strength that remains. We should turn instantly and with resistless energy to the saving of what is left. There is always another chance, even down to the life's latest moment in this world.

CHAPTER V

SOURCES OF STRENGTH

"Oh how many hearts are breaking!
Oh how many hearts are aching
For a loving touch and token,
For the word you might have spoken!"

JOSEPHINE POLLARD.

"God doth suffice! O thou, the patient one,
Who puttest faith in Him, and none beside,
Bear thou thy load; under the setting sun
The glad tents gleam: thou wilt be satisfied."

WE all need help. None of us are sufficient in ourselves for all the exigencies of our condition. Life is too large for any of us. Its duties are too great for our strength. Its trials overtax our power of endurance. Its antagonisms overmaster us. Our own hearts contain only a little cupful of oil; and, unless we can replenish them from some reserve supply, our lamps will go out, leaving us in darkness.



Yet we are required to meet life victoriously. We are not to succumb to its stress or struggle. We are told that while our temptations are far more than a match for our strength, yet we need not fall in them. The task is set for us of being more than conquerors in all life's trials. We are not to be crushed by sorrow. We are to rejoice always, though always enduring sore grief.

It is possible, therefore, for us to receive help from without our own little life, to make us equal to whatever we may have to bear or to endure. It is important that we learn how to live so that we can get this help. What are the sources from which we may draw strength in our time of need? Evidently they are twofold. We can be helped in a certain way by human hands; and we can be helped in the largest measure we need by the Divine strength.

In all things the life of Christ is our pattern. He lived a human life to show us how to live. He did not meet life otherwise than we must meet it. He wrought no miracles to make

trials easier for Himself than they would be for His followers. In our Lord's experience in Gethsemane we have an illustration of the way He sought help in time of great need, both from the human and the Divine source.

The real agony of Christ's atoning death was in Gethsemane, and not on Calvary. It was there He fought the battle and won the victory. After this there was no more struggle. It is worth our while to look closely into our Lord's experiences in the Garden, to learn the secrets of the victory He won there. It will be ours some time to face a sore struggle, a bitter disappointment, a great trial, a keen sorrow, or to take up a heavy cross. How can we prepare ourselves for the experience, so as to meet it victoriously?

The Mexicans whisper over the cradle of a new-born babe, "Child, thou art born to suffer ; endure and hold thy peace!" Courage in meeting trial is good. We should learn to take up our burden quietly and walk beneath it steadfastly. We should learn to endure and

hold our peace. There are men who do this, hardening themselves against pain and sorrow, and meeting life's misfortunes and trials stoically, with solemn firmness. But this is not the best way to meet life. It was not thus that our Lord met His trials. He did not go to His cross stoically. True, He set Himself to endure and hold His peace. Never, before or since, has anguish been borne so victoriously, or has the world seen such peace as filled the Redeemer's soul during all the hours of His deepest humiliation. But His was not the peace of stoical hardening; it was the peace of God which kept His heart and mind.

"Endure and hold thy peace" is not all of the lesson. There is something better than stoicism. We need not struggle unaided. It is not a mark of weakness to accept help in hours of great need. Jesus desired to be sustained as He entered His agony. First, He craved and sought the help of human sympathy. It seems strange to us, at first thought, that He, the strong Son of God, could receive help from men, and from such men as His

disciples were. It showed His true humanity. It showed, too, how real human friendship was to Him. We know that His friends received help and comfort from Him, but we are not so apt to think of Him needing them and receiving strength from their love. But here we see Him leaning upon them, wanting them near to Him while He struggled and suffered, and craving their sympathy and tenderness. How sad it was, then, that the three chosen disciples whom He led into the depths of the Garden, that they might watch with Him and strengthen Him by their love, slept instead of watching!

In Brittany, among the peasants, they have this beautiful legend of the robin. They say that when the Saviour moved towards Calvary, bearing His cross, with enemies all about Him, a robin hovered near. And, reckless of the tumult, the bird flew down and snatched a cruel thorn from the Christ's bleeding forehead. Then over the robin's bosom flowed the sacred blood, tinting with its ruby stream the bird's brown plumage. This, the peasants say, was

the origin of the red spot on the robin's breast.

"And evermore the sweet bird bore upon its tender breast
The warm hue of the Saviour's blood, a shining seal impressed.
Hence, dearest to the peasants' heart, 'mid birds of grove and plain,
They hold the robin, which essayed to soothe the Saviour's pain."

This is only a legend. No bird plucked a thorn from that sacred brow. Not by even so small a soothing was the Saviour's anguish that day mitigated. Yet it was in the power of His disciples to have soothed His bitter agony immeasurably. But when He came back to them after each struggle, hoping to find comfort from their love, they were asleep. They failed Him, not through carelessness, but through faintness. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Had they been stronger, it would have been a little easier for Christ to endure the cross. Their love would have taken at least one thorn from His crown of thorns.

We all need human friendship. We need it specially in our times of darkness. He does not well, he lives not wisely, who in the days of prosperity neglects to gather about his life a few loving friends, who will be a strength to him in the days of stress and need.

Then we should be ready, too, to give the strength of our love to those whom we see passing into the ways of struggle or sorrow. We should not commit the mistake of our Lord's friends, failing those who need and expect our cheer. There is a deep lesson in the words Christ spoke at the last to the men to whom He had come three times in vain, craving sympathy. "Sleep on now, and take your rest; it is enough, the hour is come." There was no need, then, for longer watching, nor could any good come of it. The struggle was over, the victory had been won without them, and there was nothing left for them to do.

This experience is too common. Continually men close beside us are needing sympathy and love which we have it in our power to give, but which we do not give, letting them pass on

unhelped. Here in a stanza is told too many a life-story :

"A heart beat in our midst that vainly tried
Companionship of other hearts to gain ;
A soul lived pure and sweet before our eyes,
Whom our unsympathy caused cruel pain."

There is a time to show sympathy, when it is golden ; when this time has passed, and we have only slept meanwhile, we may as well sleep on. You did not go near your friend when he was fighting his battle alone. You might have helped him then. What use is there in your coming to him now, when he has conquered without your aid ? You paid no attention to your neighbour when he was bending under life's loads, and struggling with difficulties, obstacles, and adversities. You let him alone then. You never told him that you sympathised with him. You never said a brave, strong word of cheer to him in those days. You never scattered even a handful of flowers on his hard path. Now that he is dead and lying in his coffin, what is the use in your standing beside his still form, and telling the people how nobly

he battled, how heroically he lived, and speaking words of commendation? No, no; having let him go on, unhelped, uncheered, unencouraged, through the days when he needed so sorely your warm sympathy, and craved so hungrily your cheer, you may as well sleep on and take your rest, letting him alone unto the end. Nothing can be done now. Too laggard are the feet that come with comfort when the time for giving comfort is past.

“Ah! woe for the word that is never said
 Till the ear is deaf to hear;
 And woe for the lack to the fainting head
 Of the ringing shout of cheer;
 Ah! woe for the laggard feet that tread
 In the mournful wake of the bier.

“A pitiful thing the gift to-day
 That is dross and nothing worth,
 Though if it had come but yesterday
 It had brimmed with sweet the earth;
 A fading rose in a death-cold hand,
 That perished in want and dearth.”

Shall we not take our lesson from the legend
 of the robin that plucked a thorn from the
 Saviour's brow, and thus sought to lessen His

pain, rather than from the story of the disciples, who slept and failed to give the help which the Lord sought from their love? Thus can we strengthen those whose burdens are heavy, and whose struggles and sorrows are sore.

So much for the human help. There was another source of help in our Lord's Garden experience. If there had not been, He would have been utterly unhelped in all His sore need, for human friendship proved inadequate. "Being in an agony, He prayed." He sought strength from heaven. He crept to His Father's feet, and made supplication to Him, and was heard.

As we watch Him in His struggle, we see that He grows calmer and quieter as He prays. It is evident that Divine help comes to Him. He is sustained and strengthened. At length, when He comes from His pleading, His heart is at rest; His pleading has died away in the sweetest and divinest of peace.

We have the same infinite and unfailing source of help in our times of great need. Human friendship can go with us a little way, yet not into the inner depths of our ex-

perience of sorrow or trial. Human sympathy is very sweet, but it is weak, and ofttimes sleeps when we most need its cheer and comfort. But when the human ceases to avail, the Divine is ready. In the face of life's great needs, when no other help can come to us, God comes, and from His Divine fulness gives all that we need.

The prayer of our Lord in the Garden is a model for all who would find help in sore need. It was intense in its pleading, but it also breathed the most perfect submission. "Not My will, but Thine be done." No other spirit of prayer is pleasing to God, or brings blessing. The answer did not come, the cup did not pass away, and yet our Lord was really strengthened and helped in His praying. At its close, He came forth with peace in His heart, ready now to pass into the darkness of His cross.

"How was He helped," some one may ask "when that which He craved was not granted?" He was not spared the sorrow, but He was strengthened to endure it. This is God's way in much of our praying. We do not know

what would be a blessing to us. What to our thoughts seems bread might really be a stone to us. We may make our requests for things we desire, but we should make them humbly and submissively. If it is not our Father's will to grant us what we wish, He gives us grace to go without it. If He does not avert the trial from which we ask to be spared, He strengthens us for meeting it. Thus no true prayer ever goes unanswered. The Divine help never fails. There is a limit to what our human friends can do for us ; but God is infinite, and all His strength is ready to our hand, to help us as we need.

CHAPTER VI

LIVING VICTORIOUSLY

"I like the man who faces what he must
With step triumphant and a heart of cheer;
Who fights the daily battle without fear;
Sees his hopes fail, yet keeps unfaltering trust
That God is God; that, somehow, true and just,
His plans work out for mortals; not a tear
Is shed when fortune, which the world holds dear
Falls from his grasp. Better, with love, a crust,
Than living in dishonour; envies not
Nor loses faith in man; but does his best,
Nor even murmurs at his humbler lot;
But, with a smile and words of hope, gives zest
To every toiler. He alone is great
Who, by a life heroic, conquers fate."

SARAH K. BOLTON.

WE ought not to allow ourselves to be beaten in living. It is the privilege and duty of every believer in Christ to live victoriously. No man can ever reach noble character without sore cost in pain and sacrifice. All that is beautiful and worthy in life must be won

in struggle. The crowns are not put upon men's heads through the caprice or favouritism of any king; they are the reward of victorious achievement. We can make life easy, in a way, if we will, by shirking its battles, by refusing to grapple with its antagonisms; but in this way we can never make anything beautiful and worthy of our life. We may keep alongshore with our craft, never pushing out into deep waters; but then we shall never discover new worlds, nor learn the secret of the sea. We may spare ourselves costly service and great sacrifice, by saving our own life from hardships, risks, and waste, but we shall miss the blessing which can come only through the losing of self. "No cross, no crown" is the law of spiritual attainment.

"He who hath never a conflict hath never a victor's palm,
And only the toilers know the sweetness of rest and calm."

Therefore God really honours us when He sets us in places where we must struggle. He is then giving us an opportunity to win the best

honours and the richest blessings. Yet He never makes life so hard for us, in any circumstances, that we cannot live victoriously through the help which He is ready to give.

This lesson applies to temptation. Not one of us can miss temptation, but we need never fail nor fall in it. Never yet was a child of God in any terrible conflict with the Evil One in which it was not possible for him to overcome. There is a wonderful word in one of St. Paul's Epistles which we should write in letters of gold on our chamber walls: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it."

These are sublime assurances. No one need ever say, "I cannot endure this temptation, and must yield and fall." This is never true. We need never fail. Christ met the sorest temptations, but He was always victorious; and now this tried and all-conquering Christ is by our side as we meet and endure our temptations,

and we cannot fail when He is with us. It is possible, too, for us so to meet temptations as to change them into blessings. A conquered sin becomes a new strength in our life. We are stronger because we have conquered ; we are braver and more confident for the next battle. We are stronger because every conquest gives us a new spirit of life ; the strength we have defeated becomes now part of our own power.

Victoriousness in speech is among the hardest of life's conquests. The words of St. James are true to common experience, when he says that the tongue is harder to tame than any kind of beasts or birds or creeping things or things in the sea ; indeed, that no man can tame it. Yet he does not say that we need not try to tame our tongue. On the other hand, he counsels us to be slow to speak and slow to wrath. A Christian ought to learn to control his speech. The capacity for harm in angry words is appalling. No prayer should be oftener on our lips than that in the old psalm :

**"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ;
Keep the door of my lips."**

The hasty word of an uncontrolled moment may leave sore wounding and pain in a gentle heart, may mar a sweet friendship, may set an innocent life on a career of evil. Then the hurt in him who speaks ungoverned words is scarcely less sore. The pain that quickly follows their utterance is terrible penalty for the sin. There is oftentimes a cost, too, in results, which is incalculable. Lives have been shadowed, down to their close, by words which fell in a single flash from unlocked lips. Moses is not the only man who has been shut out of a land of promise by reason of one unadvised word. It is better to suffer wrong in silence than to run the risk of speaking in the excitement of anger.

One writes : " A single word spoken under the influence of passion, or rashly and inconsiderately spoken, may prove a source of abiding pain and regret ; but the suffering of an act of injustice, of wrong, or of unkindness, in a spirit of meekness and forbearance, never renders us unhappy. The remembrance of a sinful or even a hasty word is not infrequently the cause of

very deep mortification. The reflection that our words betrayed a weakness, if not a lack of moral and spiritual balance, humiliates us. It is a wound to our self-respect, and the consciousness that the regret is now unavailing adds a sting to the pain. But in the feeling that in our exercise of the meekness and forbearance inspired by the love of Christ we went further than we were bound to go is not often a cause of distress. In a calm review of the act we do not feel that we wronged ourselves by making too large a sacrifice, or that our failure to resent the injury and to attempt to retaliate was a mistake. Reason and conscience approve the course, and it is a source of satisfaction and comfort."

The lesson applies also to whatever in our environment makes life hard. Sometimes we find ourselves in places and conditions of living in which it seems impossible for us to grow into strength and beauty of character. This is true of many young people in the circumstances in which they are born, and in which they must grow up. They find about them the limitations

of poverty. They cannot get the education they seem to need to fit them for anything better than the most ordinary career. They envy other young people who have so much better opportunities. But these limitations, which seem to make fine attainments impossible, oft-times prove the very blessings through which nobleness is reached. Early hardship is the best school for training men. Not many of those who have risen to the best and truest success began in easy places.

Sometimes it is poor health that appears to make it impossible for one to live grandly, at least to do much in the world. But this is not an insuperable barrier. Many people who have been invalids all their life have grown into rare sweetness of spirit, and have lived in the world in a way to make it better, and to leave influences of blessing behind them when they went away. Many a "shut in" has made a narrow room and a chamber of pain the centre of a heavenly life, whose benedictions have gone far and wide. At least, there is no condition of health in which one cannot live victoriously

in one's spirit, if not physically. One can be brave, cheerful, accepting one's limitations, praising God in sickness and in pain, sure always that what God wills is best, and that he who sings his little song of joy and praise in his prison is pleasing God and blessing the world.

"Let sunshine and gladness illumine thy face ;
 'Twill help some one else to 'keep sweet.'
Do troubles oppress thee? Let God be thy stay ;
'Tis easy to sigh, but 'tis better to pray ;
Thy sunshine will come in His own blessed way :
 So trustingly try to 'keep sweet.'"

Sometimes that which makes life hard is in one's own nature. Passions are strong ; temper seems uncontrollable ; the affections are embittered so that meekness and gentleness appear to be impossible ; or the disposition is soured so that one finds it hard to be loving and sweet. The fault may be in one's early training, or the unhappy temper may be an inheritance. None of us come into the world saints, and oftentimes there are tendencies in one's childhood home, or in one's early years,

which give the wrong bias to the life. A few years later one awakes to find the nature misshapen, distorted, with the unlovely elements prominent and dominant.

Must one necessarily go through life to the end thus marred, with disposition spoiled, quick-tempered, with appetites and passions uncontrollable? Not at all. In all these things we may be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." The grace of Christ can take the most unlovely life and change it into beauty. Saintliness is impossible to none, where the grace of God is allowed to work freely and thoroughly.

Many persons find in their own homes the greatest obstacle in the way of their becoming beautiful and gentle in life. Home ought to be the best place in the world in which to grow into Christlikeness. There all the influences should be inspiring and helpful. It ought to be easy to be sweet in home's sacredness. Everything good ought there to find encouragement and stimulus. All home training should be towards "whatsoever things are lovely." Home

should be life's best school. What the conservatory is to the little plant or flower that finds warmth, good soil, and gentle culture there, growing into sweet loveliness, home should be to the young life that is born into it, and grows up within its doors. But not all home-life is ideal. Not in all homes is it easy to live sweetly and beautifully. Sometimes the atmosphere is unfriendly, cold, cheerless, chilling. It is hard to keep the heart gentle and kindly in the bitterness that creeps into home-life.

But no matter how sadly a home may fail in its love and helpfulness, how much there may be in it of sharpness and bitterness, it is the mission of a Christian always to be sweet, to seek to overcome the hardness, to live victoriously. This is possible, too, through the help of Christ.

~~These are only illustrations of this lesson.~~ Many of us find ourselves in uncongenial conditions in which we must stay, at least for the time. But, whatever the circumstances, we may live Christianly. God will never allow us to be put in any place in which, through the help of

His grace, we cannot be good and beautiful Christians. | Limitations, if we rightly use them, only help to make our life more earnest, more beautiful. A writer calls attention to the fact that every musical string is musical because it is tied at both ends, and must vibrate in limited measure of distance. Cut the string, and let it fly loose, and it no more gives out musical notes. Its musicalness depends upon its limitations. So it is with many human lives; they become capable of giving out sweet notes only when they are compelled to move in restraint. The very hardness in their condition is that which brings out the best qualities in them, and produces the finest results in character and achievement.

This lesson applies also to experiences of misfortune, adversity, sorrow. Paul speaks of himself in one place as "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." His life could not be crushed, his joy could not be quenched, his songs could not be hushed. We must all meet trial in some form, but one need never be overwhelmed by it. Yet it is very important that we should learn to

pass through our sorrow as Christians. Do we meet it victoriously? We cannot help weeping; Jesus wept, and tears are sacred when love for our friends and love for Christ mingle in them. But our tears must not be rebellious. "Thy will be done" must breathe through all our sobbings and cries, like the melody of a sweet song in a dark night of storm.

"Then sorrow whispered gently: 'Take
This burden up. Be not afraid;
An hour is short. Thou scarce wilt wake
To consciousness that I have laid
My hand upon thee, when the hour
Shall all have passed; and gladder then
For the brief pain's uplifting power,
Thou shalt but pity griefless men.'"

Sorrow hurts some lives. It embitters them. It leaves them broken, disheartened, not caring more for life. But this is not the Christian way. We should accept sorrow, however it may come to us, as bringing with it a fragment of God's sweet will for us, as bringing also some new revealing of Divine love. We should meet it quietly, reverently, careful not to miss the

blessing it brings to us. Then we should rise up again at once and go on with our work and duty. Some hands are left hanging down after grief has come. "I do not care any more for life," men are sometimes heard to say. "I have no interest in my business, since my wife died. I want to give it all up." But that is not victorious living. Sorrow absolves us from no duty, from no responsibility. Our work is not finished because our friend's work is done. God's plan for our life goes on, though for the life dearest to us it has ended. We dare not lose even a day for sorrow. We rise the morning after the funeral and find the old tasks waiting for us, clamouring for our coming, and must go forth at once to take them up. "Let us dry our tears and go on," wrote a Christian man to his friend after a sore bereavement. That is the true spirit.

We ought to live more earnestly than ever after grief has touched our heart. Our life has been enriched by the experience. Tears leave the soil of the heart more fertile. The experience of sorrow teaches us many lessons. We are wiser afterward, more thoughtful, better

fitted to be guide and helper to others, prepared especially to be comforters of those whom, after our own experience, we find passing through affliction. Instead, therefore, of letting our hands hang down in despairing weakness, we should rise up quickly, fresh from our new anointing, and hasten on to the duty that waits for us.

Thus all Christian life should be victorious. We should never allow ourselves to be defeated in any experience that may come to us. With Christ to help us, we need never fail, but may ever be more than conquerors. Even the things that seem to be failures and defeats in our lives, through the love and grace of Christ—if only we are faithful—will prove in the end to be successes and victories. Many a good man fails in a worldly sense, and yet in the moral and spiritual realm is more than conqueror. There is no real failure but in sin. Faithfulness to Christ is victory, even when all is lost.

**“All things fulfil their purpose, low or high :
There is no failure ; death can never mar
The least or greatest of the things that are ;
Until our work is done, it matters not how nigh**

SECRETS OF A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

May be the night time that is never far,
That long ere sunset lights the evening star,
That throws its still shadow up into the sky.

"To-day shall end what yesterday begun;
What we are planning others yet may build;
The leaves may wither, but the tree shall grow;
And though, at last, we leave our work undone,
Our life will not the less be all fulfilled;
Our work will all be even finished so."

CHAPTER VII

INTERPRETERS FOR GOD

**"O Earth! thou hast not any wind that blows
Which is not music; every weed of thine
Pressed rightly flows in aromatic wine.
And every humble hedge-row flower that grows,
And every little brown bird that doth sing,
Hath something greater than itself, and bears
A living word to every living thing,
Albeit it hold the message unawares."**

GOD wants interpreters. He does not walk the earth in form that we can see, nor speak to us in words that we can hear. Yet He is always with us, and He is always speaking to us. Once He sent His only begotten Son, and men saw His face—a face like their own; and heard His voice—a voice like their own. Now He has many sons; and in all of these, just in the measure in which they are true, God's face beams its love upon the world, and God's voice speaks its message to the world.

Every one of us has something to do in interpreting God to men. If we are His friends, the "secret of the Lord" is with us. Not a secret, however, which we are to keep to ourselves, but one which it is ours to declare. We are in this world to reveal God, and to make God's words plain to others.

We have many illustrations of this in the Scriptures. For example, twice in the story of Joseph do we find him acting as an interpreter for God. Two of his fellow-prisoners had dreams. Joseph told them the meaning of the dreams. Pharaoh had a dream which Egypt's wise men could not interpret, and Joseph was brought from his prison to tell its meaning. In both these cases the dreams were words of God, whose interpretation it was important to learn. In the case of the prisoners, the dreams were forecastings of the future of the two men. In the case of Pharaoh, they were revealings which the king needed to understand, in order that he might make provision for his people in the famine that was coming. It would have been a great calamity for Egypt

and for the world if he had not learned the meaning of what God had spoken in his ear in the visions of the night. But without an interpreter he never could have known.

So we all stand in this world amid mysterious writings which we cannot read, having our dreams and visions, whose meanings we cannot ourselves interpret. Yet these writings and these visions are really God's words to us, Divine teachings which we ought to understand, whose meanings it is intended we should find out. They have their lessons for us, which we need to know. They hold messages of comfort for our sorrows, of guidance for our dark paths, of instruction for our ignorance, of salvation for our perishing souls. We cannot live as we should live until we learn the meaning of these Divine words. We need interpreters.

Take the little child. It comes into the world knowing nothing. On all sides are wonderful things—in nature, in its own life, in other lives, in books, in art, in providence. But the writings are all mysterious. The child

understands nothing. Yet it is here to learn all it can of these writings. They are words of God which concern its own welfare. The child needs interpreters. And we are all only children of various growths. Life is full of enigmas for us. We bend over the Bible and find texts we cannot understand. There are mysteries in providence; they come into every life at some time. Yet in these obscure texts and these dark providences there are words of God hidden—words of love, of wisdom, of mercy. We all need interpreters to read off for us the mysterious handwriting of God.

Then it is our office as Christians to be interpreters for others. Joseph found the two prisoners sad, and his heart was touched with sympathy. He became eager to comfort them. This revealed the true and noble spirit in him. He had a warm, gentle heart. No one can ever be greatly useful in this world who does not enter into the world's experiences of need. Christ was moved with compassion when He saw human pain and sin. At once His love went out toward the sufferer, and He desired

to impart help. Wherever we go we see sad faces which tell of unrest, of broken peace, of unsatisfied longings, of unanswered questions, of deep heart-hungerings. Sometimes it is fear that writes its lines on the pale cheeks. Sometimes it is perplexity which darkens the features. Sometimes it is baffled longing. Here it is desire to look into the future; again it is eagerness to learn more of God.

We are sent to be interpreters, each in his own way, and in the things which he knows. All the rich knowledge of the world has come down to us through human interpreters. All along the ages there have been men who have climbed to the mountain tops, where they saw the earliest gleams of light, while it was yet dark in the valleys of life below, and have then come down and spoken to men of what they saw. There have been seers in every age, gifted to look upon the scrolls of truth and read off the words written there. The scientific knowledge we have has come to us through many interpreters who have learned to read God's words in nature. To most people nature's

wonderful writings mean almost nothing : flowers, trees, rivers, lakes, seas, mountains, the splendour of the skies—people walk amid these Divine works without awe, seeing nothing to touch their hearts or thrill their spirits. As Mrs. Browning says :

“ Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God ;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes ;
The rest sit round it, and pick blackberries.”

But there have been interpreters—men with eyes which saw, with ears which heard, and they have told us something of the meaning of the wonderful things God has written in His works.

Or take the literature of the world. It is the harvest of many centuries of thought. In every age there have been men who have looked into truth with deeper, clearer vision than their fellows, and heard whispers of God’s voice ; then coming forth from their valleys of silence, they have told the world what they heard. Take the treasures of spiritual truth which we possess ; how have they come to us ? Not through any scrolls brought from heaven

by angels, but through human interpreters. God took Moses up into the mount and talked with him, as a man talks with his friend, revealing to him great truths about His being and character, and giving him statutes and laws for the guidance of men; then Moses became an interpreter to the world of the things which God had spoken to him. David was an interpreter for God. God drew him close to His own heart and breathed heavenly songs into his soul; then David went forth and struck his harp and sang—and the music is breathing yet through all the world. John was an interpreter for God. He lay in Christ's bosom, heard the beatings of that great heart of love, and learned the secrets of friendship with his Lord; then he passed out among men and told the world what he had heard and felt and seen; and the air of this earth has been warmer ever since, and more of love has been beating in human hearts. Paul was an interpreter for God. God took him away from men and revealed Himself to him, opened to him the mystery of redemption as to no other man in all Christian

history ; and Paul wrote the letters of his which we have, which have been marvellous in their influence all these Christian centuries.

But not alone have these inspired men been God's interpreters ; many others since have taken up the word of God, and have found new secrets, blessed truths, precious comforts, that had lain undiscovered before, and have spoken out to men what they have found. Evermore new light is breaking from the Bible.

God gives to every life that He sends into this world some message of its own to give out to others. To one it is a new revealing of science. Kepler spoke of himself as thinking over God's thoughts, as he discovered the paths of the stars and traced out the laws of the heavens. To the poet God gives thoughts of beauty, revealings of the inner life, which he is to interpret to the world ; and the world is richer, sweeter, and better for hearing his messages. Even to the lowliest man God whispers some secret of truth which He wants that man to impart by word or act to others. We cannot all make books, or write poems or hymns which

shall bless men ; but if we live near the heart of Christ, there is not one of us into whose ear Christ will not speak some fragment of truth, some revealing of grace and love, or to whom He will not give some experience of comfort in sorrow, some glimpse of light in darkness, some glimmering of heaven's glory in the midst of this world's care. God forms a close personal friendship with each of His children, and tells each some special secret of love which no other ever has learned before. That now is your message—God's own peculiar word to you ; and you are God's prophet to forth-tell it again to the world. Each one should speak out what God has given him to speak. If it be but a single word, it will yet bless the earth. Not to speak it will leave the world a little poorer.

Says Mozoomdar : " If the flowers should no longer be in the world, if the sun should no longer shine, how great would be our distress ! If the bird no longer twittered on the budding bough of the tree, how greatly we should miss it ! Everything is so closely connected with us that we cannot do without it. Everything has

its corresponding fact in human nature, and every little thing has a destiny, a message. Orientals believe that each man and woman has a message, and the man or woman who accomplishes it is a true man or a true woman, but one who does not is an anomaly—one to be pitied."

We dare not hide in our heart the message that God gives us to utter to the world. Suppose that Joseph, knowing by Divine teaching the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams, had remained silent—think what his silence would have cost the world! Or suppose that John, having leaned upon the Lord's breast, and having learned the inner secrets of His love, had gone back to his fishing, after the Ascension, and had refused or failed to be an interpreter for Christ—what would the world have lost! If one only of the million flowers that bloom in the summer days, in the fields and gardens, refused to bloom, hiding its gift of beauty, the world would be a little less lovely for the failure of the one flower. If but one of the myriad stars in the heavens should refuse to shine some night, keeping its beam

locked in its own breast, the night would be a little darker. Every human life that fails to hear its message and learn its lesson, or that fails to interpret its own secret, keeping it locked in the silence of the breast, in some measure impoverishes the earth, and withholds that which would have enriched earth's life. But every life, even the lowliest, that learns its word from God, and then interprets it to others, adds something, at least, to the world's sum of blessing and good. We need only to be pure in our purpose and strong in our struggle, and all life shall be purer and stronger through our faithfulness.

“There's never a rose in all the world
But makes some green spray sweeter ;
There's never a wind in all the sky
But makes some bird wing fleeter ;
There's never a star but brings to heaven
Some silver radiance tender ;
And never a rosy cloud but helps
To crown the sunset splendour ;
No robin but may thrill some heart,
His dawnlight gladness voicing.
God gives us all some small sweet way
To set the world rejoicing.”

It is our mission, then, to live near the heart of Christ, that we may catch the spirit of His life, and then to go forth among the people to interpret to them the things of Christ which we have learned. Then it is not our words that the world needs, so much as the sweet life that we can live. Let us get into our heart the word and spirit and love of Christ, and then interpret in our daily walk among men the beauty of Christ.

**"The dear Lord's best interpreters
Are humble human souls;
The gospel of a life
Is more than books or scrolls.**

**"From scheme and creed the light goes out—
The saintly fact survives;
The blessed Master none can doubt
Revealed in holy lives."**

CHAPTER VIII

THE COST OF PRAYING

**"Say, what is prayer, when it is prayer indeed?
The mighty utterance of a mighty need.
The man is praying who doth press with might
Out of his darkness into God's own light."**

IT seems easy to pray. It is only speaking a few simple words in our Father's ear. We are not accustomed to think of praying as something hard. Yet sometimes it is only at sore cost that we can pray. Many of the things we ask for can come to us only through struggle and tears.

The basis of all praying is the submission of the whole life to the will of God. We cannot pray at all unless we make this full surrender. There is a story of a young naval officer who was taken prisoner. Brought into the presence of the commandant of the victorious squadron, he reached out his hand to him, his sword yet

hanging by his side. "Your sword first," said his captor. No greeting or salutation could be accepted until surrender was complete. Nor can we approach God in acceptable prayer until we have altogether submitted our will to His. All our prayers must be based upon "Thy will, not mine, be done." It costs much to make this surrender. It means a giving up of our own will and our own way. When it is sincere and real, every kneeling at Christ's feet is a laying of one's self upon the altar anew in entire devotion. We can keep nothing back and pray truly. A sin cherished makes words of prayer of no avail. A plan, a wish, a desire, wilfully urged, not submitted to God's perfect will, pressed rebelliously, shuts the ear of God to our praying. To pray means always the sacrifice of the will.

Is it, then, never hard to pray? Does it cost nothing? Are there no struggles with self, no giving up of desires dear as life, no dropping of cherished things out of the hand, no crushing of tender human affections, in the quiet "Thy will be done" of our prayers?

It was something you wanted, but you were not sure God wanted you to have it. You prayed earnestly for it, but you said, "Thy will, not mine, be done." The gift did not come, but your desire became less and less intense as you prayed and waited. At last, when it became evident that it was not God's will to grant your wish, there was no bitterness, no lingering struggle, only peace and a song. But did the submission cost you nothing?

Or it was a sorrow against which you pleaded. A loved one was stricken. With all your heart you prayed that your friend might recover. Yet, as you prayed, you were led by a gentle constraint to lay the burden of your desire in submission at God's feet. Slowly as the days and nights of watching went by, and the illness grew worse instead of better, and when it became more and more certain that your dear one would be taken from you, there came into your heart a new, strange sense of God's love, and you were calm and quiet. Then, when the sorrow came, there was no rebellion, no bitterness, but only sweet

trust. All this wondrous change your praying had wrought in you. It had not changed God's way, bringing it down to yours, but it had lifted you up into accord with God's will. Did it cost you nothing?

This is the inner history of every praying life. We ask for things we desire, things which we think would make us happier. Yet these things which we think would be bread to our hearts would really prove a stone if we had them. Our Father will never give His child a stone for bread, and hence the story of much of our praying is a story of unanswered prayers—unanswered in a sense. The things we want must be given up. Self must die. Desire must yield. Faith must grow. Our wills must blend with God's. Our restlessness must nestle in His rest. Our struggle must become quiet in His peace. We must be lifted up nearer to God. Such struggle costs—costs anguish and tears, but it brings us rich good. No doubt many of our best blessings come through God's withholdings. Ofttimes it is more blessed to learn to do without things

than it would be to get them. The prayer is not really unanswered in such cases. The things we asked for would not have been a blessing; but the very longing, though it was not satisfied, did us good, made us stronger, lifted us up into better life, while the lesson of submission learned through struggle and pain was rich in its discipline. It is in such experiences that we grow upward toward God. Writes Sarah K. Bolton :

“Life is full of broken measures,
Objects unattained:
Sorrows intertwined with pleasures,
Losses of our costliest treasures,
Ere the heights be gained.

“Every soul has aspiration
Still unsatisfied:
Memories that wake vibration
Of the heart in quick pulsation,
At the gifts denied.

“We are better for the longing,
Stronger for the pain:
Souls at ease are nature wronging;—
Through the *harrowed* soul come thronging
Seeds, in sun and rain!

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**"Broken measures, fine completeness
In the perfect whole:
Life is but a day in fleetness;
Richer in all strength and sweetness
Grows the striving soul."**

But such lessons are not easily learned. Such discipline is not easily gotten. It always costs to pray the soul into calmness and peace. The struggle grows less and less as the praying goes on; the pleadings are less intense; at last they sob themselves into silence, and the lips speak with love and trust the word of submission. But it has been at sore cost that this result has been gained. It was the dying of self that was going on. Such praying costs.

There is another phase of the cost of praying. We ask for more holiness. We know that this is God's will for us, and yet it may require a long time of struggle to bring our lives into true accord with our own desire. We pray to be made more humble, but it is probable that our longing can be answered only through many buffetings and defeats. We ask for patience, but the very word tells

of suffering to be endured, and the quality of patience is one that can be gotten only through trial. We ask for more of Christ in our heart, and God is very willing to grant us this request. But perhaps our heart is so preoccupied that room for more of Christ can be made only by the casting out of many other things. Here is where the cost is experienced. The old nature in us will not yield to the new without a protest, nor until vanquished and put under-foot.

It is never easy to grow better. You pray for a gentle temper. Does it come quietly and softly in answer to your prayer, as the dove came down out of the heavens to abide on Christ at His baptism? This certainly is not the usual history of the evolution of a sweet temper. It is a story rather of sore and long discipline, in which a turbulent and uncontrolled spirit is, by a slow process, tamed and trained into self-control, oftentimes only through long and sore struggle and many failures. When a man with an ungoverned temper begins to pray sincerely and earnestly that he may

learn to rule his own spirit and to grow into lovingness of disposition, he does not know what it will cost him to have his prayer answered. It is the same with all sincere requests for Christlikeness. We have the impression that a few petitions breathed up to God, asking Him to make us pure, loving, and gentle, will bring the answer in some mysterious way, working the change in us without any effort or struggle of our own. But it is not thus that such prayers are answered.

John Newton, in one of his hymns, tells the story of such a prayer. He asked the Lord that he might grow in faith, and love, and every grace. He hoped that in some favoured hour the request would be at once answered, and his sins subdued by love's restraining power. Instead of this, however, he was made to feel the hidden evils of his heart, and his soul was assaulted by the angry powers of darkness.

“‘Lord, why is this?’ I trembling cried;
 ‘Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?’
 ‘’Tis in this way,’ the Lord replied,
 ‘I answer prayer for grace and faith;

These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set thee free,
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayest seek thine all in Me.'"

They know not what they ask who begin to pray sincerely and deeply, "Nearer, my God, to Thee." It may indeed require a cross to lift us higher and nearer. But no price is too great to pay to become conquerors over self, and to grow into holiness and beauty of life.

Another example of the cost of praying is found in prayers for others. Sometimes it is easy enough to pray for our friends, and seems to involve nothing on our part. But we do not pray long for others with true earnestness and with the importunity of love, before we find that we have something to do to make our praying avail. A parent's pleading for a child draws the parent's whole soul with it. We pray for the heathen ; and, unless we are heartlessly insincere, we must take a corresponding interest in movements to save the heathen. We pray for the sick, the poor, the needy ; and if we mean it at all, our love will not stop at

praying. A city missionary implored God to send His angel to care for two orphan children whom he had found in a cold, fireless hovel, starving and naked beside the dead body of their mother. Instantly a voice spoke to him in his conscience, "Thou art Mine angel; for this very purpose did I send thee here." His praying for these children proved a costly act. You would better not begin pleading for one of God's little ones in need or trouble, telling God of your interest in the suffering one, if you want your praying to cost you nothing. Almost surely God will ask you to care for the suffering one for Him.

We are to pray for our enemies, for those who spitefully use us. That is not easy. It costs no struggle when we go home in the evening and kneel down before God in our closet, to recall all who have been gentle and kind to us, and to pray for them. Anybody can do that. But we are to recall also and especially those who have been unkind to us, who have spoken evil of us, or have injured us in some way, and are to pray for these. And praying for them

involves forgiveness in every case. We cannot keep the resentment, the angry feeling, the grudge, after truly praying for those who have done us hurt. At the altar of intercessory prayer all anger, passion, and bitterness die. Praying for others sweeps out of our heart everything but love. Thus it proves very costly, but the blessing it brings is very rich.

These are illustrations of the cost of praying. Every true spiritual longing is a reaching up out of self into a better, truer, nobler life. Praying is always a climbing upward toward God. We can thus climb only at the cost of struggle and self-denial, the crucifixion of the old nature. David said he would not offer to God that which had cost him nothing. In prayer the same test can be applied. Pleadings that cost nothing have no answer. Prayers that cost the most bring down the richest blessings.

CHAPTER IX

"GIVE YE THEM TO EAT"

**"My life is not mine own, but Christ's, who gave it,
And He bestows it upon all the race;
I lose it for His sake, and thus I save it;
I hold it close, but only to expend it;
Accept it, Lord, for others, through Thy grace!"**

WE begin to live only when we begin to love, and we begin to love only when self dies and we live to bless others. We forget too often that we are the body of Christ in this world. The things He would do for men we must do. His pity for the lost must throb in our human hearts. His comfort for earth's sorrow must be spoken by human lips. He is the bread of life which alone can feed men's hunger, but it must pass through our hands. We must be the revealers of Christ to others. The love must flow to them through us. We

are the branches, and from our little lives must drop the fruits which shall meet men's cravings.

The importance of this human part is well illustrated in our Lord's miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. When the need of the people was spoken of, the disciples proposed to send them away to buy bread for themselves. Jesus replied, "They have no need to go away; give ye them to eat." No wonder the disciples were startled by such a command, when they realised the smallness of their own resources. Yet a little later they did give the multitudes to eat from their own small stores, and had abundance left for themselves.

The miracle is for our instruction. All about us are those who have many and sore needs. We pity them. We turn to Christ with our pity, and pray Him to send some one to feed and bless those who are in such need. But as we listen we hear Him say, "Give ye them to eat!" Then we say, "Why, Master, we have nothing to give to these hungry multitudes. We cannot comfort these sorrows. We cannot guide

these tottering, stumbling feet. We cannot give strength to these fainting hearts. We cannot meet these intense cravings for sympathy, for love, for life. We cannot feed these hungers. We have only our five barley loaves, and here are thousands." But our Lord's quiet answer still is, "Give ye them to eat."

Christ always used the human so far as the human would reach. He never wrought an unnecessary miracle. If the work could be done without the putting forth of supernatural energy, it was so wrought. And when miracles were performed, all that human ability could do in the process was left to human ability. There was never any waste of miracle. Then it is a common law in the kingdom of God that, whenever possible, Divine gifts are passed to men through other men. God sends many of His gifts to the world through human hands and hearts. The word of God was spoken in olden times through human lips. When God came to reveal His love and mercy in a life, the people looked up and saw a face like their own faces. The real worker in the world to-day is the Holy

Spirit. His is the power that regenerates, sanctifies, and comforts. But no eye sees Him. He works invisibly, silently. What we see all the time is a human face and a human hand. We hear the Spirit's voice in the accents of lips like our own. The Gospel is to be told to every creature ; but those who have learned it themselves, and have been saved by it, must be the bearers of the good news. The command still and always is, "Give ye them to eat."

This puts upon us who know the love and grace of Christ a great responsibility. Those who are in need or in sorrow about us must be blessed through us. The responsibility for helping, comforting, lifting up, these weak, sad, or fallen ones is with us. Yet we seem to have nothing with which to answer their cravings. We have only five barley loaves ; and what are they among so many ?

We may get further instruction concerning the manner of blessing the world with our meagre resources from the way the disciples fed these thousands. First, they brought their barley loaves to Christ. If they had begun,

feeding the people with what they had, without bringing it to the Master, it could have fed only a few. We also must bring our paltry resources to Christ, and put them into His hands. This is always the first thing in doing good. Without Christ's blessing, even the largest resources or abilities will avail nothing. Christ can do nothing with us until we have really given ourselves into His hands. But when we have done this, no one on earth can tell the measure of good that may be wrought even by the smallest abilities.

Then follows Christ's blessing on the loaves. His blessing maketh rich. We ought to pray continually that Christ's touch may be upon us, and that what we have may first lie in His hands, before it is given out to become food to others. There seems to be a significance, too, in the fact that Christ broke the loaves as He blessed them, before He gave them into the hands of the disciples. Often He must break us and our gifts before He can make us bread for others. Very beautifully do Dr. S. W. Duffield's lines illustrate this :

**"They tell me I must bruise
The rose's leaf
Ere I can keep and use
Its fragrance brief.**

**"They tell me I must break
The skylark's heart
Ere her cage song will make
The silence start.**

**"They tell me love must bleed,
And friendship weep,
Ere in my deepest need
I touch that deep.**

**"Must it be always so
With precious things?
Must they be bruised, and go
With beaten wings?"**

**"Ah, yes! By crushing days,
By caging nights, by scar
Of thorns and stony ways,
These blessings are!"**

Many of us cannot be used to become food for the world's hunger until we are broken in Christ's hands. "Bread corn is bruised." Christ's blessing oftentimes means sorrow, but even sorrow is not too great a price to pay for the privilege of touching other lives with bene-

diction. The sweetest things in this world to-day have come to us through tears and pain. We need never be afraid to make sacrifices in doing good. It is the things that cost that yield blessing. The ashes of our ofttimes ourish joys for others.

"Some sweet or tender thing may grow
To stronger life because of thee;
Content to play an humble part,
Give of the ashes of thy heart,
And haply God, whose dear decrees
Taketh from those to give to these,
Who draws the snowdrop from the snows,
May from these ashes feed a rose."

The last thing in this story of the feeding of the people was the passing of the broken loaves through the hands of the disciples to the people. Jesus did not distribute them Himself. He gives our consecrated gifts back to us, that we may dispense them. He would teach us, for one thing, that we can be our own best almoners. Our money loses sadly in power to do good if we must pass it through a society instead of taking it ourselves to those who need it. If possible, we would better always give it

with our own hands, and let our love go with it, in expressions that will be bread for the hunger of those whom we would serve.

"The gift without the giver is bare."

It is a great responsibility which this truth puts upon Christian people. The bread can reach the hungry only through the hands of the disciples. "Give ye them to eat" is still the word. The perishing world can get the blessings of the gospel of Christ only through us. Here stands the Master with the consecrated bread in His hands, enough for all. Yonder is the multitude, with countless needs and hungers. But between Christ and the people is the human ministry. "He gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." Suppose the disciples had eaten of the bread themselves, and, when satisfied, had still remained sitting there, enjoying their blessing, but carrying it no farther; what would have been the result? The people would have gone hungry, although there had been ample provision made for them by the Master. The

guilt would have been on the heads of the disciples.

But we are now Christ's disciples. All about us are hungry people. Christ has bread to give them—enough to satisfy all their hungers. But it must pass to them through our hands. What if the bread stop with us? What if we take it—this sacred bread, Christ's own body broken for us—and eat it with relish, and sit down and think not of those just beyond us who are hungering for comfort, for help, for love, for life? This bread is not given to us for ourselves alone—Christ gives no blessing in that way; it is given for ourselves, and then to be passed on by us to others. Says Amiel, "It is better to be lost than to be saved all alone." And Susan Coolidge writes, using Amiel's words as a motto:

**"To lie by the river of life and see it run to waste,
To eat of the tree of heaven while the nations go
unfed,
To taste the full salvation—the only one to taste—
To live while the rest are lost—oh, better by far
be dead!**

**"For to share is the bliss of heaven, as it is the joy of earth ;
And the unshared bread lacks savour, and the wine unshared lacks zest :
And the joy of the soul redeemed would be little, little worth,
If, content with its own security, it could forget the rest."**

So it is that we stand between Christ and a needy, hungry world. So it is that the bidding ever comes to us, "Give ye them to eat." Let us be faithful. It would be a bitter thing, indeed, if any should perish because we did not carry to them the bread which the Master gives us for them.

CHAPTER X

CHRIST'S WITHHELD LESSONS

"Is it true, O Christ in heaven,
That, whichever way we go,
Walls of darkness must surround us,
Things we would but cannot know?"

ALL learning is slow. This is true in proportion to the importance of the lessons. We learn some things quickly, but they are not the things which are of greatest value. Mere head-lessons are gotten more easily than heart-lessons. We may memorise the beatitudes in a few minutes, but it takes many years to learn to live them. And in moral lessons this is the only learning that counts. Any one can get a code of ethics by heart, without much effort; but to get the faultless code wrought into conduct, disposition, spirit, character, is the work of a lifetime.

In life-teaching the lessons are given only as

fast as they are learned. Our Master will not teach us more rapidly than we can take His lessons. It was in the midst of His most confidential talk with His disciples that He said He had many things to say to them which they could not yet bear. All wise teaching must be from the simplest rudiments up to the more complex knowledge. The mind is not capable of comprehending the higher elements till it has been developed and trained. Then truth itself is progressive, and the pupil is not prepared to receive the advanced lessons until he has mastered the rudiments.

Spiritual truths can be received only as we come to the experiences for which they are adapted. There are many of the Divine promises which we can never claim, and whose blessedness we cannot realise, until we come to the points in life for which they were specially given. For example: "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion." This word can mean nothing to the child playing amid the flowers, or to the young man or woman walking in sunny paths, without a care or a trial.

It can be understood only by one who is in trouble. Or, take Christ's word: "My grace is sufficient for thee." It was given first in place of an answer to a prayer for the removal of a sore trial. It meant Divine strength to offset human weakness; and it cannot be received until there is a sense of need. Christ stands beside a happy young Christian and says, "I have a precious word to give you, one that shines with the beauty of Divine love; but you cannot bear it yet." The disciple moves on along life's sunny path, and by-and-by comes into the shadows of sorrow or trouble. Again the Master stands beside him and says, "Now I can give you the word I withheld before. It is this: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'" Then the promise glows with light and love.

There is a large part of the Bible which can be received by us only when we come into the places for which the words were given. There are promises for weakness which we can never get while we are strong. There are words for times of danger which we can never know in

the days when we need no protection. There are consolations for sickness whose comfort we can never get while we are in robust health. There are promises for times of loneliness, when men walk in solitary ways, which never can come with real meaning to us while loving companions are by our side. There are words for old age which we can never appropriate for ourselves along the years of youth, when the arm is strong, the blood warm, and the heart brave. God cannot show us the stars while the sun shines in the heaven ; and He cannot make known to us the precious things of love which He has prepared for our nights while it is yet day about us. Christ says to us then, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." We could not understand them. But by-and-by, when we come into places of need, of sorrow, of weakness, of human failure, of loneliness, of sickness, of old age, then He will tell us these other things, these long-withheld things, and they will be full of joy for our hearts. When night comes, He will show us the stars.

Older Christians will understand this. There are many things in the Bible which had little meaning for them in life's earlier days, but which one by one have shone out bright and beautiful along the years, as stars come out in the evening sky when the sun fades from the heavens. Even in childhood the words were said over and over; but they were repeated thoughtlessly because there had been no experience to prepare the heart to receive them. Then one day there crept a shadow over the life, and in the shadow the long familiar words began for the first time to have a meaning. Other experiences of care, trial, and loss followed, and the precious words became more and more real. Now, in old age, as the sacred texts are repeated, they are the very rod and staff to the trembling, trusting spirit. No better illustration of this truth can be given than we have in the lines which tell how an old hymn was learned:

**Rock of Ages, cleft for me!
Thoughtlessly the maiden sung.**

Fell the words unconsciously
From her girlish, gleeful tongue;
Sang as little children sing;
Sang as sing the birds in June;
Fell the words like light leaves down
On the current of the tune—
'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!'

"'Let me hide myself in Thee!'
Felt her soul no need to hide—
Sweet the song as sweet could be,
And she had no thought beside;
All the words unheedingly
Fell from lips untouched by care,
Dreaming not that they might be
On some other lips a prayer—
'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!'

"'Rock of Ages, cleft for me!'
'Twas a woman sung them now,
Pleadingly and prayerfully,
Every word her heart did know;
Rose the song as storm-tossed bird
Beats with weary wing the air,
Every note with sorrow stirred,
Every syllable a prayer—
'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!'

" 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me !
 Lips grown aged sung the hymn,
 Trustingly and tenderly,
 Voice grown weak and eyes grown dim—
 'Let me hide myself in Thee !'
 Trembling though the voice and low,
 Ran the sweet strain peacefully,
 Like a river in its flow ;
 Sang as only they can sing
 Who life's thorny path have pressed ;
 Sang as only they can sing
 Who behold the promised rest—
 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in Thee !

" 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me
 Sung above a coffin-lid—
 Underneath, all restfully,
 All life's joys and sorrows hid ;
 Nevermore, O storm-tossed soul,
 Nevermore from wind and tide,
 Nevermore from billows' roll,
 Wilt thou need thyself to hide.
 Could the sightless, sunken eyes,
 Closed beneath the soft grey hair—
 Could the mute and stiffened lips
 Move again in pleading prayer,
 Still, aye still, the words would be,
 'Let me hide myself in Thee !' "

Thus, as life goes on, the meaning of Christ's

words come out clearer and clearer, until the child's heedless repetition of them becomes the utterance of the faith and trust of the strong man's very soul.

We cannot bear now the revealing of our own future. Christ knows it all. When a young Christian comes to the Master's feet and says, "I will follow thee whithersoever Thou leadest," the Master knows what that promise means. But He does not reveal the knowledge to His happy disciple. People sometimes say they wish they could look on into the years and see all that will come to them. But would this be a blessing? Would it make them happier? Could they shape their course better if they knew all that shall befall them—the struggles, the victories, the defeats, the joys and sorrows, the failures of bright hopes—just how long they will live?

Surely it is better we should not know our future. So the word of the Master is continually: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Only as we go on, step by step, does He disclose to us His

will and plan for our life. Thus the joys of life do not dazzle us, for our hearts have been chastened so that we have learned how to receive them. The sorrows do not overwhelm us, because each one brings its own special comfort with it. But if we had known in advance the coming joys and prosperities, the exultation might have made us heedless of duty and of danger. We might have let go God's hand and have grown self-confident, thus missing the benediction that comes only to simple, trusting faith. If we had known of the struggles and trials before us, we might have become disheartened, thus failing of courage to endure. In either case we could not have borne the revealing, and it was in tenderness that the Master withheld it.

We could not bear the many things Christ has to tell us about heaven, and therefore He does not tell them to us. The blessedness, if disclosed now, would dazzle and blind our eyes; the light must be let in upon us, little by little, so as not to harm us.

Then if heaven were within our sight, as

we toil and struggle and suffer here, the bliss would so excite us that we should be unfitted for duty. A traveller tells of returning to France after a long voyage to India. As soon as the sailors saw the shore of their own land they became incapable of attending to their duties on the ship. When they came into port and saw their friends on the quay, the excitement was so intense that another crew had to be found to take their place. Would it not be thus with us if heaven were visible from earth? Its blessedness would win us away from our duties. The sight of its splendours would so charm and entrance us that we should weary of earth's painful life. If we could see our loved ones on heaven's shore, we would not be content to stay here to finish our work. Surely it is better that more has not been revealed. The veiled glory does not dazzle us; and yet faith realises it, and is sustained by the precious hope in its struggles in the night of earthly life, until at last the morning breaks.

This is the great law of Divine revealing. We learn Christ's teaching as fast as we are

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able to bear it. So we may wait in patient faith when mysteries confront us, or when shadows lie on our pathway, confident that He who knows all has in gentle love withholden from us for the time the revealing we crave, because we could not yet endure the knowledge. Ever, therefore, our prayer may be :

**"Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on :
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on :
Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see
The distant scene one step enough for me."**

28/27

CHAPTER XI

FOR THE DAYS OF DARKNESS

**"Who followeth Me shall walk in darkness never,
The light of life shall brighten all his way;
Nor things of time, nor things to come, shall sever
From Him they love the children of the day."**

WE are not to anticipate trial. God wants us to take the days as they come, building little fences of trust about each one, shutting out all that does not belong to it. We are not to stain to-day's blue sky with to-morrow's clouds. We are not to burden to-day's strength with to-morrow's loads. We are not to walk sadly in bright youth, when we have no sorrows, because we know that later in life we must meet pain and grief. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Yet we should live in the glad days so that when the sad days come they will not overwhelm us. For no matter

how brightly the sun shines about us to-day, it will some time grow dark. No holy living, no kind of preparation beforehand, can keep the affliction away. That is not the way God blesses His children. Yet there are ways of living in the sunny days so that when the night comes we shall not be left in utter darkness.

One way is by storing our minds with the promises of God. We may get a lesson here from our geology. Ages ago vegetation grew rank and luxuriant. Wisely our earth piled away all the vast *débris* of the falling and decaying forests, and covered it up. It seemed a foolish sort of carefulness and economy. Of what use would all this mass of dead trees and vegetation ever be? But it is now earth's coal-beds, and it is lighting our homes in the dark nights. In the days of human gladness, when there is no trouble, no pain, there are many of God's words which seem to have no meaning for us. We do not need them. They are for times of sorrow, and we have no sorrow. They are lamps for the darkness, and we are not

walking in darkness. They are for days of pain and loss, and we have no pain, and are called to endure no loss. But if we are wise, if we would be ready for whatever the future may bring to us, we will not leave these unheeded words unappropriated. We will take them into our heart and fix them there, as one would fix lamps in a house during the daytime, to be ready to shine when night comes. Then when the sorrow comes, as it surely will come, we shall not be overtaken by the darkness. These promises for which we had no use in the days of human joy, but which we took into our heart against the time of need, will now shine down upon us and fill our gloom with sweet light from heaven. That is one way of walking while we have the light, so that the darkness will not overtake us and overwhelm us. Hang the lamps all about your heart's chambers during the day.

Another way is by keeping the vision clear all the time between our souls and heaven. It is not easy in the time of unbroken worldly prosperity to maintain unbroken communion

with God. Prosperity fosters many things that serve to cut off our spiritual outlook. A man built a house on a spot which commanded a beautiful view of distant mountains and a great stretch of sky. Then he said, "I must have trees to shelter the house. Trees make any place more lovely." So he planted a number of fine trees, and they grew up, and were much admired. But the trees were close together, and, as they grew, their branches interlaced; and by-and-by they shut out the distant view, so that the mountains were no longer visible from the house, and scarcely a glimpse could be had of the sky.

So it is often with men's lives. In their prosperity men gather about them many earthly interests and pleasures. These are very sweet; but sometimes they shut out the view of heaven's glorious mountains, and of the blessed spiritual things which are the realities of Christian faith. Many a life thus loses its familiarity with Christ, and the invisible things of God become less and less clear to the vision. Earthly interests absorb the thought and the affections.

Then when sorrow comes and it grows dark, the heart cannot find its refuge, and goes uncomforted. The familiar joys have lost their power to bless, and the soul has no experience of the higher joys.

Walk while ye have light, that the darkness overtake you not, swallow you not up. That is, in the days of earthly joy and prosperity, keep the view between your soul and heaven clear and open. Do not let the trees grow up about your life's home, so as to shut out your view of the mountains of God. Keep on intimate and familiar terms all the time with Christ. Then when night comes the lights from your Father's house will shine down upon your darkness. Bereft of human companionship, the consciousness of the presence, the companionship, and the love of Jesus Christ, your unseen Friend, will become more and more real to you. Thus walking while you have the light, the darkness when it comes will not overwhelm you.

There are many such experiences of sorrow. They come, perhaps suddenly, to some Chris-

tian who has known only gladness before; but the life is not crushed. In the darkness the face of Christ appears in beauty never seen before, and the sad heart is comforted.

Still another way in which we may be prepared in the light for the darkness is suggested by our Lord Himself in one of His teachings. "While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light." There is something very beautiful in this. If you walk in the light, the light will enter into you, and you will become a son of light. If a diamond lie for a while in the sunshine, and then be carried into a darkened room, a soft light will pour out from it. We know how it was with John, for example. He walked in the light of Christ for three years, and the light entered into him, into his very soul, until he became a shining light. So it was with all who were close friends of Christ.

And we may walk in the light of Christ just as truly as did those who knew Him in the flesh. Christ is not behind us, a mere historical figure of long centuries past. He is with us, as really

present by our side as He was by Mary when she sat at His feet, or by John when he lay upon that blessed bosom. So we can walk in the light of Christ; and as we do so, we shall become light ourselves, filled with His light.

But how can we get the light into our own life? Only by opening our heart to the love of Christ. There were a great many people in those ancient days who saw Jesus, who met Him oftentimes, who heard His wonderful words, who beheld His sweet life, who were witnesses of His patience, His gentleness, His gracious kindness, His unselfish ministry, but who never became children of light. Their lives remained dull and cold and dark as though they had never seen Him. On the other hand, there were a few people who walked in the light of Christ, and became themselves transfigured, bright, shining children of light.

What was the cause of this difference in the influence of Jesus upon different lives? It is very plain to one who understands the law of spiritual impression. The people at large saw Christ, heard His words, beheld His sweet life,

walked beneath His influence, but kept their hearts shut against Him. Christ's life flowed all about them, but found no entrance into them. The friends of Christ, however, believed in Him, loved Him, opened their souls to Him, came into intimate communion with Him, received His words, let His spirit pour into their hearts. The Divine life that flowed about them filled them. There is the same difference always among those who live under the influence of Christ. Not all take the blessing into their souls. Thousands know the truth of Christianity who have not received the spirit of Christianity. But those who receive Christ Himself become Christians, Christ's men, children of light, and shine themselves with the same light.

That is what our Lord means for us when He says, "Ye are the light of the world." We are lighted at the flame of His life. Then as He was in the world, so are we in the world. Our lives shine too. In our little measure we become Christs to others. We, in turn, are comforters of the sorrow of the sorrowing, inspirers

of hope in the despairing, and of strength in the weak. There is no other secret in the art of comfort. There is no use in your saying over verses of Scripture to those who are in darkness or trouble, if that is all you do. You must have light in yourself. The sorrowing must hear the heart-beat in your words. The life of Christ must flow through your lips and shine in your face. Walk in the light until you become a child of light, and then you can go out to shine for Christ in the world.

If we are children of light, no darkness can overwhelm us. Night does not quench the lights that shine in our streets and in our homes; they appear only the brighter as the darkness deepens. So, if we are children of light, the darkness of sorrow falling about us will not overwhelm us. It will not be dark in our soul, however deep the gloom outside. In the time of the three days' darkness in Egypt, God's people had light in their houses. Thus it is in the Christian home in the time of sorest and most sudden sorrow. This is the secret of comfort. Be filled with Christ. Open your

heart to His love, to His Spirit, to His peace, to His joy, to His life. Abide in Christ until Christ abides in you, until you are filled with all the fulness of God. Then you need not fear any sorrow, for the comfort is in yourself. No darkness can make it dark in your soul, because the light of Christ shines there.

Then in your own sorrow you will be a comforter of others. Jesus, in His darkest hours, forgot Himself and sought to comfort others. On the night of His betrayal, when the shadows were deepening about Him, He took the disciples into the upper room, and comforted them in their deep and bitter grief with the most precious words of comfort earth's sorrowing ones have ever heard. Let those who are themselves crying out for consolation go out into the sad world, and forget their own affliction as they seek to lift up other mourners. The words Christ has spoken to them in their hour of darkness let them speak forth again. Let the mother with the empty crib and the empty bosom go to the home where white crape hangs on the door, put her arm around the

mother who sits there in her bitter grief, and tell her she understands the pain of her heart, and then whisper to her the comfort of God's love. In trying to console others, the mourner will find consolation for herself.

There is no other secret of comfort like this. Walk in the light while ye have the light, and ye shall become the children of light. Then no darkness can overtake you, or quench the light that shines in you. Then you will be a light in the world to brighten other lives in their sorrow. Of a great preacher a poet wrote :

“ Where he trod,
Love of God
Blossomed into sight;
Form and hue
Lovelier grew
In the eternal light.”

CHAPTER XII

HIDDEN WORDS IN THE BIBLE

"More and more stars! and ever as I gaze
Brighter and brighter seen!
Whence come they, Father? Trace me out their ways
Far in the deep serene."

KEBLE.

THERE is a great deal of beauty in the world which lies too deep for our eyes. There are millions of stars in depths of the heavens which no telescope reveals. Night unveils to us splendours which lie hidden in day's glare.

One may write with invisible ink, and the words fade out after the pen, leaving no trace. Yet they remain in the paper, hidden there, unseen and unsuspected by any eye that scans it. But if one day the paper be exposed to heat, the hidden words come out in all clearness, every line appearing in distinctness.

There is a sense in which the revealings of God in the Bible are hidden. They are not hidden because God seeks to keep them from us, but because we must be brought into a certain condition before we can receive them. One said the other day, "Why did I never see the rich meaning of that psalm before?" We had been going over one of the psalms together as I sat at my friend's bedside, and we had seen many sweet things in some of the verses. My friend almost chided herself with dulness of vision, or with carelessness in reading, in not having seen the precious meanings before. "I have read that psalm hundreds of times," she said. "These sweet thoughts were lying in the verses all the while, but I never saw them until now. Why was it? Did God mean to hide them from me?"

The answer to these questions is that the revealings are made and the blessings bestowed really at the earliest possible moment. The stars are in the sky all day, but we cannot behold them until night comes. My friend could not have seen the precious thoughts in the

psalm six months before. Then she was in health, active, swift in movement, strong, with no consciousness of weakness, rich in human hopes and expectations. And she found very many precious things then in the Bible. It had its lessons, its encouragements, its interpretations. Just what she needed and craved in those active days the book had for her. But the particular revealings which she gets now from its words she did not then find. Now she needs comfort for weakness, strength to endure pain patiently, grace to enable her to readjust her life to its new conditions, assurance of Divine love and care in her experience of feebleness. She did not need these special revealings in the time of health and activity, and they were not then available to her.

The experience is a very common one. A happy young girl may sing sweetly the hymn—

"Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly";

and yet it may mean almost nothing to her. She feels no need to fly to the Divine bosom.

She is conscious of no danger, of no enemy pursuing, of no storm gathering. The words ripple from her tongue in musical measure and tone, but there really is no experience in her heart to interpret them to her. A few years later she is a woman, with many cares, burdens, trials, and sorrows, and again she sings the song :

“ Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past ;
Safe into the haven guide ;
Oh, receive my soul at last !”

And now she feels every word as it drops from her lips in pleading accents. Every syllable is now a prayer from her heart. On the wings of her song her heart rises :

“ As storm-tossed bird
Beats with weary wing the air.”

What makes the song such a new song to her ?
New experiences have come into her life, and

amid these she has learned her own insufficiency and her need of Divine shelter, and has learned also of the preciousness of the refuge in the bosom of Christ.

The same is true of very many Divine comforts. There are Bible texts which open to the young. They read the sacred book in the bright years when there is no care, no sense of weakness, no consciousness of need, and many of its words speak to them in thoughts of gladness and cheer. Meanwhile there are other words that read sweetly enough, yet over which they do not linger, out of which comes to their heart no soothing voice. Then they go on for a few years, and at length the way slopes into gloom. A child is sick, and the strong man is watching beside its bed, with heart burdened and anxious. Or he is brought down himself to a sick-bed, where he has time for thought. He knows his illness is serious—that he may never recover. Now he is ready for some new Bible verses. He needs some of the comfort that thus far has been hidden from him in the words of God, whose deeper meaning he could not

receive until now. For example, there are the opening lines of the Forty-sixth Psalm :

**“ God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.”**

He felt no need of a refuge in the sunny days, and never availed himself of it. Indeed, the door did not seem to open to him at all. But now in his weakness and fear he seeks a refuge, some place to hide ; and coming upon this word of God, it opens at once to him, and he runs into it, and finds warmth, shelter, love, safety, all within its gate.

He had not felt the need of God's help and companionship when human friendship seemed so all-sufficient, and the word about “ a very present help in trouble ” had no personal meaning for him then ; now, however, the human friendships, sweet as they are, are inadequate, or they are far away. In this condition the assurance that God is “ a very present help ” is a blessing revealing, and it is the opening to him of a new secret of blessing. When he knows this, all the way of life seems lighted with a new

and strange illumining. He fears no dangers, no trials, no battles; for with God for a very present help, he can never fear nor falter.

It is thus that all the Bible words must be gotten. There are many precious promises for those who are tempted; but until you are in the grip of temptation you cannot draw the blessing from the quiver which God binds on His tempted ones. There are tender and precious words for the widow; but while the beloved wife has her husband by her side, strong, brave, and true, these words are yet closed storehouses to her. They can become hers only when she wears the badge of widowhood, and sits lonely by the coffin of her dead, or amid the cares and burdens which her bereavement has cast at her feet. There are sweet words for orphan children; but while the children have both father and mother with them, and are dwelling in the shelter of a happy home, they cannot draw upon this reserve of Divine goodness. Only when they have lost one or other or both parents can they quote such a Bible promise as this :

**"When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the Lord will take me up."**

There are very loving promises, too, for the old; but the man or woman in youth or mid-life cannot take them. There are beatitudes for certain conditions. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." But only those who are in sorrow can experience the blessedness of Divine comfort. It never can be learned while the heart knows not grief. Another beatitude is: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." But there must first be hunger and thirst before there can be heart-filling.

Thus all the Bible treasures are ready to open to us the moment we have the experience which the particular grace in them is intended to supply. Hence it is that the Bible is never exhausted. Men read it over and over again, and each time they find something new in it—new promises, new comforts, new revealings of love. The reason is, they are growing in experience, and every new experience develops new needs, and brings them to new revealings.

Another feature of this truth is that the revealings are made only as we enter upon the needs. The blessing for each day is locked up in the little circle of that day, and we cannot even get to it until we come to the place. But when the need comes, the supply is always ready. George MacDonalD puts this truth in a sentence: "As you grow ready for it, somewhere or other you will find what is needful for you, in a book or a friend." Nor is it mere chance that brings the supply, the help, the light, thus, just at the right moment. The hand of God guides all such chances. It is Divine thoughtfulness that watches and always has the goodness ready at the instant of want. As the nature awakes, and its needs begin to express themselves in hungerings and cravings, God brings to us in His own way that which our newly awakened craving requires. He watches us, and at the right moment has ready the blessing for the moment.

Every new providence which opens before us has in its own little circle its own supply of goodness. Take, again, for illustration, the

case of the young friend who was sick. She had never been ill before. When the sickness came on, the experience was altogether new and strange. At first it seemed mysterious to her, and she was alarmed; but soon she began to realise that while the experience was new and painful, she was receiving new blessings, had come upon new revealings of God's goodness. For one thing, she had never before experienced such tenderness of love in her own home as now came to her from all her loved ones. The whole household life began to turn about her sick-room. The love was all there before in the hearts of father, mother, sister, brother—they loved her no more than before; but in her happiness and health the love had never shown itself as it did now when she lay among the pillows, white and weak and suffering. Now each vied with all the others in the expression of kindly interest.

Then, never had she known before that she had so many friends outside her home. There had always been kindness and courtesy, but now there seemed hundreds who wanted to

show their love in some tender way. Still another new blessing that opened to her in her sickness was her Bible. She had always been a Bible reader, and the book had meant much to her in the bright, sunny days of life. But now she found precious love-thoughts, shining like diamonds, in words which had meant but little to her before. Nor was that all; she found revealings of the love of God which she had never experienced in her days of strength. The friendship of Christ never before had seemed so close and real as it now became. Thus the providence of God which had brought her into a darkened sick-room, had brought her also to a new unfolding of Divine goodness, to which she could not have come had not the illness been experienced.

So it is continually in life. The things we dread—the losses, the sorrows, the adversities—bring us to new goodness and blessing, which we should have missed if the painful trial had not come. Close beside the bitter fountain of Marah grew the tree that sweetened the waters. Hard by every sorrow waits the comfort needed

to alleviate it. Every loss has wrapped up in it some compensating gain. It is in human weakness that God's strength is made perfect.

We may set it down as a principle, a law, of Christ's kingdom, which has no exceptions that for every new condition or experience in any Christian life, there is a special reserve of Divine goodness, whose supply will adequately meet all the needs of the hour. We need never fear, therefore, that we shall be led to any place in which we cannot have grace to live sweetly and faithfully. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," is the unfailing Divine promise. But the grace is hidden in the need, and cannot be gotten in advance. The grace for sorrow cannot be given when we are in joy. The grace for dying we cannot get when we are in the midst of life's duties. And surely that is not the help we need then, but, rather, wisdom and strength to live nobly, lovingly, truly. Then when we approach death we shall be sustained and led through the valley into life.

CHAPTER XIII

GETTING THE JOY OF CHRIST

"Take Joy home,
And make a place in thy great heart for her,
And give her time to grow, and cherish her!
Then will she come and often sing to thee
When thou art working in the furrows! ay,
Or weeding in the sacred hours of dawn.
It is a comely fashion to be glad—
Joy is the grace we say to God."

JEAN INGELOW.

THE ideal life is one of joy. The face ought to be shining—shining even in darkness. People say this is a sad world. Yes, for those who have eyes only for shadows. What we see is the imaging on the life around us of the colours of our own inner life. He who has the bird in his eye sees the bird in the bush. He who has songs in his heart hears songs wherever he goes. This is a sad world for the sad man. Darkness within finds only darkness

without. But if one carries a lantern when he goes out at night, one finds light wherever he goes. If one's face shines with an inner joy, one finds joy even in the deep night of sorrow.

Christ said a great deal about desiring joy in His disciples. He put it both in sermon and in prayer. He said He had spoken to them certain things in order that they might have His joy in them. It is clear that joy was His ideal for Christian life.

It is remarkable, too, that most of His words about joy were spoken the night before He died. This suggests that He meant His followers to have this joy, not only in their happy days, but when they were in sadness. It is evident, also, that it is not earthly gladness that He desires His friends to have, but a joy that dwells deep in the heart—too deep for any earthly pain or sorrow to touch.

Surely here is a secret worth learning. There are a thousand things in this world that tend to disturb or destroy human happiness. If there is a way to live beyond the reach of these

things, to live a life calm, serene, rejoicing, victorious, songful, in the midst of sorrow, loss, struggle, pain, and wrong, we ought to know it.

It is certain that we cannot get this joy by finding a place where the world's cares and hurts cannot reach us. There is no such place on this earth. No walls can shut out pain and trial. Christ did not ask that His disciples should be taken out of the world. They must live, as He did, in ordinary human conditions. The wind blows no more softly for you because you are God's child. Christ does not give us His joy by sheltering us from the things that might disturb the joy.

Nor does He give it by so changing our nature that we shall not feel the griefs and pains of life. To do this He would have to rob our hearts of the very qualities in them that are noblest and divinest. Power to enjoy and to be happy would also be destroyed with the power to suffer; for our joys and pains grow on the same stalk. Rack, stocks, and prison-chains hurt the disciples no less because they had the love of Christ in them.

We must get Christ's joy as He got it. One secret was His unbroken consciousness of His Father's love. When men hated Him, when the world assaulted Him, He fled to His Father, and found a refuge into which none could follow Him, whose calm peace none could disturb. We, too, must keep ourselves in the love of God if we would find this joy.

Absolute devotion to the Divine will was another of the secrets of Christ's joy. He never did His own will. In this way only can we find joy. "True, pure joy," says Amiel, "consists in the union of the individual will with the Divine will, and in the faith that this supreme will is directed by love."

Another secret of the joy of Christ was in His service and sacrifice of love. The angels see human joy on earth, not where men seek for happiness of their own, not where they are living to find their own good and pleasure, but where they are toiling and denying themselves to give happiness to others. Christ's whole life was devoted to ministry for others, and every service of love yielded Him joy. His

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death, too, was the voluntary giving of Himself for others. There is a beautiful legend which gives us a glimpse of the joy which Christ found even in going to His cross. Father Ryan gives it thus :

“He walked beside the sea: He took His sandals off
 To bathe His weary feet in the pure, cool wave—
 For He had walked across the desert sands
 All day long—and as He bathed His feet
 He murmured to Himself, ‘Three years! three years!
 And then, poor feet, the cruel nails will come
 And make you bleed; but that blood will lave
 All weary feet on all their thorny ways.’”

The deepest joy of Christ's life must have been in His dying, for this was His greatest sacrifice and service. We get a glimmering of this experience in the word which says that “for the joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame”; and we have its foreshadowing in the prophetic assurance that He should see of the travail of His soul, and should be satisfied. We can get this joy of Christ only as we enter into His life of self-giving love. Selfishness yields no true glad-

ness. Serving starts songs in the heart. If we would have the joy of Christ, we must enter into the spirit of the life of Christ. He was in this world to bless and save it. We can share His joy only as we share His love for the world, and live to bless and help to save it.

Another secret of the joy of Christ was in His always keeping His face toward the light. His look was ever upward. His eye was ever turned toward His Father and toward heaven. He saw only brightness. Many Christians need to learn this lesson. They look too much at the darkness of the world. They think of their sorrows, not of their joys. They let fear drive out courage and hope. If we would have Christ's joy, we must train ourselves persistently—it is matter of training and habit largely—to look toward the light. There are flowers that keep their faces always turned toward the sun. That is the way we should learn to live. If we look ever toward the light, the light will enter into us and fill us with its own radiance.

In another of our Lord's words He tells us that Christian joy is transformed sorrow. He said to His disciples, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." He did not tell them that their sorrow should be taken away and joy given in its place, but that the sorrow itself should be turned into joy. When there has been a bereavement, He does not comfort by giving back the loved one. When there has been a disappointment, He does not undo it, and put into the life the dear thing that was wanted so much. The trouble is not removed, but it becomes a joy. This was fulfilled literally in respect to the cross, whose utter blackness became, later, the most glorious light the world has ever seen.

The same transformation takes place in every sorrow of Christian faith; it is turned into joy. In the depths of every dark thundercloud there is a rainbow hidden, which will break forth when the sun smites upon the cloud. And there is no trouble that comes to any Christian which has not, lying concealed within its folds, a Divine blessing of joy, which

will be revealed when the love of Christ shines upon it. You bow low in sorrow when death has touched a loved one of yours and the circle is broken. The loss seems irreparable. The grief appears too deep ever to receive comfort. But the Comforter comes, the consolations of Divine love are given, and the sorrow is turned into joy. The sense of loss is not taken away. The friend is not given back. The keenness of the grief is not softened. But the love of Christ is revealed. The truth of immortal blessedness becomes a window through which faith's eye sees into the heavenly glory, beholding, not death, but radiant life. The will of God, that seemed to crush like a falling avalanche the heart's frail joys, appears now the very hand of love, blessing, and doing good. The sorrow becomes deep joy.

In every life that has passed through such experiences and has kept its faith, the sweetest, richest joys are always transformed sorrows. The best things in any life are not things born of summer days, the things that come without cost or effort. One writes :

"Joys that cost nothing give us little pleasure ;
We value most the things most hardly won.
Men that delve deep to find earth's hidden treasure
Would pass it by if open to the sun."

The things we prize most are not those we have gathered, as one plucks flowers on a summer hillside, from the gardens of ease and worldly pleasure. They are things that have become ours through pain, struggle, self-denial, and tears. The lessons learned with greatest difficulty are the ones that are most to us in value and profit. Out of the hardest experiences of struggle and sacrifice we get the qualities that are the brightest ornaments of our character, and the noblest elements of our strength. The lenses through which now we see deepest into heaven once were salt tears. The treasures we hold now with firmest clasp once seemed marred things, unsightly, unlovely—things we shrank from receiving. The points in our past which now appear to have been fullest of outcome of good for our life are those which at the time seemed God's strange ways with us. Christian joy is transformed sorrow.

Another thing about this joy that Christ gives is that it cannot be taken away from us. Not dependent on earthly conditions, earthly accidents cannot reach it. Very much of our happiness others can take from us. They may rob us of our property. They may smite us with bodily wounding. We may lose out of our own life the things we love, the things which give us comfort and pleasure. But if we are believers in Christ, we have an inner gladness which no one can touch.

We can conceive of a strong fortress, in time of war, all of whose outer approaches may be assailed and despoiled, but within whose walls and gates there is a place of security which no enemy can enter, which no desolating hand of war can touch. There, if you were to pass within, you would find a quiet home, with music and pictures, with garden and flowers, with love and peace. Like this is the true Christian life. It has its unassailable fortress. Without in the world there are troubles and antagonisms, and the outer gladness may all be swept away; but, within there is a holy place

of peace which nothing can invade. How that man is to be pitied who has no joy that others cannot take away, whose whole life, to its innermost stronghold, is open to the tread of alien feet! It is dreadful to have no joys of which the world cannot rob us, to have all our happiness, the deepest and most sacred, within the reach of human or earthly despoiling. Yet there are many people of whom this is true. They have no inner sanctuary of life which is beyond the reach of intrusion, which no foot can invade, which no hand can desecrate. But if we are the friends of Christ, our hearts' joy should be inviolable. Our property, our loved ones, our health, may be taken away, and all earthly sources of happiness despoiled; but deep within, untouched and untouchable, the joy of Christ should still and ever abide.

This is the ideal Christian life. It is possible to every one—the weakest, the most exposed, the most sorely troubled,—possible, but possible only in Christ. There is no self-sufficiency in us which will give it to us. The dream

of self-culture may be most radiant, but it is only a dream ; it never can be realised. All that self alone can build up may be destroyed. The fairy palace of self-sufficiency which one may pile up can be nothing more than a house built upon the sand, which the floods will sweep away. But when we have Christ in our heart, we have a life which no one can touch, whose joys live on, sweet, calm, and serene, amid all earth's strifes and trials.

This is the life every one should seek to live. We should not carry our joy where every earthly experience can destroy it, but only where it will be safe from whatsoever might quench it. It is impossible to estimate the power for good, in this sad, struggling life, of a bright, glad, shining face.

**"Of all the lights you carry in your face,
Joy shines farthest out to sea."**

One of the best things any of us can do for this world is to show it ever a victorious life of joy, a face that shines even through tears, a

beauty of the Lord which glows with radiance even in the night. That is the life the Master wants every follower of His to live ; and we can live it, too, if our life is truly hid with Christ in God.

April 1928

CHAPTER XIV

OUR UNANSWERED PRAYERS

" O tired heart !

God knows,

Not you nor I,

Who reach our hands for gifts

That wise hands must deny.

We blunder where we fain would do our best,
Until a-weary, then we cry, ' Do Thou the rest !

And in His hands the tangled thread we place
Of our poor, blind weaving, with a shamèd face.

All trust of ours He sacredly will keep,

So, tired heart, God knows ; go thou to work or sleep."

THERE are times when God seems to be silent to us. To our earnest supplications He answers not a word. We are told to ask, and we shall receive—to seek, and we shall find—to knock, and it shall be opened unto us. Yet there come times when we ask imploringly, and seem not to receive ; when, though we seek with intense eagerness, we seem not to find ; when we knock until our hands are bruised and bleeding,

and there seems to be no opening of the door. Sometimes the heavens seem to be brass above as we ask, "Is there anywhere an ear to hear our pleadings? Is there anywhere a heart to feel sympathy with us in our need?"

Nothing is so awful as this silence of God—to feel that communication with Him is cut off. It is a pathetic prayer in which a psalm-writer pleads: "Be not silent to me, lest I become like them that go down into the pit." Anything from God is better than that He be silent to us. It would be a sad, dreary, lonely world if the atheist's creed were true—that there is no God, that there is no ear to hear our prayer, that no voice of answering help or love or comfort ever comes out of the heaven for us.

Are prayers ever unanswered? There are many prayers which are answered, although we do not know it and still think them unanswered. The answer is not recognised when it comes. This is true of our common mercies and favours. We pray every morning, "Give us this day our daily bread," and then we never think of our three meals each day as being answers to prayer.

We ask God for health, for raiment, for the things we need, for prosperity in business, for friends: all these things come to us in continuity, without break. But do we remember that we prayed for them, and that they come from God as answers to our requests?

The same is true of many of the spiritual blessings which we seek. We ask for holiness. It does not seem to us that we are advancing in holiness, but all the while our spirit is imperceptibly and unconsciously receiving more of the mind and spirit of Christ, and we are being changed into His image. We expect the answer in a marked way, while it comes silently, as the dew comes upon the drooping flowers and withering leaves. But, like the flowers and the leaves, our soul is refreshed and our life is renewed.

We put our cares into God's hands in prayer, and they do not seem to become less. We think there has been no answer to our prayers. But all the while an unseen hand has been quietly shaping, adjusting, and disentangling the complex affairs in our life that made us anxious.

We are not conscious of it, but our prayers have been receiving continual answer in peace and blessing.

We find ourselves in the midst of circumstances which appear adverse to our happiness and good. We seem about to be crushed by sorrows, by disappointments, by trials, or by antagonisms. We pray to be saved from these distressful conditions. No answer seems to come. The shadow deepens; the blow falls. We sit in the darkness and say that God did not answer our prayers. We are unaware of the blessing that really came to us in the time of our pain. The cup was not taken away, but we were secretly strengthened, so that we were able to drink it.

We are very ignorant. We know not how to pray as we ought. The thing we ask for is not just what we need, although we think it is. The thing we really need comes in place of what we thought we needed. The prayer seems to be unanswered, while in fact it is answered in a far better way than if what we sought had come instead. We think it is more of God's gifts we

need; these do not come, but God Himself comes into our life in new fulness, imparting to us more of His love and grace. The Giver is better than His best gifts.

Thus there is a large field of praying in which answers come, but come unaware, unrecognised. We have been blessed, although we know it not. We did not know the blessing when it was given to us. We did not understand that the good things we were receiving so plentifully were answers to our prayers. We thought God was not heeding our requests, when really He was giving us abundant answer every day.

But there are other prayers that really are not answered. God is silent to us when we ask. Yet there is a reason for His silence—it is better we should not have the things we want and plead for. For example, we ask God to lift away our burdens. But to do this would rob us of blessing which can come to us only through the bearing of the burden, and our Father loves us too well to give us present ease at the cost of future and eternal good. There are mistaken notions current about the way God promises to

help us. People think that whenever they have a little trouble or a bit of hard path to go over, a load to carry, a sorrow to meet, or a trial of any kind, all they have to do is to call upon God, and He will at once deliver them, take away the sorrow that threatens, free them from the trial. They think that is what God promises. They imagine that when anything goes a little wrong with them, all they have to do is to pray, and God will set it right. But this is not the manner of God's love. His purpose concerning us is not to make things easy for us, but to make something of us.

So when we pray to God to save us from all care, to take the struggles out of our life, to make the paths mossy, to lift away all loads, He simply will not do it. It would be most unloving in Him to do so. Prayers of this kind, therefore, go unanswered. We must carry the burden ourselves. God wants us to learn life's lessons, and to do this we must be left to work out the problems for ourselves. There are rich blessings that can be gotten only in sorrow. It would be a short-sighted love, indeed, that would heed our

cries and spare us from the sorrow because we cried for this, thus depriving us of the wonderful blessings which can be gotten only in the sorrow.

A child may indolently shrink from the study, the regular hours, the routine, the drudgery, and the discipline of the school, begging the parent to let him stay home from school and have an easy time; but what would you think of the father who should weakly and softly grant the child's request, releasing him from the tasks which irk him so? Nothing more unkind could be done. The result would be the dwarfing of the child's life for all the future. Is God less wisely kind than our human fathers? He will not answer prayers which ask that we may be freed from duty or from work, since it is by these very things we grow. The only true answer in such prayers is the non-granting of what we ask.

Then there are also selfish prayers that are unanswered. Human lives are tied up together. It is not enough that any one of us shall think only of himself and his own things. Thoughts

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of others must modify all our life. It is possible to overlook this in our prayers, and to press our own interests and desires to the harming of others. God's eye takes in all His children, and He plans for the truest and best good of each one of them. Our selfish prayers which would work to the injury of others He will not answer. This limitation applies especially to prayers for earthly things. We must not pray selfishly even for prosperity in business. We must not ask for our own comfort and ease without qualification. Love must come into our praying as well as our living. Or if we forget love's law, and think only of ourselves in our asking, God will not grant us our desires. He thinks of all His children, and will not do injury or harm to one to gratify another.

These are examples of prayers that are not answered. They are not according to God's will. They are for things that would not prove blessings to us if we were to receive them.

There is yet another class of prayers which appear to be unanswered, but whose answer is

only delayed for wise reasons. Ofttimes we are not able at the time to receive the things we ask for. A child in one of the lower grades in a school may go to a teacher of higher studies and ask to be taught this or that branch. The teacher may be willing to impart to the pupil the knowledge of the higher study, but the pupil cannot receive the knowledge until he has gone through certain other studies to prepare him for it. There are spiritual qualities for which we may pray earnestly, but which can be received only after certain discipline. A ripened character cannot be gotten by a young Christian merely in answer to prayer; it can be gotten only through long experience.

Or it may be that the things we pray for cannot be given to us until they have been prepared for us. Suppose you were to plant a young fruit tree, and were to begin to pray for fruit from its branches: could your prayer be answered at once? It is thus with many things we ask for—they must be grown before they can be given to us. God delays to answer that He may give us in the end better things than

could have been given at the beginning. He seems silent to us when we plead ; but it is not the silence of indifference, nor the silence of refusal, but the silence of love, that assents to our request and sets about preparing for us the blessing we crave. We need only patience to wait our Father's time.

Here it is that oftentimes we fail. We cannot wait for God. We think He is indifferent to us because He does not instantly give us what we crave. We fret and vex ourselves over the unanswering of the very prayers which God is really answering as speedily as the blessings can be made ready for us, or we can be made ready to receive them. We should teach ourselves to trust our Father in all that concerns our prayers—what He shall give, what He shall withhold, and the time and the manner of His giving.

These are suggestions of what seem unanswered prayers. They may have been answered in ways in which we did not recognise our requests. They may be, indeed, unanswered because to answer them would have been un-

kindness to us, or would have wrought hurt to others. Or the answers may have been delayed until we are made ready to receive them, or while God is preparing them for us.

Jan 30 - 1926

CHAPTER XV

FOR THE PEOPLE WHO FAIL

"God sets some souls in shade, alone;
They have no daylight of their own—
Only in lives of happier ones
They see the shine of distant suns.

"God knows. Content thee with thy night.
Thy greater heaven hath grander light.
To-day is close. The hours are small;
Thou sit'st afar, and hast them all.

"Lose the best joy—that doth but blind;
Reach forth a larger bliss to find.
To-day is brief; the inclusive spheres
Rain raptures of a thousand years."

IT is quite time some strong words should be spoken for the people who fail. There are enough to sing the praises of those who succeed. When a man is valiant, and overcomes in the battle, and stands a victor at the close of the strife, there are enough to shout the huzzas and to twine the laurel for his brow. When a man

prospers in business, rising to wealth and influence, living in splendour, there are enough to do homage to his achievements. When one has won honour in any calling, attaining eminence and distinction, as in art or in a profession, there is no lack of voices to speak commendation. Books are written, telling the stories of heroes who won great victories on land or sea. Poets weave their verses into garlands of honour for those who conquer in the world's battles. We have many volumes filled with the records of men who became famous, and women who became famous, rising from obscurity to greatness.

All this is well. But who tells the story of those who fail? Who sings the praises of him who goes down in the fight? Who tells of the heroism of him who is defeated in the battle, and falls wounded and overwhelmed? When the struggle is over and the victors come out of the smoke and carnage in triumph, there is a jubilant shout to greet them; but who lifts up the cheer for the men who fell and died on the field? Yet were they any less brave than those who came unwounded from the strife?

Did the honour of the victory belong any less to them than to those who lived to hear the shout of conquest ?

In all departments of life there are a few who seem to succeed, while the many seem to fail. Have all those who sink down, weary and broken-hearted ; who fall out of the ranks, unable to keep up in the swift march ; who do not get on in business ; whose hopes are disappointed, and who drop down in the dust of defeat,—have all those who seem to fail really failed ?

“While the voice of the world shouts its chorus—its
 pæan—for those who have won ;
 While the trumpet is sounding triumphant, and high
 to the breeze and the sun
 Glad banners are waving, hands clapping, and hurrying
 feet
 Thronging after the laurel-crowned victors, I stand on
 the field of defeat,
 In the shadow, with those who are fallen, and wounded
 and dying, and there
 Chant a requiem low, place my hand on their pain-
 knotted brow, breathe a prayer,
 Hold the hand that is helpless, and whisper: ‘They
 only the victory win
 Who have fought the good fight, and have vanquished
 the demon who tempts us within ;

**Who have held to their faith unswayed by the prize
that the world holds on high ;
Who have dared for a high cause to suffer, resist,
fight, if need be to die."**

When a great building is to be erected, deep excavations are made and piles of stones are laid down in the darkness, only to be covered up and hidden out of sight by the imposing superstructure which rises high into the air. This foundation work receives no praise. It is not even seen by any human eye. It appears in a sense to be wasted work. Yet we know that without it there could be no massive building towering in majestic proportions in the air. So many men's lives seem to be failures, while in reality they have been built into the foundations of great temples. Their work is covered up and hidden out of sight, and makes no show before the world ; but without it those who came after them could never have achieved the success which makes their names bright.

For a whole generation men are experimenting along some line—for example, in electricity. Some of them almost succeed. They seem to

be on the very edge of achieving what they are seeking. But success persistently and narrowly eludes them, and they die at last, broken-hearted over their failure. Then a new man arises, and taking the results of their experiments as a starting-point, he is successful, and all the world rings with his praises. Yet he could never have brought the invention to a successful issue but for the long, patient experimenting of those who went before him, toiling, sacrificing—failing. Nearly every great discovery or invention that has proved a boon to the world had a long history of such effort and failure behind its final success. Who will say that the men who wrought thus so unselfishly in obscurity, and without result or reward, really failed? They did their part in preparing the way. Their work was essential in its place. Should they not share the songs of victory which the world sings for the man who at last brings the invention to triumphant completion?

Recently a man, prospecting in the mining regions of Arizona, found a remarkable natural bridge. It spans a deep cañon, forty-five feet

in width. The bridge is made by a great agatised tree that lies across the gorge. Scientific men say that many ages since this tree was prostrated by some terrific storm and fell across the cañon. By the effects of the water and of time it has passed through many stages of mineralisation, and is now a wonderful tree of solid agate. And there it lies, making an agate bridge over which men may pass from side to side. This tree seemed to be a failure when, that day in its prime, it was broken off by the storm and hurled to the ground. But, instead of being a failure, to what nobler use could it have been put than thus to become a bridge of agate, to stand for ages, and on which countless human feet may walk across the chasm?

This fallen tree is an illustration of countless human lives which have fallen and seem to fail, but which in time have proved to be bridges over which others can walk to honour, success, and triumph. We are all daily passing over bridges built of the toils, sacrifices, and failures of those who have gone before us. The luxury,

ease, and comfort we now enjoy cost other men tears, pain, and loss. We cross continually to our blessings and privileges, our promised lands, our joys, on the bridges built for us by those who failed.

"And I say again, Count you the cost
Of this bridge? To what is it nalled?
What are its bulwarks piled high—these
You cross to the city of ease?
Man, I tell you 'tis built on the failed—
The fighters who lost.

Dryshod reach your promised land now
On their failure—on those the world railed—
They the stuff of whom heroes are—
Who saw its light gleam from valleys far,
And fought for it—died for it—failed—
No failure, I vow."

Christ Himself is the greatest example of this truth. His life was a failure as seen on the world-side. At three-and-thirty it was all over, the brightest light that ever shone on the earth quenched in the darkness of the cross. But now it is a bridge of agate, over which millions are passing from sin to holiness, from sorrow to joy, from death to life, from earth to

heaven. Christ said, "I am the way. . . . No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." So His failure became the saving of the world. It built the bridge over the chasm between earth and heaven, on which all who are saved pass over. We live because He died.

So in smaller measure it is with thousands of human lives. They fail. They sink down in the dust and are forgotten. Their names are lost in the indistinguishable multitude. No fame, no remembrance, is theirs. But without them the world would have missed a portion of its blessing, and other lives, honoured now, would have missed their honour. Many a child is living to-day in bright happiness, prosperous, successful, enjoying distinction, because his parents toiled, sacrificed, and—failed. None of us know what we owe to the past, to those who have gone before us, to the lives that sank down in unmarked obscurity. They laboured, and we are entered into their labours.

It is doubtful if any good man can make the most possible of his life in a worldly pursuit and yet be a loyal Christian. He may have

brilliant powers, all the qualities that lead to success. If he were to devote all his energies without reserve to his chosen business, he could outstrip all his competitors and win the highest place. But he is a Christian, and a Christian cannot live for this world's ambition alone, though he do it honestly and honourably, and though the ambition be altogether worthy and he be altogether faithful to his Master. He must serve his fellow-men as he passes through life. He must be as Christ to the weary and stumbling ones. He must turn aside oftentimes, like the good Samaritan in his journey, to help those who are in need, whose cries break upon his ear. He may not press on in his ambition heedless of love's duties.

Then while he thus stays his feet to do service to those who need sympathy and help, his competitors in the race, not troubling themselves to heed the calls of distress about them, thinking only of winning the goal, gain upon him and pass him by. Men say he is foolish thus to permit himself to fail through his heart's tenderness and sympathy. But that is not

failure which comes through pausing to comfort and bless others. Rather it is such ministries as these that alone redeem an earthly life from utter failure. The man who steels his heart against all appeals for pity and help, and goes remorselessly on to the goal of his ambition, without turning aside at the calls of need, finds no blessing in that which he achieves. But he who seeks first the kingdom of God, stopping in his busiest days to do good, and turning aside from his most ardent pursuits to minister to human want or sorrow, though his hands hold less of this world at the end, will be rich in the rewards of love's service.

Not every good man succeeds in worldly affairs. Not every true effort that is made has apparent success. Sometimes it is by failure that a man can do his best. Success in the undertaking can come only after many have sunk down without attaining. Nearly always the first prophets and heralds of a new reform must perish in defeat, thus preparing the way, building the bridge over the chasm for those who come after them, to carry the reform to

success. But surely it is just as glorious to do one's part in the essential preparatory stages, and then fall without sharing the victory, as it is to have one's part at the last among the victors.

We may set it down as an unalterable truth, however, that there can be no real failure when one is faithful to God and to duty. Sin is always a failure. The apparent success that men build up through unrighteousness is only a gilded picture. It has no foundation, no substance. It is an illusion. It will vanish in the presence of the Divine judgment, as the morning mists vanish in the noon-day sun. But whatever men build up in truth and right is real as God Himself. All truth is part of God, and is imperishable. No failure is possible when we work with God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Nothing may seem to come from the toil, the sacrifice, and the outpouring of precious life; but sometime, somehow, somewhere, there will be a harvest from every sowing. Not one grain of the holy seed of love can ever be lost. The life may sink

away and seem to have perished, but from its grave will come an influence which will be a blessing in the world. We need not care what we do, nor where we go, nor what comes of our work, if only we do God's will.

It is sweet to see the blessing come from our serving, to gather the fruit from our sowing, to witness the success of our work ; but whether we have this privilege or not, it is a comfort to know that nothing done in truth for God can ever fail, and that no service rendered in Christ's name can be in vain.

**"I know that love never is wasted,
Nor truth, nor the breath of a prayer,
And the thought that goes forth as a blessing
Must live as a joy in the air."**

CHAPTER XVI

THE OUTER AND INNER LIFE

"I wait
Till from my veiled brows shall fall
This being's thrall,
Which keeps me now from knowing all
In stormless mornings yet to be
I'll pluck from Life's full-fruited tree
The joys to-day denied to me."

IN every man there are two men. There is an outer man, that people can see; there is an inner man, that no human eye can see. The outer man may be hurt, wounded, marred, even destroyed, while the inner man remains untouched, unharmed, immortal. St. Paul puts it thus: "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." He is referring to his own sufferings as a Christian. His body was hurt by scourgings, by stonings, by exposure. It was worn by toil

and by endurance of hunger, of hardship. But these things which scarred his body, leaving marks upon it, making it prematurely old, had no effect on the inner man. His real life was not wounded by persecution. It even grew in strength and beauty as the outer man decayed.

There is a quenchless life within our decaying life. The beating heart, the breathing lungs, the wonderful mechanism of the body, do not make up the real life. There is something in us which thinks, feels, imagines, wills, chooses, and loves. The poet lies dead. His hand will write no more. But it was not the poet's body that gave to the world the wonderful thoughts which have so wrought themselves into the world's life. The hand now folded shaped the lines, but the marvellous power which inspired the thoughts in the lines was not in the hand. The hand will soon moulder in the dust, but the poet is immortal. The outward man has perished, but the inner life is beyond the reach of decay, safe in its immortality.

• The inner spiritual life of a Christian is not subject to the changes that come upon his outer

life. The body suffers; but if one is living in fellowship with Christ, one's spiritual life is untouched by physical sufferings. The normal Christian life is one of constant, unchecked, uninterrupted progress. Unkindly conditions do not stunt it. Misfortunes do not mar it.

The inner growth of a Christian should be continuous. The renewal is said to be "day by day." No day should be without its line. We should count that day lost which records no victory over some fault or secret sin; no new gain in self-discipline, in the culture of the spirit; no enlargement of the power of serving; no added feature of likeness to the Master. "The inward man is renewed day by day."

This does not mean that all days are alike in their gain. There are special dates in every spiritual history which are memorable for ever for their special advance—days when decisive battles are fought, when faults are discovered and conquered, when new visions of Christ are granted, when the heart receives a new accession of Divine life, when one is led into a new field of service, when a new friend comes into the

life, when one takes new responsibilities or enters into new relations.

Then there are days in every life when there would seem to be no spiritual advancement. We all have our discouraging days. We have days that are stained by folly, marred by mistakes, blurred and blotted by sin, and these seem to be lost days. There are days when we appear to fail in duty or in self-control, or in struggle with temptation. The inner man would appear to be crippled and hurt in such experiences as these, and the days would seem to be idle and useless, without profit or progress. We come to the evening with sad confessions of failure, and with painful regret and disheartenment. But even such times as these are really gaining times, if we are living near the heart of Christ. We are at least learning our own weakness and frailty, the folly of self-dependence, the feebleness of our own best resolves. Ofttimes our defeats prove our greatest blessings. No doubt many of our richest gains are made on the very days on which we weep most sorely over our mistakes and failures.

Then there are days that are broken by sorrow. The lights go out in our sky and leave us in darkness. The friends of many years are taken away from us. Prosperity is turned to adversity. Misfortune touches our interests. Our circumstances become painful. Is not the growth of the inner life interrupted by such experiences? Not if we are truly abiding in Christ and receiving from Him the grace He has to give. No doubt many of the best, the divinest blessings of spiritual life come to us on just such days. The photographer takes his sensitive plate into a dark place to develop his picture. Sunlight would mar it. God often draws the curtain upon us, and in the darkness brings out some rare beauty in our life, some delicate feature of His own loveliness.

The teaching of the Scriptures is that, whatever the experience of the outer life, the growth and enrichment of the inner life should never be interrupted or hindered. This is the Divine purpose for us. Provision is made for this continuous work in the grace of God. We need never be harmed by anything that breaks into

our life. Indeed, there is nothing that touches us in any way that may not be made to minister good to us. Woundings of the outer life may become pearls in the soul. Losses of earthly things may become gains in the spiritual life. Sickness of the body may result in new health and vigour in the inner man. It is the privilege and the duty of the child of God to move upward and forward day by day, whatever the day's experience may be.

This is the meaning of the promises of peace which are found so frequently in the Bible. We have no assurance of a life without strife, trial, trouble, earthly pain and loss; but we are assured that we may have unbroken peace within while the outer life is thus beset. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "In Me ye shall have peace."

The blessing of such a life in this world is incalculable. It becomes a place of strength, of shelter, of comfort, of hope, to many other lives. Susan Coolidge writes of one whose heart is kindest, and whose life is a perpetual benediction :

"O heart beloved, O kindest heart!
 Balming like summer and like sun
 The sting of tears, the ache of sorrow,
 The shy, cold hurts which sting and smart,
 The frets and cares which underrun
 The dull day and the dreaded morrow—
 How when thou comest all turns fair!
 Hard things seen possible to bear,
 Dark things less dark, if thou art there,
 "Thou keepest a climate of thine own
 'Mid earth's wild weather and grey skies,
 A soft, still air for human healing,
 A genial, all-embracing zone
 Where frosts smite not, nor winds arise;
 And past the tempest-storm of feeling
 Each grieved and weak and weary thing,
 Each bird with numbed and frozen wing,
 May sink to rest and learn to sing."

Then she writes, giving the secret of this wondrous power of helpfulness :

"Like some cathedral stone begirt,
 Which keeps through change of cold and heat
 Still temperature and equal weather,
 Thy sweetness stands, untouched, unhurt,
 By any mortal storms that beat,
 Calm, helpful, undisturbed for ever.
 Dear heart, to which we all repair,
 To bask in sunshine and sweet air,
 God bless thee ever, everywhere."

We can be truest and best blessings to others only when we live victoriously ourselves. We owe it therefore to the needy, sorrowing, tempted world about us, to keep our inner life calm, quiet, and strong, restful and full of sweet love, in whatsoever outer turbulence or trial or opposition we must live. The only secret is to abide in Christ.

The lesson has a special application to sickness. Sickness is common. Not always does it prove a means of grace. There are some who are not spiritually benefited by it. Yet it is the duty and privilege of every Christian so to meet the experience of illness or invalidism as to grow ever in it into Christlier character. The secret is a living faith in Christ. Restlessness or distrust will mar the Divine work that Christ would do in the heart; but quiet submission to the will of God and peaceful waiting for Him will ensure continual renewal of the inner life even while the outer life is being consumed.

It is well, therefore, that those who are called to endure sickness should learn well how to

relate themselves to it, so as not to be harmed by it. Sickness is discouraging. It is not easy for one with life broken, unable longer to run the race with the swift, to keep his spirit glad, cheerful, and wholesome. It is hard not to be able to do the heroic things which the unquenched spirit longs to do. Life seems now to be useless. They appear lost days in which no worthy service can be done for Christ. Too often those who are called to invalidism lose out of their heart the hope, the enthusiasm, the zest of living, and become depressed, unhappy, sometimes almost despairing. But this is to fail in true and noble living. When we cannot change our conditions we must conquer them, through the help of Christ. If we are sick, we had better not fret nor chafe. Thereby we shall only make our illness worse, retarding our recovery, while at the same time we shall mar the work of grace on our inner life. The captive bird that sits on its perch and sings is wiser than the bird that flies against the wires and tries to get out, only bruising its wings in its unavailing efforts. The sick-room may be

made a holy of holies instead of a prison. Then it will be a place of blessing.

The lesson has its application, also, for those who are growing old. Old age ought to be the most beautiful period of a good life. Yet not always is it so. There are elements in the experience of old age which make it hard to keep the inner life ever in a state of renewal. The bodily powers are decaying. The senses are growing dull. It is lonely. There is in memory a record of empty cribs and vacant chairs, of sacred mounds in the cemetery. The work of life has dropped from the hands. It is not easy to keep the joy living in the heart in such experiences. Yet that is the problem of true Christian living. While the outward man decays the inward man should be renewed day by day. This is possible, too, as many Christian old people have proved. Keeping near the heart of Christ is again, as always, the secret. Faith gives a new meaning to life. It is seen no more in its relation to earth and what is gone, but in its relation to immortality and what is to come. The Christian old man's best

days are not behind him, but always before him. He is walking, not toward the end, but toward the beginning. The dissolving of the earthly tabernacle is a pledge that the house not made with hands is almost ready.

The lesson has its application also for death. That seems to be the utter destruction of the outer man. The body returns to the dust whence it came. What of the inner life? It only escapes from the walls and fetters which have confined it on the earth. It is as when one tears a bird's cage apart, and the bird, set free, flies away into the heavens. An old man, nearing his end, spoke of his bodily decay, the tokens of the approach of death, as the land-birds lighting on the shrouds, telling the weary mariner that he is nearing the haven. Death is not misfortune, it is not the breaking up of life; it is growth, development, the passing into a larger phase of life. We need death for life's completing.

**"Death is the crown of life;
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain;
Were death denied, to live would not be life;**

Were death denied, e'en fools would wish to die.
Death wounds to cure: we fall; we rise; we reign;
Spring from our fetters; hasten to the skies,
Where blooming Eden withers in our sight.
Death gives us more than was in Eden lost;
This king of terrors is the prince of peace.⁴¹

CHAPTER XVII

ON GROWING OLD SUCCESSFULLY

"Old—are we growing old?
Life blooms as we travel on
Up the hills, into fresh, lovely dawn;
We are children who do but begin
The sweetness of life to win.
Because heaven is in us, to bud and unfold,
We are younger for growing old!"

A GREAT deal of advice is given to young people. Sermons are preached to them. Books are written for them, filled with counsels. No doubt the young need wise advice, solemn preaching, and paternal counsel. The world has many dangers for youth. Besides, character is formed into permanence in the early days. When this period has been safely passed through, guardian angels begin to breathe more freely. Their solicitude relaxes.

But youth is not the only stage of life which has perils; each period has its own. A great

many men break down at mid-life. Many whose youth and early manhood gave brightest promise fail utterly in some crisis when at their very prime. Not all the wrecks of life occur in the early days. A majestic tree fell at its prime—fell on a calm evening, when there was scarcely a breath of air stirring. It had withstood a century of storms, and now was broken off by a zephyr. The secret was disclosed in its falling. A boy's hatchet had been struck into it when it was a tender sapling. The wound had been grown over and hidden away under exuberant life, but it had never healed. There at the heart of the tree it stayed, a spot of decay, ever eating out a little farther into the trunk, until at last the tree was eaten through, and fell of its own weight, when it seemed to be at its best. So many lives fall when they seem to be at their strongest, because some sin or fault of youth has left its wounding and its consequent weakness. For many years it is hidden, and life goes on in strength. At last, however, its sad work is done, and at its prime the man falls.

One might suppose, however, that good old

age, at least, is safe from moral danger. It has weathered the storms of many long years. It has passed through the experimental stages. The passions of youth have been brought under masterful control. Life is sobered, quiet, steady, strong, with ripened character, tried and secure principles, and with rich experience. So we congratulate the old man on having gotten well through life, where he can at last enjoy the blessings of restful years.

But really old age has perils of its own which are quite as grave in their way as those of youth. Sometimes it does not fulfil the prophecy and the promise of the earlier years. Some men who live nobly and richly until they have passed the meridian of their days, lose in the beauty and splendour of their character and in the sweetness of their spirit as they move toward the sunset.

Old age has its temptations and perils. It is hard to bear the honours of a good and worthy life and not be spoiled by them, as they gather about the head when the years multiply. Some old men grow vain when they hear their names

mentioned with honour, and when their good deeds are applauded. It is hard to keep the heart humble and the life simple and gentle, when one stands amid the successes, the achievements, the ripened fruits of many years of struggle, toil, and sacrifice, in the days of a prosperous old age. Some old men become self-conceited—quite too conscious of the good they have done, and the honour that gathers about their heads. They grow garrulous, especially about themselves and their own part in the achievements of the past. They like to tell the stories of the things they have done.

The ease and freedom from care which sometimes come as the fitting reward of a life of hardship, self-denial, struggle, and toil, do not always prove the most healthful conditions nor those in which the character appears at its best. Some men who were splendid in incessant action, when carrying heavy loads, meeting large responsibilities and enduring sore trials, are not nearly so noble when they have been compelled to lay down their burdens, drop their tasks out of their hands, and step out of the

crowding, surging ranks into the quiet ways of those whose great life-work is mainly finished. They chafe at standing still. Their peace is broken in the very days when it ought to be the calmest and sweetest.

They are unwilling to confess that they are growing old, and to yield their places of responsibility and care to younger men. Too often they make the mistake of overstaying their own greatest usefulness in positions which they have filled with fidelity and success in the past, but which with their waning powers they can no longer fill acceptably and well as heretofore. In this respect old age puts life to a severe test. It is the part of true wisdom in a man, as he advances in years, to recognise the fact that he can no longer continue to carry all the burdens that he bore in the days of his strength, nor do all the work that he did when he was in his life's prime.

Sometimes old age grows unhappy and discontented. We cannot wonder at this. It becomes lonely as one by one its sweet friendships and close companionships fall off in the

resistless desolation which death produces. The hands that have always been so busy are left well-nigh empty. It is not easy to keep sweet and gentle-spirited when a man must stand aside and see others take up and do the things he used to do himself, and when he must walk alone where in former years his life was blessed with tender human companionships. Broken health also comes in, oftentimes, as a burden of old age, which adds to the difficulty of the problem of beautiful living.

These are some of the reasons why old age is a truer and a sorer testing-time of character than youth or mid-life. New perils come with this period. Many men who live nobly and victoriously in the days of active struggle and hard toil fail in the days of quiet and ease. While busy and under pressure of duty they prove true and faithful, but they fail in leisure, when the pressure is withdrawn.

We should set ourselves the task, however, of living nobly and victoriously to the very close of life. We should make the whole day of life beautiful, to its last moments. The late after-

noon should be as lovely with its deep, serious blue and its holy, restful quiet, as the forenoon with its stir and freshness and its splendour and sunshine ; and the sunsetting should be as glorious with its amber and gold, as the sun-rising with its glow and radiance.

The old, and those who are growing old, should never feel for a moment that their work, even their best work, is done, when they can no longer march and keep step in the columns with youth and strong manhood. The work of the later and riper years is just as important as that of the earlier years. It is not the same work, but it is no less essential in the world. "Young men for action, old men for counsel," said the great philosopher. The life that one may live in the quieter time, when the rush and the strife are left behind, may be even more lovely, more Christlike, more helpful, than was the life of the more exciting, stirring time that is gone.

It may mean more in results, in real fruitage, though lacking in stir and noise. Here is a parable of a beautiful old age :

"Yon is the apple tree,
Joints all shrunk like an old man's knee,
Gaping trunk half eaten away,
Crumbling visibly day by day;
Branches dead or dying fast,
Topmost limb like a splintered mast;
Yet behold in the prime of May,
How it blooms in the sweet old way!

"Heart of it brave and warm,
Spite of many a wintry storm,
Throbbing still with the deep desire,
Burning still with the eager fire,
Striving still with the zeal and truth,
Of the gladsome morning days of youth;
Still to do and to be, forsooth,
Something worthy of Him whose care
Summer or winter failed it ne'er,—
This is motive for you and me,
When we grow old like the apple tree."

The pathway of the righteous is compared to the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. A good life ought to grow more and more beautiful every day. The task of sweet, useful living is no less a duty when one has gotten through the years of mid-life into the borders of old age than it was in the days of strength. A man should not slacken

his diligence, earnestness, faithfulness, prayerfulness, or his faith in Christ until he has come to the very gate of eternity.

One of the perils of old age is just at this point. A man feels that his work is done, his character is matured, his reputation is established, and he is tempted to grow careless, as if it could not now matter much what he does or what he leaves undone. This is an error which sometimes proves very costly. There have been old men who in their very last years, for lack of the accustomed wisdom or restraint, have marred the beauty which through all their life their hands had been diligently and painstakingly fashioning. Sometimes the fabric of a whole life-work is torn down in a few days or months of foolishness, when the watch is taken off the life and discipline is relaxed.

We are not done with life in this world until the hands have been folded on the breast in their final repose; therefore we should not slacken our diligence for an instant. We should make the last moments beautiful with trust and faith, and sweet patience, and quiet peace, and

earnest usefulness, dying beautifully. Robert Browning says in " Rabbi Ben Ezra " :

" Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made :
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, ' A whole I planned,'
Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all, nor be afraid."

How shall we live so that we shall be sure of a successful and beautiful old age? For one thing, all the life, from youth up, must be true and worthy. Old age is the harvest of all the years. It is the time when whatsoever we have sown we shall also reap. Wasted years, too, give a harvest—a harvest of regret and sorrow, of unhappy memories and remorseful self-accusings. We are building the house, all along the years, in which we must live when we grow old. The old man may change neighbours or change countries, but he cannot get away from himself.

To have a golden harvest, we must sow good seeds. To have sweet memories, we must live purely, unselfishly, thoughtfully, with reverence

for God and love for man. We must fill our hearts with the harmonies of love and truth along the years, if in the silence of old age we would listen to songs of gladness and peace.

The old should never let duties drop out of their hands. Duties may not be the same when years have brought feebleness, but every day to the close brings something for the hands to do. No old man has earned the right to be useless even for a day. The old should never cease to look forward for the best of life. The year we are now living we should always make better than any year that is past. It was an old man, with martyrdom imminent, who gave as his theory of life the forgetting of things that are past and the stretching forth to things that are before.

Such a life never grows old. Even at four-score it is "eighty years young," not eighty years old. It is a beautiful fancy that in heaven the oldest are the youngest, since all life is toward immortal youth. Why may it not be so of the good on earth? We need not grow old. We can keep our heart young—our feelings, affections, yearnings, and hopes young. Then

old age will indeed be the best of life—life's ripeness, life's time of coronation.

"It is a favourite speculation of mine," said Dr. Chalmers, "that if spared to sixty years of age, we then enter the seventh decade of human life, and that this if possible should be turned into the Sabbath of our earthly pilgrimage and spent sabbatically, as if on the shores of an eternal world, or, as it were, in the outer courts of the temple that is above, the tabernacle that is in heaven."

This is a beautiful thought, with a suggestion which must commend itself to many devout people drawing toward old age. It does not imply a decade of idleness, or of selfish ease, but such a use of the life in its ripeness and richness of experience as shall shed upon the world the benignant influence and the holiest benediction.

"Old—we are growing old :

Going on through a beautiful road,

Finding earth a more blessed abode ;

Nobler work by our hands to be wrought,

Freer paths for our hope and our thought ;

Because of the beauty the years unfold,

We are cheerfully growing old.

**"Old—we are growing old :
Going up where the sunshine is clear ;
Watching grander horizons appear
Out of clouds that enveloped our youth ;
Standing firm on the mountains of truth ;
Because of the glory the years unfold,
We are joyfully growing old.**

**"Old—we are growing old :
Going into the gardens of rest
That glow through the gold of the West,
Where the rose and the amaranth blend,
And each path is the way to a friend ;
Because of the peace that the years unfold,
We are thankfully growing old."**

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CHAPTER XVIII

LEARNING TO BE CONTENTED

"I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the world go right,
But only to discover and to do with cheerful heart
The work that God appoints."

SOME one has said that if men were to be saved by contentment, instead of by faith in Christ, most people would be lost. Yet contentment is a duty. It is also possible. There was one man at least who said, and said it very honestly, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content." His words have special value, too, when we remember in what circumstances they were written. They were dated in a prison when the writer was wearing a chain. It is easy enough to say such things in the summer days of prosperity, but to say them amid trials and adversities requires a real experience of victorious living.

But what did St. Paul mean when he said, "I am content"? He certainly did not mean that he was satisfied. Contentment is not an indolent giving up to circumstances. It does not come through the dying out of desire and aspiration in the heart. There is a condition of mind which some people suppose to be devout submission to God's will which is anything but Christlike. We are to make the most of our life. We are not to yield irresolutely and weakly to everything that opposes us. Ofttimes we are to resist and conquer what seem to be impossibilities. We are never to be satisfied with our attainments or our achievements, however fine they may be. Satisfaction is undivine; it is a mark of death, not of life. St. Paul never was satisfied. He lived to the very last day of his life looking forward, and not back—forgetting things behind and stretching forward to things yet before, eager to do more and achieve more. When he said he had learned to be content, he did not mean that he had ceased to aspire and strive.

The original word, scholars tell us, contains

a fine sense which does not come out in the English translation. It means "self-sufficing." St. Paul, as a Christian man, had in himself all that he needed to give him tranquillity and peace, and therefore he was not dependent upon any external circumstances. Wherever he went, there was in him a competence, a fountain of supply, a self-sufficing. This is the true secret of Christian contentment, wherever it is found. We cannot make our own circumstances; we cannot keep away from our life the sickness, the pain, the sorrow, the misfortunes; yet as Christians we are meant to live in any and all experiences in unbroken peace, in sweet restfulness of soul.

How may this unbroken content be obtained? St. Paul's description of his own life gives us a hint as to the way he reached it. He says, "I have *learned* to be content." It is no small comfort to us common people to get this from such a man. It tells us that even with him it was not always thus—that at first he probably chafed amid discomforts and had to "learn" to be contented in trial. It did not come

naturally to him, any more than it does to the rest of us, to have peace in the heart in the time of external strife.

Nor did this beautiful way of living come to him at once, as a Divine gift, when he became a Christian. He was not miraculously helped to acquire contentment. It was not a special power or grace granted to him as an apostle. He tells us plainly in his old age that he had "learned" it. This means that he was not always able to say, "I am content in any state." This was an attainment of his later years, and he reached it by struggle and by discipline, by learning in the school of Christ, by experience, just as all of us have to learn it, if we ever do, and as any of us may learn it, if we will.

Surely every one who desires to grow into spiritual beauty should seek to learn this lesson. Discontent is a miserable fault. It grieves God, for it springs from a want of faith in Him. It destroys one's own heart-peace: discontented people are always unhappy. It disfigures beauty of character. It sours the temper, ruffles the calm of sweet life, and tarnishes the loveli-

ness of the spirit. It even works out through the flesh, and spoils the beauty of the fairest face. To have a transfigured face, one must have heaven in one's heart. Just in proportion as the lesson is learned are the features brightened by the outshining of the indwelling peace. Beside all this, discontent casts shadows on the lives of others. One discontented person in a family often makes a whole household wretched. If not for our own sake, then, we ought at least for the sake of our friends to learn to be contented. We have no right to cast shadows on other lives by our miserable complainings and discontents.

But how can we learn contentment? One step toward it is patient submission to unavoidable ills and hardships. No earthly lot is perfect. No mortal ever yet in this world found a set of circumstances without some drawback. Sometimes, however, it lies in our power to remove the discomfort. Much of our hardship is of our own making. Much of it would require but a little energy on our own part to cure. We surely are very foolish if day after

day we live on amid ills and frets which we might change for comforts if we would. All removable troubles we ought therefore to remove. Too many people are indolent in resisting hard circumstances and conditions. (They give up too readily to what they miscall Divine providences.) Obstacles are not always meant to block our way ; oftentimes they are intended to inspire us to courage and effort, and thus to bring out our hidden strength. We must not be too quick in submitting to hardness, nor too limp in yielding to circumstances. Some of these things which we find in our way we are to lift out of our way.

But there are trials which we cannot change into pleasures, burdens which we cannot lay down, crosses which we must continue to carry, thorns in the flesh which must remain with their rankling pain. When we have such trials, why should we not sweetly accept them as part of God's best way with us? Discontent never made a rough path smoother, a heavy burden lighter, a bitter cup less bitter, a dark way brighter, a sorrow less sore. It only makes

matters worse. One who accepts with patience that which he cannot change has learned the secret of victorious living.

“Two men toiled side by side from sun to sun,
And both were poor ;
Both sat with children, when the day was done,
About their door.

“One saw the beautiful in crimson cloud
And shining moon ;
The other, with his head in sadness bowed,
Made night of noon.

“One loved each tree and flower and singing bird
On mount or plain ;
No music in the soul of one was stirred
By leaf or rain.

“One saw the good in every fellow-man,
And hoped the best ;
The other marvelled at his Master's plan,
And doubt confessed.

‘One, having heaven above and heaven below,
Was satisfied ;
The other, discontented, lived in woe,
And hopeless died.”

Another part of the lesson is that we moderate our desires. “Having food and raiment,” says

St. Paul again, "let us therefore be content." Very much of our discontent arises from envy of those who seem to be more favoured than ourselves. Many people lose most of the comfort out of their own lot in coveting the finer, more luxurious things some neighbour has. Yet if they knew the whole story of the life they envy for its greater prosperity, they probably would not exchange for it their own lowlier life with its homelier circumstances. Or if they could make the exchange, it is not likely they would find half so much real happiness in the other position as they had enjoyed in their own. Contentment does not dwell so often in palaces as in the homes of the humble. The tall peaks rise higher and are more conspicuous, but the winds smite them more fiercely than they do the quiet vales. And surely the lot in life that God makes for us is always the very best that could be made for us for the time. He knows better than we do what our true needs are. The real cause of our discontent is not in our circumstances; if it were, a change of circumstances might cure it. It is in ourselves, and wherever

we go we shall carry it with us. The only cure that will effect anything must be the curing of the fever of discontent in us.

Envious desires for other people's places ^{too} which seem finer than our own prevent our getting the best blessings and good out of our own. Trying to grasp the things that are beyond our reach, we leave unseen, unappreciated, untouched, and despised the many sweet bits of happiness that lie close about us. Some one says, "Stretching out his hand to catch the stars, man forgets the flowers at his feet, so beautiful, so fragrant, so multitudinous, and so various." A fine secret of contentment lies in finding and extracting all the pleasure we can get from the things we have, the common, every-day things, while we enter no mad, vain chase after impossible fancies. In whatever state we are we may therein find enough for our need.

If we would learn the lesson of contentment, we must also train ourselves to live for the higher things of life. One of the ancient wise men, having learned that a storm had destroyed his merchant ships, thus sweeping away all his for-

tune, said, "It is just as well, for now I can give up my mind more fully to study." He had other and higher sources of enjoyment than his merchandise, and felt the loss of his ships no more than manhood feels the loss of childhood's toys. He was but a heathen philosopher: we are Christians. He had only his studies to occupy his thought when his property was gone: we have all the blessed things of God's love. No earthly misfortune can touch the wealth a Christian holds in the Divine promises and hopes.

Just in the measure, therefore, in which we learn to live for spiritual and unseen things do we find contentment amid earth's trials and losses. If we would live to please God, to build up Christlike character in ourselves and to lay up treasure in heaven, we shall not depend for happiness on the way things go with us here, nor on the measure of temporal good we have. The lower desires are crowded out by the higher. We can do without childhood's toys when we have manhood's better possessions. We need this world less as we get more of God and heaven into our hearts.

There is a modern story of a merchant who was devoted to high purposes in life, who was determined to be a man free from bondage to the lower things. One day a ship of his that was coming home was delayed. He became anxious, and the next day was yet more troubled, and the third day still more. Then he came to himself, awaking to his true condition of bondage to earthly things, and said, "Is it possible that I have come to love money for itself, and not for its nobler uses?" Taking the value of the ship and its cargo, he gave it to charities, not because he wished to be rid of the money, but because only thus could he get the conquest over himself, holding his love of money under his feet. He was learning well one secret of contentment.

St. Paul knew this secret. He cheerfully gave up all that this world had for him. Money had no power over his mind. He knew how to live in plenty, but he did not fret when want came instead. He was content in any trial, because earth meant so little and Christ meant so much to him. He did not need the things he did not

have ; he was not made poor by the things ne lost ; he was not vexed by the sufferings he had to endure, because the sources of his life were in heaven, and could not be touched by earthly experiences of pain or loss. George MacDonald's words are very true : " In life troubles will come which look as if they would never pass away. The night and the storm look as if they would last for ever, but the calm and the morning cannot be stopped. The storm in its very nature is transient. The effort of Nature, as that of the human heart, ever is to return to repose, for God is peace."

" We bless Thee for Thy peace, O God,
 Deep as the soundless sea,
 Which falls like sunshine on the road
 Of those who trust in Thee :

" That peace which suffers and is strong,
 Trusts where it cannot see ;
 Deems not the trial way too long,
 But leaves the end with Thee."

These are the hints of the way we may learn
 In whatsoever state we are therein to be content.
 Surely the lesson is worth learning. | One year

of sweet content amid earth's troublous scenes is better than a whole lifetime of vexed, restless discontent. The lesson can be learned, too, by any one who is truly Christ's disciple ; for did not the Master say, "Peace I leave with you ; My peace I give unto you" ?

The artist painted life as a dark, storm-swept sea, covered with wrecks. Then out of the midst of the wild waves he made to rise a great rock, in a cleft of which, high up, amid herbage and flowers, he painted a dove sitting quietly on her nest. It is a picture of Christian peace in the midst of this world's strifes and storms. In the cleft of the Rock is the home of content.

CHAPTER XIX

REASONS FOR NOT WORRYING

"O heart of mine, we shouldn't
Worry so.
What we've missed of calm we couldn't
Have, you know.
What we've met of stormy pain
And of sorrow's driving rain,
We can better meet again
If it blow

"We have erred in that dark hour--
We have known.
When the tears fell with the shower
All alone,
Were not shine and shadow blent
As the gracious Master meant?
Let us temper our content
With His own."

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

GEORGE MACDONALD tells of a castle
in which lived an old man and his son.
Though they owned the castle, they were yet
very poor. They could scarcely get enough bread

to keep them from starving. Yet all the time there was great wealth, which, if they had known about it, would have supplied all their wants. Through long generations there had been concealed within the castle very valuable jewels, which had been placed there by some remote ancestor, so that if he or any of his descendants should be in need, there would be something in reserve.

For a long time the old man and his son suffered for want of food, not knowing of the hidden treasures. At last, however, they learned in some way of the jewels, and instantly their distress was ended. Yet all the years of their pinching poverty these treasures had lain there, ready to furnish comfort, if only they had known of them.

This story illustrates the case of many Christians. They are living in their Father's house, in which are concealed the rich treasures of Divine love. Yet many of God's children seem not to know of these treasures, and live in distress. There really never is any reason why a child of God should worry about any-

thing. We have this teaching in plainest words in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ gives a number of strong reasons against anxiety.

One of the reasons is that anxiety about food and raiment and the world's things is serving mammon, and we cannot serve mammon and serve God at the same time. It is trusting in money to provide for our wants instead of in God. When money fails, then we are in distress. George MacDonald says again, "How often do we look upon God as our last and feeblest resource! We go to Him because we have nowhere else to go." We feel safer when mammon's abundance fills the pantry and the wardrobe than when mammon threatens to fail and we have only God.

Another reason against worry is that God, having given us our life, is certainly able to provide for our life's needs. The life is more than its provision. What a strange, mysterious thing it is, this thing which we call life! It is more wonderful than the mountains and the stars. Think of physical life,—that beats in the heart, and pulses in the veins, and stirs in all

the fibres. Think of mental life,—that knows, and remembers, and feels, and chooses, and loves, and suffers; that can dart across seas and fly to the skies. Think of spiritual life,—that can climb the stairways of light and commune with God; that can worship; that can be fashioned into Christ's image; that is capable of heavenly blessedness; and that shall live as long as God lives. God has made this wonderful life: can He not provide for it the piece of bread and the cup of water it daily needs for its daily sustenance? Why, then, should we be anxious for these things?

Another reason why we should not worry the great Teacher draws from Nature. God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers. "Behold, the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns." is the teaching that since the birds neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, therefore we should put forth no exertion to provide for our own wants? No; the birds do the best they know, but God has given us power by which we can gather for ourselves.

It is not an untoiling life that our Lord enjoins. Curse rests not upon work, but upon idleness. The lesson from the untoiling birds is, not that we are not to work, but that we are to fill our own place as the birds fill theirs, and that then God will take care of us. God's children are better than His birds. Birds have no soul, no mental faculties. They cannot think nor reason. They do not wear God's image. They are not God's children. God is the birds' Creator, but not their Father. An earthly father will do more for his children than for his fowls. A mother will give more thought to her baby than to her canary. Our heavenly Father will provide more surely and more carefully for His children than for His birds.

A like lesson Jesus teaches from the flowers. God clothes the lilies in loveliness far surpassing any adornment which the finest skill of art can produce. We are better than flowers. They live but for a day, and their rich beauty fades. They are lovely, but there is no soul in them, and they have no future. If our Father lavishes so much beauty on perishing plants, is there

any ground for fear that He will not clothe His own dear children? Like the lily, we should grow into sweet beauty wherever God places us, not complaining, not vexing ourselves with anxious care, fulfilling God's purpose and doing God's will.

Another of the reasons Jesus gives why we should not worry is the uselessness of it. We cannot by being anxious about our height, for example, make ourselves any taller. We cannot by worry change the colour of our hair—unless it be that we vex ourselves until our hair becomes grey. When we think of it, a great deal of the worrying that is so common is over matters that we have no power to change. There is much fretting about the weather. There are many people who never get it just as they want it. They are always complaining and finding fault. But who ever heard of such fretting changing the weather? It were better far just to accept it as it comes, and be cheerful whichever way the wind blows, and whether it be hot or cold, rainy or dry.

There are many people whose condition in

life disappoints them. They are poor and have to work hard to provide for their families. They have troubles and trials. They meet difficulties. Sometimes one can change one's circumstances by making an earnest effort. That is right. God wants us to make the most of our life. He would not have us live on in unpleasant conditions which with a little energy and taste we might transform into comfort. If the roof leaks, we ought to mend it. If the fence is broken and our neighbour's cattle get into our garden, we ought to repair the fence. If the chimney smokes, we ought to have the flues cleaned out. There are many worries of this class which we ought to have sense enough to cure for ourselves without vexing our souls with worry over them.

But there are many things, not just to our mind, which we cannot alter. Many young people fret over the limitations of their home, the narrowness of their opportunities. If only they had the home and the opportunities of some envied neighbour, they would get on so much better and make so much more of their

life. They have to work constantly on the farm or in the shop. They have no time for reading. Their home is without cheerfulness. They love it, of course, but it lacks the privileges they crave.

Now, what good can ever come from worrying over such things? The noble way is to accept the conditions that are hard and live cheerfully in them. Hard work is made easier when one can sing at it. Burdens are made lighter when one's heart is full of joy. When we acquiesce in any unpleasant experience, we have conquered the unpleasantness. A thoughtful writer says :
"The soul loses command of itself when it is impatient, whereas, when it submits without a murmur, it possesses itself in peace, and possesses God. . . . When we acquiesce in an evil, it is no longer such. Why make a real calamity of it by resistance? Peace does not dwell in outward things, but within the soul. We may preserve it in the midst of bitterest pain if our will remain firm and submissive. Peace in this life springs from acquiescence, even in disagreeable things, not in exemption from bearing them."

Besides, the very hardness of our condition is oftentimes that from which the greatest blessing comes. The world's best men have not been grown in easy circumstances. Pampered, petted boys do not usually make the heroes and the great men of their generation. Hardship in early years, nine times out of ten, is that which makes a man strong and stalwart, and a power among men when he reaches his prime. Herodotus wrote: "It is a law of nature that faint-hearted men should be the fruit of luxurious countries; for we never find that the same soil produces delicacies and heroes." Therefore, instead of worrying over the rough, stern, and severe things in his environment, a healthy, wholesome boy ought to set to work to master them, and in mastering them get strength and victoriousness for his own life.

A lapidary brought a large and beautiful onyx to a fine artist or engraver of precious stones. "See how clear, pure, and transparent this stone is," said the lapidary. "What a fine one for your skill, were it not for this one fatal blemish!" Then he showed him at one point

an underlying tinge of iron-rust, which, as he said, made the stone almost worthless.

But the artist took it, and with matchless skill and delicacy wrought upon the stone, carving a graceful figure. By most ingenious and patient use of his engraving tool, he fashioned it so that what had seemed an irreparable blemish was made into a leopard-skin, on which rested the foot of the lovely figure—the contrasting colours enhancing the beauty of the lovely cameo. This illustrates what God would have us do with the hard things in our condition. We think we can never make anything of our life, with all the discouraging things there are in our lot. Really, however, we can make our life all the nobler, greater, stronger, more beautiful, by means of the very things which we think ruin our chances. We can make them yield new strength and beauty for our character.

This is the way to treat the hard, discouraging things in life. It is useless to fret over them—fretting will never remove them, and it only weakens our energy and mars our life. But if we meet them with undismayed courage and

persistent resolve, we shall conquer them, and in conquering them carve royalty of character and noble worth for ourselves.

Another of our Master's reasons why we should not worry is that worrying is a sin. The Gentiles, He says, the heathen, do it. But they know no better. They have never learned about God and His fatherhood, and it is no wonder if they are anxious sometimes about the needs of their lives. But we know what God is. We have learned to call Him our Father. If we believe what we say we believe concerning our privileges as God's children, we ought not to worry. Worry is doubt, unbelief. It dishonours Him whose love is infinite and eternal, and whose promises are so wide and full.

For, really, as Jesus tells us again, we have nothing to do with the care of our own life. We have only one thing to do: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." The rest is God's: "And all these things shall be added unto you." When we grow anxious about food or raiment or shelter, we are taking the care of our life out of our Father's hand. We

should learn to put the emphasis on our own duty. We never can be too careful at this point. We must leave no duty undone, no task neglected. We must not seek to take care of ourselves by unrighteousness, by living dishonestly. Our part is to be true, loyal, faithful. Then we may leave all the rest in God's hands.

At the close of His wonderful talk about worry, our Lord gives us a wonderful secret. He tells us that we should keep the fences up between the days. We must not bring tomorrow's cares back into to-day. The morrow must look to its own matters. When its cares come it will be soon enough to take them up. This is a golden lesson—living by the day. We should learn it.

"One day at a time. A burden too great
To be borne for two can be borne for one:
Who knows what will enter to-morrow's gate?
While yet we are speaking all may be done—

"One day at a time. But a single day,
Whatever its load, whatever its length;
And there's a bit of precious Scripture to say
That according to each shall be our strength."

He who learns the lesson, living without

worrying, has mastered life. He is ready then to live sweetly and most effectively. It is said that the electro-dynamo is well-nigh perfect in its conservation of energy. Ninety-five per cent. of the force it generates is utilised—goes into light or power. If we can learn so to live so that only five per cent. of our energy is expended in friction or needless waste, we shall have learned indeed, in one sense at least, to make the most of our life. Many people have not learned to live in this economical way. They waste in anxious care what they ought to use in lighting the world with their peace, or helping others with their strength. For nothing wastes life's energies more rapidly and more needlessly than worry.

CHAPTER XX

COMFORT IN CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE OF US

**"Thou knowest, not alone as God, all-knowing ;
As man, our mortal weakness Thou hast proved ;
On earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing,
O Saviour, Thou hast wept and Thou hast loved ;
And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home."**

TO many people the thought of Christ's perfect knowledge of them is an unwelcome one. It awes them and troubles them. But if we are living as we should live, if we are true in our purpose and sincere in our striving, the consciousness that Christ knows all about us should give us great comfort.

Too often this thought of the Divine omniscience is presented as an element of terror. Children are told that God sees them, and the fact is presented to them as one which should inspire dread, and they are made to fear God's

eye. The words "Thou God seest me" are quoted and commented upon as if it had been in stern aspect that the Lord appeared to Hagar. Really, however, it was of a friendly revealing that these words were first used. Under God's all-seeing eye was a shelter of love for the poor woman. So it is always that God looks down upon His children. His look is ever kindly. He is our friend, not our enemy; and His feeling toward us is very gracious and loving. The thought of His perfect knowledge of us should never be an oppressive one, and it will not be if we understand even a little of His yearning interest in us, and if we have even a faint conception of His infinite patience.

True, our life is full of failures and blemishes. We mean to be loyal to Christ, but the world is hard and we are very weak. At the best, we get only little fragments of the beauty of Christ into our character. We are Christlike only in dim, blurred resemblances in our disposition and conduct. We intend to be gentle and loving, but we mar our days oftentimes with unhappy tempers, querulous bickerings, unseemly complaints, and

selfish strivings. We intend to be strong in faith, allowing nothing to make us fear or doubt ; but our trust fails us many times, and we grow fearful in life's stress. We mean to be consistent Christians, to live blamelessly in this evil world ; but our strength is small and temptations are sore ; and where is the day which is not marred by failures ?

When we come into the presence of Christ with our broken vows and our stained records, what can we say ? Can we look up into His blessed face and declare that we love Him, with the memory of all our faults, inconsistencies, and failures fresh in mind ? Is not our poor Christian life a denial of our fair profession ? We might say that we are sorry and will not repeat these sins and follies ; but have we not been saying that over and over, perhaps for years, and then almost immediately repeating the things we deplored and promised never to repeat ?

What shall we do ? If Christ were but a man like ourselves, judging of love by its deeds, we could not hope for His patient bearing with us.

Men are not so tolerant of our failures. They grow weary of our broken vows. They do not know our inner life ; they cannot see the sincerity which is in our heart beneath all that would seem to prove us insincere. But here it is that we find the comfort in Christ—in His perfect knowledge of us. He knows not only the sin and the wrong that are in us, but He knows also whatsoever in us is true and sincere. He sees the little true love—little, yet true—that there is amid the weakness, the broken vows, and the sad failures.

It was in Christ's knowledge of him that Peter found his comfort, when, after his denials, Jesus asked him three times, " Lovest thou Me ? " What could he say about his love, with that sad story of inconsistency so close behind him ? He could take refuge only in the assurance that his Master knew all—what was true and sincere, as well as what was so false and unworthy. " Thou knowest that I love Thee."

We may find comfort in the same consciousness. If Jesus did not know us perfectly, if He, like men, judged only from our acts, our

behaviour, then we could not make such an appeal. But He sees into our hearts. The sincere love for Him which we know we have, in spite of all that seems so contradictory of love, He sees. So we can ever, with simple confidence, say, "Thou knowest," and rest there.

"I strive, but fail; oh, why, dear Lord,
Must this my constant record be?
Why finds each daily westering sun
My work for Thee but half begun,
Or done, alas! so selfishly?

"I'm tempted oft, and often yield,
For pleasure hath a siren voice;
She sings my scruples quite away,
And with her charming roundelay
Deprives me of the power of choice.

"My faith is strong when skies are bright,
But sunny days are all too brief;
When clouds arise, and sorrows come,
My lips are sealed, my heart is dumb
And full of weary unbelief.

"But this, dear Lord, my comfort is:
My troubled heart is known to Thee;
Thou knowest that I love Thee, Lord;
And, Saviour mine, I love Thy word
That this shall my salvation be."

There is another phase of the comfort we have in Christ's perfect knowledge of us. The world is not charitable toward our faults. Men are quick to note our inconsistencies. They see our faults with unfriendly eye. They are not patient with our infirmities. They easily doubt our sincerity when we fail to live up to our profession. Then sometimes men misunderstand us even when in our hearts we are really most faithful. Jesus Himself was continually misjudged and misunderstood. Men took His noblest and divinest acts, and made them appear unworthy and even disreputable. The disciples must not hope to escape the misrepresentation and the maligning which the Master Himself had to endure. There are few good men who are not at some time in their life misjudged or falsely accused. But in all such experiences we know there is One who knows the truth about us, who is always charitable in His judgment, who never misunderstands us nor misjudges us. When we have sinned and failed, yet knowing in our heart that we are repentant and sincere, or

when we are misunderstood or falsely accused, we can look up with confidence into Christ's face and say, "Lord, Thou knowest." There is wonderful comfort in such cases in the consciousness that He understands all.

This love that is in the heart of Christ is a wonderful love. It is a love that never tires of us. We are not sure always of such patience and endurance in human affection. We complain if our friends do not return as deep, rich, and constant love as we give them. We are hurt at any evidence of the ebbing of love in them. Human love is oftentimes chilled and even repelled by the discovery of things unworthy, traits of character that are not beautiful, acts that are not right.

We are not sure always that human friends will love us still when they know all about us. We could not trust the world with the perfect knowledge that Christ has of our real inner life. There are records in the secret history of most of us that we would not dare spread out before the eyes of men. There are things in us—jealousies, envyings, selfish desires, earthward

turnings, unholy affections—which we would not feel safe in laying bare even to our dearest and most patient friends. But Christ knows all. Yet we need not be afraid to trust Him with all the innermost frailties, faults, and failures of our life. His love will not be turned back by these repulsive things while it finds in us even the feeblest true love for Him.

“ He knows all, yet loves us better than He knows.”

In one sense it is not easy for Christ to save us. We struggle and resist, and there is much in us that persistently disputes His sway. It was the prayer of a saintly man, “ Lord, save me in spite of myself.” We must all be saved, it would seem, if ever, in spite of ourselves. St. Paul found a law in his members for ever opposing the impulses of the new nature in him, making him do the things he would not. The only way Christ can save any of us is by never giving us up, never letting go His hold upon us, never allowing our stubborn earthward striving to drag us out of His hands.

If He ever did grow weary of our persis-

tent sinning, and were to let us have our own way, what would be the result? Suppose that Jesus had let Peter go that night, after his denial, giving him no further thought, what would have become of the poor fisherman? He would have been swept away on the dark bosom of sin's floods, and would never have seen his Lord's face again. We do not know the perils of our own weakness, nor our capacity for sinning.

When the disciples were told by their Lord that one of them should betray Him, they did not begin to suspect one another. Each one seemed to be seized with a terrible dread lest it might be himself that would do this dreadful thing. Who has not shuddered when hearing of the fall of some other person into sad, dishonouring sin, feeling that it might have been himself? Terrible are the possibilities of sin in human hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

We talk lightly of sin and sin's dangers. We speak oftentimes sternly and bitterly of those who

are overcome in temptation and swept down in its relentless tides. Ofttimes we have little charity for those who fall. It is because we do not know sin's awful power. There is evil enough lurking in the heart of the holiest of us, if only it were unleashed, to destroy our souls for ever. Nothing but the mighty power of the grace of God keeps those who are preserved blameless through life. We cannot fathom what we might have been, abandoned to ourselves to drift in the wild floods, had it not been for the hand of Christ, who saves us from our fatal self.

It is told of a saintly man that by his own request the only epitaph on his grave was the word "kept." We are all "kept," we who do not fall away into the darkness of eternal death—we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Some people speak of the beginning of their Christian life, when they decide to follow Christ, as if that were all, as if the struggle were all over when the choice is made. We hear it said that certain persons are saved, as if the whole of being saved is

accomplished in the one act of deciding to be a Christian. Really, however, the struggle only begins with the conversion, ending only when the life reaches glory.

Some speak, too, as if all Christ's work in saving us had been done on the cross nineteen hundred years ago, in His giving up of Himself for us. But His actual work in saving us is done with us, and in us, one by one, in teaching us life's lessons, giving us grace to overcome in temptation, lifting us up when we have fallen, going after us and bringing us back when we have wandered away, and keeping us from the world's deadly evils. Were it not for this patient, never-failing, watchful love of Christ, not one of us would ever be saved.

It is Christ's perfect knowledge of us that gives such infinite patience to His love and grace. He knows the sincerity that is in us; He sees, too, the possibilities of good that are in us—not what we are now, but what we are to be when the work in us is finished.

There is a word of St. John's which says, 'We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as

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He is." This is a vision of the final outcome of Christ's work in saving us. The mother of the artist saw in her boy's childish attempts foregleams of genius, and kissed him to encourage him. That kiss made him an artist. So the patient, loving Christ sees in our poor living, in our yearnings, our human discontents, our strivings, our hungers, our longings, gleams of what we may become, and it is to bring out these possibilities that He deals with us in such grace and gentleness.

CHAPTER XXI

THREAD FOR A WEB BEGUN

"Like a blind spinner in the sun
I tread my days ;
I know that all the threads will run
Appointed ways ;
I know each day will bring its task,
And, being blind, no more I ask."

H. H.

THERE is a secret of living which, if people knew it, would make all life easier for them. It may be stated thus—that as we take up any duty and go forward with it, we shall receive the strength we need to do it. There are several Divine promises that give this assurance. One reads, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." This seems to mean that the help which God gives varies according to the necessity of the particular day. When we have abundance of ordinary human strength, we do

not need so much special Divine help, and God then gives less. Really, it is always God's strength that we have, whether it is what we call natural, or whether it comes in a supernatural way. When we have human friends about us, with sweet companionship, we do not need so much the revealing of the Divine presence and the companionship of the unseen Friend; but when we lose the human, then we need the Divine more deeply; and in the loneliness God makes Himself known to us as never before. So it is in all our experiences. God fits His blessing to our days. When we are faint, He increases strength. When we are sorrowful, He gives comfort. When we are in danger, He grants protection. When we are weary, He gives rest. "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

Another of the promises reads, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Every word of this assurance shines with radiant light. It is Christ's grace that is sufficient. We know that He has all Divine fulness, and therefore we are sure that no human need can ever exhaust His power to give help. It is Christ's "grace" that

is sufficient. If it were anything else but grace, it might not give us such comfort. Grace is undeserved favour, goodness shown to the unworthy. We deserve nothing, for we are sinners. But it is grace that is sufficient, and so we can claim it. Every promise in the Bible is for sinners. The grace is sufficient for each one—"for thee" the promise runs; and that means each one who reads it or hears it. It is present tense too—"is sufficient." Christ is always speaking personally to the one who is in any need, and saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Then the word "sufficient" is one whose meaning expands and amplifies with the measure of the need. No necessity is so small as not to be included, and none is so great as to go beyond the capacity of the blessing that is promised.

There are Divine words, also, which imply that the supply of blessing that we receive will depend upon ourselves. God's people in ancient times were commanded to cross the Jordan, the promise being that the stream would divide for them. Yet the waters would not have parted

for them if they had not gone forward in obedience and faith. As a matter of fact, it was only when the feet of the priests, walking in advance, were wetted in the rushing floods, that the stream began to sink away. When Jesus was ready to send forth His disciples to bear His gospel, His command was, "Go ye into all the world." Then came the promise, "And lo, I am with you all the days." The promise is very precious, but we cannot separate it from the command. We cannot have this blessed presence unless we are, in our own way, to the measure of our own ability, seeking to make disciples of all nations. It is when we go out in His name that He will be with us.

This is the unvarying law of spiritual blessing and good. Life lies before us, with its burdens, its duties, its responsibilities, its struggles, its perplexities. It does not come to us all in one piece. God breaks our years into months and weeks and days, and never gives us more than just a little at a time—never more than we can bear or do for the day. Then if we take up the present duty or burden, we shall always have

strength to do it. If we have enough of our own natural strength—and that is God's strength too—He does not need to give us special strength; for why should anything so precious as strength be wasted? But if we do not have strength of our own sufficient for the work or struggle, we need not falter, but should go on, just as if we had omnipotence in our arm; for the promise is that if we honour God by obeying Him, though the task be impossible to our ability, He will honour us by giving us all the help we need. The river will surely open when He has bidden us to cross it, if only we move on as if there were no river. The bread will surely be given when we enter the wilderness, following the Divine leading, if only we go on as if we had abundance of provision.

But we must not forget that the blessing promised depends upon our faith and obedience. If we do not begin the task that seems impossible, if we wait to receive the help before we will begin it, the help will never come. If we do not begin our march toward the river, waiting till it opens, it will not open at all. If we

do not enter upon the struggle, waiting for strength to be given for the battle before we accept it, we shall never get the strength. An old proverb says, "Get thy spindle and thy distaff ready, and God will send the flax." Yes, but He will not send the flax unless we get the spindle and distaff ready. We must do our part, thus proving our faith, or God will not do what He has promised, for His promise is conditional. Another old proverb says, "For a web begun God sends the thread." We must take up the scant bundle of threads we have and begin our weaving, confident that the Lord will provide threads as we go on enough to finish the web. He will never put His threads into folded, waiting hands. The best commentary on this proverb that can be given is a little poem by Josephine Pollard, the last she ever wrote :

' 'For a web begun God sends the thread.'
 Over and over these words I read,
 And I said to myself, with an easy air,
 'What need to burden myself with care
 It this be true,
 Or attempt to do

**More than my duty? For here is proof
That we are to hold ourselves aloof
Until from the Master we receive
The thread for the web we are to weave !'**

**" So day after day I sat beside
The loom, as if both my hands were tied,
With idle shuttle and slackened warp,
Useless as strings of an untuned harp ;
For I took no part
With hand or heart
In the work of the world. To the cry of need,
The voice of the children, I gave no heed.
'When the task is ready for me,' I said,
'God will be sure to supply the thread.'**

**" Others might go in cellars and slums
And weave a web out of scraps and thrums,
Finding excuse for the daily toll,
The reckless waste of life's precious oil ;
But as for me,
I could not see
How I was to follow them, or believe
That the needed strength I should receive,
Unless I waited, howe'er time sped,
For God to send me the promised thread.**

**" I had no strength of my own, I knew,
No wisdom to guide, no skill to do,
And must wait at ease for the word of command,
For the message I surely should understand,**

Else all in vain
 Were the stress and strain,
 For the thread would break and the web be spoiled—
 A poor result for the hours I'd toiled ;
 And my heart and my conscience would be at strife
 O'er the broken threads of a wasted life.

" But all at once, like a gem exhumed,
 The word 'begun'—by a light illumed—
 From the rest of the text stood boldly out,
 By the finger of God revealed, no doubt ;
 And shocked and dazed,
 Ashamed, amazed,
 I saw, as I had not seen before,
 The truer meaning the sentence bore,
 And read as Belshazzar might have read :
 'For a web *begun* God sends the thread.'

" The man himself, with his mind and heart,
 Toward the Holy City must make a start
 Ere he finds in his hands the mystic clue
 That shall lead him life's mazes safely through.
 And if loom and reel
 And spinning-wheel
 Idle and empty stand to-day,
 We must reason give for the long delay,
 Since the voice of the Master has plainly said,
 'For a web begun God sends the thread.'"

There is a whole sermon in these lines. There
 are thousands of good people who do almost

nothing with their life because they are waiting for God to send the thread before they will begin to weave the web of duty He bids them to weave. They say, "I want to be useful; I want to do good; but God has not given me anything to work with." Now, the truth is, that God has given them enough to begin with, and that is all He will give at first. There were only five barley loaves, and there were five thousand hungry people. What were these among so many? But for the web begun God sent the thread that day. There was only a little meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse, and there were years of famine yet to be passed through. But again for the web begun God sent the thread.

The teaching is for us, and it is one of the most practical lessons we can learn. Put your hands to the tasks that are surely yours, never asking whether you are able to do them or not, and not waiting for God to provide all the strength or all the material you will need, before you begin to do them. Whatever is your duty must be done, no matter how far beyond your

strength it may be. It is yours to begin ; it is God's to help you through, and He will, if you honour Him by trusting Him.

Those who live lives of great usefulness have always begun with the little they had. Oft-times it was a very small capacity for helping others ; but they began in a quiet way, doing what they could. Then as they used the gift they had, it grew in their hands, until they filled a large sphere of usefulness, touching many lives with the benediction of their helpfulness. For a web begun God sent the thread.

The same law of human diligence and Divine blessing prevails in the building up of character. Ten lepers cried to Jesus for healing. He answered, bidding them go and show themselves to the priest. This was what the law required lepers to do after they had been cured, when the priest would give them a certificate of health and cleanness, permitting them to return again to society. These lepers were not cured. Their bodies showed no mark of healing. But they promptly obeyed the Master's word, and "as they went they were cleansed." There are those

who long for a beautiful life, for a transformed character, but it seems to them they never can attain to such renewal, they are so full of faults and blemishes. But if they begin to follow Christ, starting with the little fragment of Christlikeness which their hands can pick up, God will help them, and they will grow at last into rich beauty of soul. Get the victory over the one temptation of the hour, and that will be the first thread in a web of complete victoriousness. Get one little line of loveliness into your disposition, and that will be the beginning of a spirit which at last will include "whatsoever things are lovely." For a web begun God will send the thread.

There is a beautiful Eastern story of a child walking beside the sea, who saw a bright spangle lying in the sand. She stooped down and picked it up, and found that it was attached to a fine thread of gold. As she drew this out of the sand there were other bright spangles on it. She drew up the gold thread, and wound it about her neck and around her head and her arms and body, until from head to foot she was covered

with the bright threads of gold, and sparkled with the brilliance of the silver spangles. So it is when we lift out of God's word an ornament of beauty to put into our life. We find that other fragments of loveliness, all bound together on the golden chain of love, are attached to the one we have taken up. Then as we draw up the chain and twine it about our neck and weave it into a web to make a garment for our soul, we find that it is endless. Infinite as God Himself is the abundance of the lovely things that we may draw out of the treasury of His grace to deck our life with beauty. "For a web begun God sends the thread."

This same law applies in the learning of all life's lessons. The Divine teaching is never wanting, but we must ever begin the lesson with the little we know. We must take the one step that is plain to us, and then God will make plain the next step for us, and the next, and the next. We must not demand to know all the way before we will set out. We must trust Christ and go on, even in the dark. We must never falter when there seems to be no path; as we go on

it will open. As we do the will of God we shall know the teaching. When we begin the web God will send the threads to weave into the beautiful ending.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SECRET OF SATISFYING

'The mighty God! Here shalt thou find thy rest,
O weary one! There is naught else to know,
Naught else to seek—here thou may'st cease thy quest.
Give thyself up. He leads where thou shalt go.

"The changeless God! Into thy troubled life
Steals strange, sweet peace; the pride that drove thee
on,
The hot ambition and the selfish strife
That made thy misery, like mists are gone."

THIRST is characteristic of humanity. Wherever you find a human soul you find in it longings, desires, yearnings. It is only commonplace to say that in all this world there is nothing to satisfy a human soul. There has been no lack of searching for a fountain of life whose waters will quench human thirst; but in vain. There is nothing that has not been tried, and yet always the result has been the same:

**“Life’s thirst quenches itself
With draughts which double thirst.”**

The theory of happiness which Buddhism proposes is to tear desire from the soul, and to destroy the heart’s hunger. But this is not possible. A craving repressed, held in check, shut up in the heart, is not at rest. The desire still lives, though caged, smothered, confined. Happiness never can be found in this way.

Christ came to tell us of a way in which our soul’s thirsts and cravings may all be satisfied. Instead of crushing them within the heart, He would let them live, and would find perfect satisfaction for them.

These longings within us are not evil in themselves. They are the Divine qualities in our soul crying out for Divine nourishment. We are not bodies—we are souls, immortal souls. We bear the image of God. We belong to heaven. It is no wonder that house and furniture and pictures and sumptuous fare and rich clothing will not answer our higher nature’s needs. How could such things satisfy an immortal soul? Imagine an angel living in the

house of one of our worldly millionaires, and living just as the millionaire lives. How much comfort would he get from it all? It is because we have in us the Divine that earth cannot satisfy us.

'Thank God for life; life is not sweet always
 Hands may be heavy laden, heart care-full,
 Unwelcome nights follow unwelcome days,
 And dreams Divine end in awakenings dull;
 Still it is life; and life is cause for praise.
 This ache, this restlessness, this quickening sting
 Prove me no torpid and inanimate thing,—
 Prove me of Him who is the life, the spring.
 I am alive,—and that is beautiful.'

A traveller tells of holding in his hand the egg of a rare East India bird which was so near the hatching that the bird inside was pecking away at the shell. He could hear it struggling to get out. It was shut away in the darkness, cramped, confined, but it was not content to stay there. It seemed to know that there was a larger life for it outside, that its wings might soar away to greet the morning light, that it might put on splendours of beauty, that it might look on mountains, valleys, and rivers, and bathe in the pure air of sunny skies.

This bird in the shell is a picture of the higher nature which is within every human life. It is not satisfied. It is a prisoner longing to be liberated. It is conscious of a wider freedom, a larger liberty, that is possible to it. We are made for communion with God. The mission of Christ is to bring us out into this larger, fuller life. Instead of vainly trying to satisfy our spiritual needs and cravings at earth's fountains, He leads us to heaven's fountains. He reveals to us the love of God. He tells us that we are God's children, and brings us into intimate relations with God. He gives us intimations of a future for ourselves that is full of blessedness and glory. He calls us to this larger life.

So the hunger for love in our beating heart is the prophecy of a satisfaction of love which is possible in Christ. The longing for holiness, for strength, for beauty of character, for power of helpfulness, for Christlikeness, is a revealing of our capacity for noble living, and of the spiritual growth to which we may attain and shall attain, unless by unbelief and sin we stunt,

choke, and smother the immortal life that is ours as Christians.

Take another illustration from nature. The dragon-fly is born at the bottom of the pond, and for a time lives there, a low, meagre form of life. It does not know of anything better—that there is a higher sphere where insects and other creatures have wings and fly in glorious freedom in the sunny air. But one day there comes a wondrous change. Tennyson tells the story well:—

“To-day I saw the dragon-fly
 Come from the wells where he did lie.
 An inner impulse rent the veil
 Of his old husk; from head to tail
 Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.
 He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
 Through crafts and pastures, wet with dew,
 A living flash of light, he flew.”

This dragon-fly of the darkness and the mire now breathes heaven's sweet air. It has wings, which unfold under the impulse of the new life into which it has emerged, and spread themselves out into shining beauty, and the lovely

creature soars aloft. It is dead to its old life in the ooze, and lives now in the brightness and the fragrance of the fields and gardens.

This, too, is a picture of the new life in Christ to which human souls may rise. Satisfaction can never be found in mere earthly conditions. In these we are like dragon-flies, living at the bottom of the pond, while our true place is up in the sunny air, with wings outspread, soaring in blessed liberty. Thus only in this new life can our thirsts be satisfied.

There are mistaken thoughts of what we must do with our cravings and longings. ~~The Buddhist says we must crush them. Many Christian people have the same thought.~~ They suppose that many of their desires and yearnings are sinful and must be crucified. But this is not true. Our longings are parts of our greater nature. God has not put a single yearning or desire in us that needs to be destroyed. Our passions, appetites, and affections are not depraved qualities in us. They may become depraved through our efforts to gratify them in mere earthly or in sinful ways. But in them-

selves they are not evil. They belong to our Divine likeness, and are all meant to be satisfied. But this satisfaction can come only in true uses of our powers. A man found a wild torrent in the mountain. It could only work waste and ruin as it rushed, uncontrollable, down the gorge. He built a flume for it, and carried its wild floods in quiet streams down into the valley, where they watered the fields and gardens, gave drink to the thirsty, and turned many a wheel of industry. That was far better than if he had dried up the torrent. It was far better, too, than if it had been left to flow on for ever with destructive force. Now it was turned and made to do good, and make the world richer and more beautiful. That is what God wants to do with the cravings, the desires, the passions, the longings, and all the mighty energies of our nature. They are not to be destroyed. Yet they are not to be allowed to work waste and ruin in efforts to find gratification in merely earthly channels, in unbridled license. That is sin's way. Rather, these great forces in our nature are to come under the yoke of Christ, and

are to be led by Him into all holy service for God and man.

Years ago there were in Southern California great stretches of burning plain, covered with dry sand, with scarcely a living thing growing anywhere upon them. Meanwhile, up in the mountain there were streams of water, produced by the melting snows, running to waste, oft-times causing damage as they rushed down the gorges. Men saw that if those wasting and destructive streams could only be carried down into the valleys, and made to distribute their waters over the alkaline sands, the desert could be changed into a garden. To-day great orange orchards grow on what, twenty-five years ago, were barren wastes.

This is an illustration of what the forces of human nature, that now in so many lives run riot in dissipation, doing harm to others and hurt to God's kingdom, might be trained to do if all their energies were but turned to noble and beneficent uses. This is what Christ proposes to do with those who come to Him. He sets them free, not by unleashing them to live with-

out law or control. He sets them free by bringing them under His own yoke, where in true and holy serving and obedience they will not only find rest and peace for themselves, but will also become means of carrying benedictions to others.

In no other way can the longings and cravings of human hearts find satisfaction. They were not made for idle rest, but for healthful activity. The affections can find satisfaction only in loving, and in loving purely, truly, unselfishly. Love is not a sinful passion; it is sinful only when it is perverted from its true end and debased, and becomes unholy lust. Nor is love an unworthy or an unmanly quality. God is love—love is His very nature. To live is to love. Loving in its true sense is the whole of living. We can never find satisfaction until we have learned to love in a Christlike way, as Christ loved us, giving our life as He did to be consumed in the flame of love.

The mind can never find satisfaction for its thirst save in learning. The desire to know is part of the Divine likeness in us. On all sides

books are lying open and we are bidden to read. The voices of wisdom are evermore speaking in our ears, and we are bidden to listen. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." One of the first words the great Teacher speaks to those who come to Him to find rest for their souls is, "Learn—learn of Me." Our minds are made to know, and they can find rest only through knowing. There is no true peace in ignorance. It is only an empty and shallow "bliss" that is found in not knowing. Our minds are made to think, and can be satisfied only in thinking. Satisfaction can come to any function of our being only when it finds the use for which it was made, and devotes itself to that use.

The spirit can find satisfaction only as it attains the character which belongs to it. There is a beatitude for hunger and thirst—for those who long for righteousness. Such thirst is a mark of life. The dead have no longings, no desires. They are satisfied. Wherever there is spiritual life there is unrest, unsatisfying, a hunger for larger life, richer, fuller, holier. Such thirst can never find satisfaction save in ever-new attain-

ments of holiness, in forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forward to the things that are before. Complete satisfying will never come until we reach the full stature of Christ, until we see Him and are made like Him; but in the Christian life on earth the beginnings of this perfect satisfying are realised.

So it is with all the powers of our being. Longing is a quality of true living and a mark of health. It is the upward looking and striving of our nature. We can attain satisfaction only as our powers find their right functions and their right uses, and train themselves to run in the channels in which they were made to run. The word of Augustine is true enough almost to be an inspired word: "Our souls were made for God, and can find no rest until they find it in God." But not always have our life-teachers explained to us all the full meaning of this Divine truth. Too often they give us only half of it. It is not enough to come to Christ and nestle in His bosom in the joy of reconciliation and forgiveness. Sometimes that is as far as our teachers lead us. Satisfaction can

never come in inaction, however holy the state may be. The powers of the life must be disciplined and trained, and then led out into active service. They must find the use for which they were made. Knowing and doing must go together, or there can be no fulness of life nor any true rest in living.

It is not enough to seek attainments merely for the sake of the attainments. That will bring no satisfaction. Learning merely to know neither enlarges nor truly enriches the mind. It is only when we desire more knowledge in order that we may use it in living more nobly and doing greater good that we are led into deeper peace. Says Froude: "The knowledge which man can use is the only real knowledge which has life and growth in it, and converts itself into practical power. The rest hangs like mist about the brain or dries like raindrops off the stones." The same rule applies in all our longings. To desire to be good merely for the sake of being good, to stand up among men in holy beauty, but with no wish to make our goodness a power in honouring

God and in blessing the world, will bring no satisfying.

After all, satisfaction can come only through the consecration of all the powers to God for love's service. Deeper amid the laws of our mortal being than any of us can ever know, in this world, lies the *must* of the service. "*Ich dien.*" I serve. I must serve. "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister," is the divinest law of normal spiritual life ever enunciated by any teacher. This is the way, the only way, to satisfaction. The powers of the soul must be led out in the paths of their own true craving, to lay hold upon the things which they were made to attain. They must not be repressed or destroyed, but must be drawn out, directed, disciplined. Then all the life must reach its Divine purpose in becoming as Christ to the world, living to bless others, giving itself in utter abandonment to help save the world.

This is the way and the only way to the satisfying of human desires. The water that Christ gives alone can quench the soul's thirst. Only as we return to God, and to the place

and service for which we were created, can we be at peace. Obedience, likeness, service are the keywords of spiritual life. Earthly satisfaction at the best is incomplete, but the well in the heart here springs up into eternal life. What we call dying is but entering into fulness of life and perfection of blessedness.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SIN OF NOT PRAYING FOR OTHERS

**'Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep and goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.'**

TENNYSON.

THERE is a Scripture word which suggests to us in a striking way the importance of praying for others. Samuel had been set aside by the people in their eagerness to have a king. For a moment their consciences were awakened to a sense of their sin, and they came to him, as they had done so often before, with a request that he would pray for them. His answer was: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

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Perhaps we are not accustomed to think of praying for others in just this way, as a duty, the omission of which is a sin against God. We think of it as a privilege, but scarcely as a part of love's solemn duty. We are in danger of narrowing our prayers to ourselves and our own wants. We think of our own sorrows and trials, our own duties, our own work, our own spiritual growth, and too often do not look out of the window upon our friend's rough path or sore struggle. But selfishness in praying is one of the worst forms of selfishness. If ever love reaches its best and purest it ought to be when we are standing before God.

Or our ceasing to pray for our friends may be from want of deep earnest thought concerning them. We pray for them when they are sick or in sore trouble, but at other times are not impressed with the truth that they need our prayers. Their wants or perils are not apparent to us. They seem to be happy. There is nothing of which we are aware in their life which appeals to our sympathy. We see only the surface, and are oblivious to their

deeper necessities or dangers. We forget that they are souls, with immortal needs; that they have enemies which we cannot see, who are seeking their hurt continually; that in this vast, complex life there are a thousand influences touching them which tend to destroy them; that only the hand of Christ can safely lead them through this perilous life; that they are to live for ever and have interests which project into eternity. We are apt to forget that our bright, happy, gentle, attractive friends without Christ are lost. We need to think of these deeper spiritual needs of those about us lest we cease to pray for them, and so sin against God.

Another reason why some cease to pray for their friends is that answers to prayers already offered in their behalf have been so long delayed. There are mothers, for example, who for weary years have been pleading for the salvation of children who still remain impenitent. In the unanswering of their supplications they lose faith and hope, and their prayer languishes. The same is true of other prayers. Hearts fail in the long delays.

But deferred answers should not chill the warmth and earnestness of our asking. Delays are not refusals. God has His own time and way of granting our requests for others as well as for ourselves. There are some blessings it takes a great while to prepare. They are like fruits which cannot ripen until their season comes, and to give them at once would only be to put into our hand unripe and unwholesome fruit. There are purposes which God is working out in our friend's life, through the sorrow, the loss, or the burden, which cannot be completed if our prayers are answered at once. It was more than twenty years before Jacob saw his prayers for his lost boy answered. We should not cease to pray because the answer tarries. Perhaps the coming of the blessing at last will depend upon our continuance in prayer. If we faint it will not come. It is a sad thing if deferred answers cause any of us to cease to pray for a careless friend. That is giving him up, and when we give him up and cease to supplicate for him, what hope has he remaining?

Another reason why some persons cease to pray for those they have prayed for before is something in these friends or in their conduct that has hurt or grieved them. There seemed such a reason in Samuel's case. He had given all his life to the interests of his people. He had spent all his years in serving them. It was good service, too, service which brought incalculable blessing to their nation. Yet in his old age, when his hair had grown grey, he was set aside by the people he had served so loyally and so unselfishly. Samuel might have ceased now to pray for the people who had proved so ungrateful and who had treated him so unkindly, and he would have seemed to do right. They did not deserve to be longer loved and remembered in his prayers, he might have argued justly. Many men would have grown bitter against the people who had so treated them. Instead of this, however, Samuel says he will not cease to pray for them; that it would be a sin against God for him to do this. No wrong treatment of him by them could absolve him from his duty of praying for them. Thus he

illustrated the spirit of that love which found its complete revealing only in Christ.

Our duty of intercession is not limited to those who are kind and faithful to us. Any man can pray for those who are generous and loyal to him. But the sin of which Samuel spoke was ceasing to pray for those who had treated him most unworthily. The lesson for us is no less wide in its reach. We may not strike from our prayer-list those who have treated us with injustice or bitterness. Our Lord commands us to pray for those who spitefully use us. We sin against God if we cease to pray for the man who has harmed us and done us evil.

Why is it so important that we should pray for others? Why is it a sin to cease to pray for any? Why is prayer so important a duty? Have we a real obligation to pray for others? Friendship without prayer lacks a vital quality. Says an old writer: "Pray for whom thou lovest: thou wilt never have any comfort of his friendship for whom thou dost not pray." There is no other duty of friendship which rests upon us with deeper obligation than this of interces-

sion. We know that we sin both against God and against our friend when we cease to show him kindness in word and deed. No kindnesses shown in act are so important and so essential a part of friendship as prayer for our friend.

"Yes, pray for whom thou lovest; if uncounted wealth were thine,
 The treasures of the boundless deep, the riches of the mine,
 Thou couldst not to thy cherished friends a gift so dear impart,
 As the earnest benediction of a deeply prayerful heart.

"Yes, pray for whom thou lovest; thou mayst vainly, idly seek
 The fervid thoughts of tenderness by feeble words to speak.
 Go, kneel before thy Father's throne, and meekly, humbly there
 Ask blessing for thy loved one in the silent hour of prayer.

"And should thy flowery path of life become a path of pain,
 The friendship formed in bonds like these thy spirit shall sustain;
 Years may not chill, nor change invade, nor poverty impair
 The love that grew and flourished at the holy time of prayer.

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**"Seek not the worldling's friendship; it shall droop
and wane, ere long,
In the cold and heartless glitter of the pleasure-loving
throng;
But seek the friend who, when thy prayer for him
shall murmured be,
Breathes forth in faithful sympathy a fervent prayer
for thee."**

Samuel said it would be a sin against the Lord for him to cease praying for the people. It would be failing in a duty, and that is always a sin against God. We are to represent God in this world. He never ceases to love and care for His children. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. He wants us to have the same spirit toward others that He has—to be always interested in them. For us to be indifferent to the good of any human being is ungodlike. To cease to pray for any one is to fail in part of our duty.

Then God has ordained that many of His blessings shall come to His children through prayer. He is ready to bestow upon them the favours of His love; but He would be inquired of, to do it for them. He says, "Ask, and ye

shall receive." That is, the gifts are within our reach, but they must be claimed; they wait to be sought. This is true of good things both for ourselves and for others. We do not know how much we miss of the grace and help and fulness of life which God has in store for us, simply because we do not ask more largely. When we cease to pray for ourselves, or only ask little things, we impoverish our lives.

The same is true of prayer for others. God has blessings manifold for our children—blessings which He is eager to put into their lives; but we must ask Him for them. If we do not, the blessing will not be bestowed, and the responsibility for their missing it will be ours. We have illustrations of this in the stories of Christ's healings. Fathers and mothers came with their sick children, and at first they could not be cured because the parents had not faith. No doubt in many homes to-day children fail at least of fullest, richest blessings because of their parents' unbelief or small faith. Then what shall we say of the prayerless homes, where fathers and mothers love their children deeply

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and tenderly, and yet bow no knee in supplication for them? What a sad, irreparable wrong they inflict upon their children's lives! For the world is very full of peril for young lives. We grieve when a child dies; but we should remember that it is our living children who are really in danger, not our dead, who are safe with God.

"Lord, we can trust Thee for our holy dead:
They, underneath the shadow of Thy tomb,
Have entered into peace; with bended head
We thank Thee for their rest, and for our lightened
gloom.

"But, Lord, our living!—who on stormy seas
Of sin and sorrow still are tempest-tost!
Our dead have reached their haven, but for these,
Teach us to trust Thee, Lord,—for these, our loved and
lost.

"For these we make our passion-prayer at night;
For these we cry to Thee through the long day!"

The lesson is for all as well as for parents. Prayer is God's ordained way of receiving blessings. God has comfort for men's sorrows, but you and I who see our friends in their grief must reach out our hands and bring down the comfort by our intercession. There is a Bible

story of a battle between the Israelites and the Amalekites. Moses was on a hill-top, overlooking the conflict. While he held up his hands Israel prevailed; but when his hands grew weary and heavy and sank down the battle went against Israel. Our friends are in the valley in sore conflict. While our hands are lifted up in intercession they are victorious; but if we cease to pray for them they falter and fail.

We do not know how much the blessing and saving of others depend upon our praying for them. We do not know how often men's failures, defeats, and falls are due to our having ceased to pray for them. We stand between God and needy lives, and are bidden to give ourselves no rest, but to cry continually to Him for those about us. The healing of the world is in our intercessory prayer.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HIDDEN LIFE

"We live together years and years,
And leave unsounded still
Each other's springs of hopes and fears,
Each other's depths of will;
We live together day by day
And some chance look or tone
Lights up with instantaneous ray
An inner world unknown."

IN a sense, all life is hidden. The blood courses through the veins as the heart keeps throbbing, throbbing, day and night. You can lay your finger on your wrist and feel the pulsings. The lungs also continue breathing, inhaling, exhaling, without pause, from infancy's first gasp until at last watching friends say, "He is gone!" Pulsings, breathings—yes: but have you found the life? What is it that keeps the heart throbbing and the lungs respiring? "Life," you say. Yes, but what is life?

Take the mind. It is very active. One man thinks, and writes beautiful poems or charming stories. Another thinks, and puts marvellous visions on canvas ; or throws great bridges over rivers ; or erects a noble cathedral. But who ever saw the processes of thought ? Mental life is hidden.

Take heart-life—the life you lived yesterday, with its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, its pleasures and pains, its cares and its affections, its thousand varying experiences. Does the world know what is going on in your breast to-day, any day ? People see the smile or the shadow that flits across your face, but they do not see the emotion which produced it. Even to your closest bosom friend your life is unrevealed, cannot be revealed. Says Keble :

“Not even the tenderest heart and next our own
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh.”

Take spiritual life. We see the effects of the Holy Spirit's work—new dispositions, new conduct, new character ; but the Divine spark of life we cannot see as it comes down from above

It is secret, hidden. One day you are sad, disheartened, and taking up your Bible you find a sweet word of promise, a revealing of God's love, and into your heart there comes a strange peace. You are in sorrow. A friend sits down beside you and speaks a few words of strong comfort. You are calmed and quieted. Yet no one sees any of these spiritual processes. They are hidden, secret.

There is an inspired word which says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." The thought is wonderfully bold and strong. Christ is the source of the Christian's life. Christ is in heaven with God, in God, wrapped up in the very glory of Divinity. Hence the Christian's life is with Christ in God. Its source is thus in the very heart of God.

Outside an old garden wall hung a great branch covered with purple clusters of grapes. No root was visible anywhere, and those who saw it wondered how the vine grew, how its life was nourished, where its roots clung. It was then discovered that the great vine from which this branch sprang grew inside the garden.

There it had an immense root, with a stem like the trunk of a tree. This one branch had pushed out over the wall and hung there, bearing in the mellow autumn its clusters of luscious fruit.

Every Christian life in this world is a branch of a great vine which grows in heaven—a branch growing outside the wall. “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” We have heaven’s life in us in this world. The fruits that grow upon us are heavenly fruits. Jesus spoke of giving His own peace to His disciples. He prayed that they might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. We read too that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, are fruits of the Spirit. Thus in our human life in this world we are drawing our life and its support from the hidden source of life in the heart of God. This assures us of its security. It is beyond the reach of earthly harm. Herein, too, lies the secret of the quiet peace which we find so often in Christian sufferers. In all their pain they are sustained by some hidden strength which the world could not understand. They are drawing their life

from a source which no earthly experience could reach or effect.

“Oh ! there are some who, while on earth they dwell,
And seem to differ little from the throng,
Already to the heavenly choir belong,
And even hear the same sweet anthem swell ;

“They joy, at times, with joy unspeakable,
Pouring to Him they love their heartfelt song ;
While to behold Him face to face they long,
As the parched traveller for the cooling well.

“Ask you how such from others may be known ?
Mark those whose look is calm, their brow serene,
Gentle their words, love breathing in each tone,
Scattering rich blessings all around unseen.

“They draw each hour, from living founts above,
The streams they pour around of peace and joy and
love.”

One writes of watching an old tree in the autumn, as the leaves were touched by the frosts and fell off when the rough wind blew. As the tree at last became bare he saw a bird's nest on one of the branches. Through the summer days the nest had been hidden beneath the thick foliage, but the blasts of winter which swept away the leaves uncovered this home and

shelter of the birds. So, oftentimes, is it in the history of God's children. In their prosperity we see not their refuge, which is hidden and secret—hidden beneath the leaves of worldly prosperity. But when adversity comes, taking away earthly beauty, stripping off the bright foliage, their true and eternal refuge in God is disclosed. The storms of earth only drive them back into God's bosom.

We say a certain person's beauty has been wasted by sickness. One came to me whom I had not seen before for five years. Then a dark tragedy had just darkened her home, and I went to try to give a little comfort. Until that day her face had been beautiful with all the freshness of youth. But these five years since have been like twenty years in her life. The beauty is now faded; how could it have been otherwise, with the broken heart she brought out of those terrible days? Yet a few minutes' conversation showed that in all the wasting of physical beauty her spiritual loveliness had not been marred. She had kept near the heart of Christ in all the bitter anguish,

and the joy and peace of her inner life had not failed. Beauty of the face is only external, and is transient. Any accident may mar it. But beauty of the soul is spiritual and imperishable. It abides even in the destruction of the body.

There is mystery in this hidden life which is in every Christian. It has a strange power of recognition. When two Christians meet, though utter strangers heretofore, there is something that reveals them to each other. The same life pulses in their hearts. They have the same hopes, the same joys, the same Christ, the same purpose in living, the same heaven. The world has nothing in common with Christians, but all who love Christ are members of one family.

**"I walk along the crowded streets, and mark
The eager, anxious faces,
Wondering what this man seeks, what that heart
craves,
In earthly places.**

**"Do I want anything that they are wanting ?
Is each of them my brother ?
Could we hold fellowship, speak heart to heart,
Each to the other ?**

"Nay, but I know not! only this I know,
That sometimes merely crossing
Another's path, where life's tumultuous waves
Are ever tossing,

"He, as He passes, whispers in mine ear
One magic sentence only,
And in the awful loneliness of crowds
I am not lonely.

"Ah, what a life is theirs who live in Christ!
How vast the mystery,
Reaching in height to heaven, and in its depth
The unfathomed sea!"

The Christian's life is hidden also in the sense that its true and full glory is concealed in this world, and will not appear until it enters the heavenly life. Only the dull bud is seen as yet; by-and-bye the flower will burst into rich bloom. The best of every Christian's life remains unrevealed on the earth. We fail to realise even our own best intentions. You did not live yesterday as you meant to live when you went out in the morning. No artist ever puts on his canvas all the beauty of his vision. No singer ever gets into the song he sings all the music of his soul. No saintly Christian ever translates

into disposition and conduct all the spiritual loveliness that glows in his ideal. Our hands are too clumsy and unskilful to express the best things of our mind and heart in word or act or character. We see the good, but cannot do it in more than a mere fragmentary way. Yet the visions of beauty which we have in mere flashes and glimmerings are hints of Divine revealings that are yet to be made, and of the wondrous possibilities which lie in the hidden depths of our nature, some day to be brought out.

The sea covers great fields of concealed splendours. Now and then a storm stirs its depths and washes up a few brilliant shells or pebbles which shine like fragments broken from heaven's walls. Yet these few stones or shells are only specimens of millions more, even more brilliant, that are buried in the ocean depths. So there come out here and there, in a human life, in times of special exaltation, glimpses of something rarely beautiful—an act, a word, a self-denial, a disposition, the revealing of some noble quality or some marvellous power or measure of love, and we say as we see it,

“That is like Christ. That is a gleam of heavenly life. That is a fragment of divinity.” But that flashing gem of character, that gleam or glimmering of Christlikeness, that act which seems too pure for earth, is only a hint of the infinite possibilities of each human soul. Hidden in the depths of the nature, under all its faults and imperfections, is a life which far surpasses the highest things that are reached in this world. The love, joy, peace, unselfishness, purity, holiness, attained in the saintliest experience of earthly Christian life, are but Divine intimations of what we shall be when the limiting conditions of earth shall have been left behind.

There will be a time when all this hidden life shall be revealed. The bud shall burst into the rich flower. The gem shall break through its rough imprisoning crust and shine in lustrous splendour. The dull character that here shows only gleams and flashes of spiritual beauty, amid manifold faults and infirmities, shall yet show in its every feature the beauty of Christ. The holy thoughts, desires, longings, and hunger after righteousness, that here are hindered,

restrained, limited, and that fail to take full form in life and character, shall yet be wrought out in deeds as beautiful and holy as themselves. We shall see Christ, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Some day we shall slip away from the things that are familiar to our eyes and hearts here, and shall enter into what we call the "other life." Really, however, it is not another life, but a fuller, deeper revealing of the life we have been living in Christ since we first gave ourselves to Him. The mystery of the Christian's life of faith is that it is "hid with Christ in God." Here we touch but the outer edge of it; in what we call dying we shall press further into its blessedness. Here our little barques move only along the shore; by-and-bye we shall sail out into the infinite expanse. There will be nothing to dread in the experience. We call it death, but really it is life. To those who watch us in departing we shall disappear, but to us the path will be only one of increasing brightness, as we go on until we enter into the presence of Christ.

"I watched a sail until it dropped from sight
Over the rounding sea. A gleam of white,
A last far-flashed farewell; and like to thought
Slipt out of mind, it vanished and was not.

"Yet, to the helmsman standing at the wheel,
Broad seas still stretched before the gliding keel.
Disaster? Change? He left no slightest sign,
Nor dreamed he of that dim horizon line.

"So may it be, perchance, when down the tide
Our dear ones vanish. Peacefully they glide
On level seas, nor mark the unknown bound.
We call it death—to them 'tis life beyond."

So will it be when we leave this world. It
will not grow dark as we imagine it will
in dying. We shall pass into fuller light, until
we too are hid with Christ in God, in the glory
of eternal life.

THE END.

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