



THE EVERY DAY OF LIFE

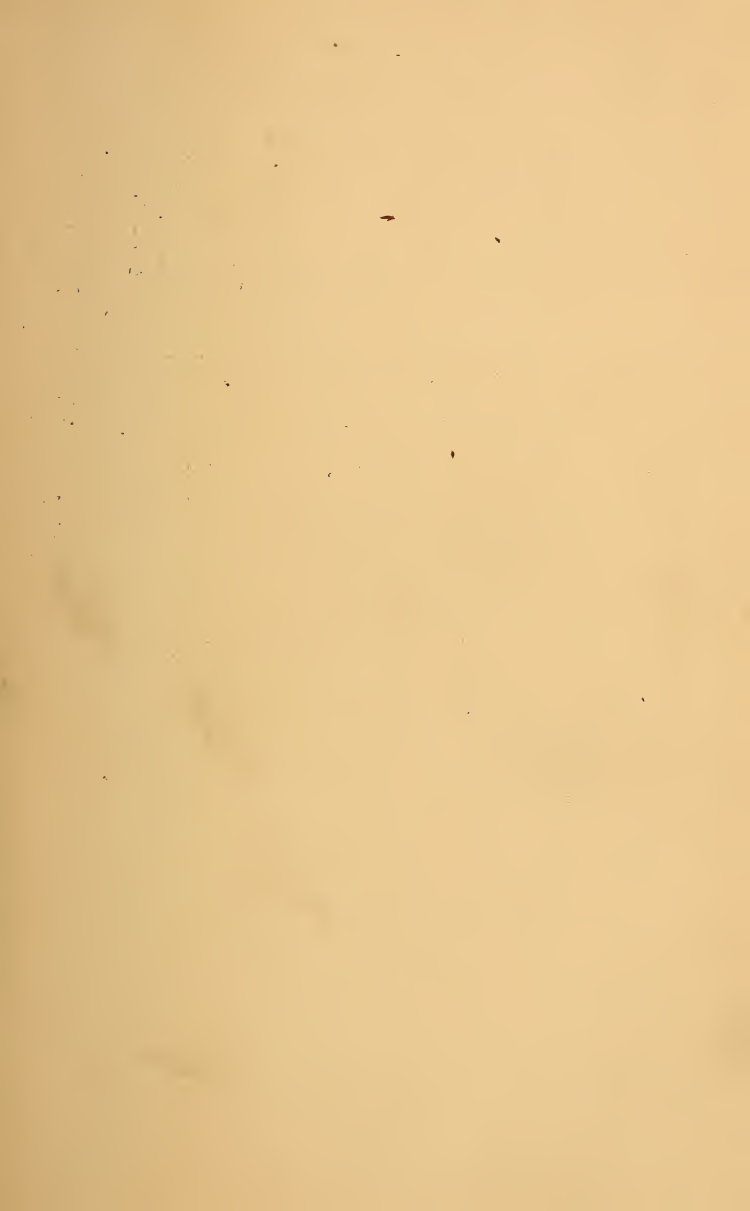
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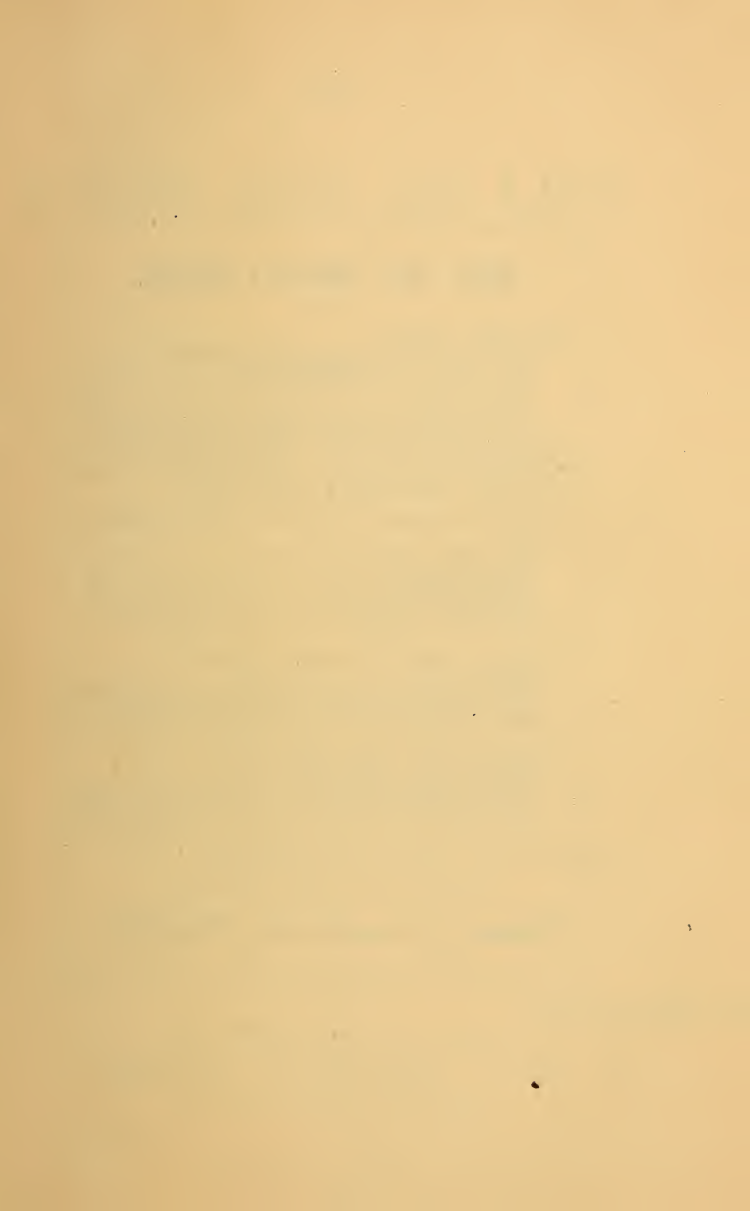
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THE EVERY DAY OF LIFE

James Russell
BY
J. R. MILLER, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE,"
"WEEK-DAY RELIGION," ETC.

 "Who knows
What earth needs from earth's lowest creatures? No life
Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.

 . . . Honest love, honest sorrow,
Honest work for the day, honest hope for the morrow—
Are these worth nothing more than the hand they make weary?
The heart they have saddened, the life they leave dreary?"

OWEN MEREDITH.

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DEDICATORY.

THIS book is dedicated to those who want to grow better. If you are satisfied with yourself you would better not read it, for it might spoil your contentment.

It is sent out with the hope that it may be helpful to some, first in showing glimpses of better things, and then in leading toward them. It is written for people who have common human experiences, in the heart of the world's toil and care; one who is a fellow-pilgrim with like experiences would lend a brother's hand.

Perhaps a discouraged one may take heart again after reading some of these simple chapters; or one who has not thought seriously of life may grow a little more earnest; or one who has fallen by the way may rise and face toward the light and begin to live victoriously; or a fainting robin may be helped back into the nest again. That will be blessing enough.

J. R. M.

PHILADELPHIA.

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THE EVERY-DAY OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE EVERY-DAY OF LIFE.

“Place a spray in thy belt, or a rose on thy stand,
When thou settest thyself to a commonplace seam;
Its beauty will brighten the work in thy hand,
Its fragrance will sweeten each dream.

When the task thou performest is irksome and long,
Or thy brain is perplexed by doubt or by fear,
Fling open the window and let in the song
God hath taught to the birds for thy cheer.”

PERHAPS the every-day of life is not so interesting as are some of the bright particular days. It is apt to be somewhat monotonous. It is just like a great many other days. It has nothing special to mark it. It wears no star on its brow. It is illumined by no brilliant event. It bears no record of any brave or noble deed done. It is not made memorable by the com-

ing of any new experience into the life, — a new hope, a new friendship, a new joy, a new success. It is not even touched with sorrow, and made to stand out ever after among the days sad with the memory of loss. It is only a plain, common day, with just the same old wearisome routine of tasks and duties and happenings that have come so often before.

Yet it is the every-day that is really the best measure and test of life. Anybody can do well on special occasions. Anybody can be good on Sundays. Anybody can be bright and cheerful in exhilarating society. Anybody can be sweet amid gentle influences. Anybody can make a solitary self-denial for some conspicuous object, or do a generous deed under the impulse of some unusual emotion. Anybody can do a heroic thing once or twice in a lifetime.

These are beautiful things. They shine like lofty peaks above life's plains. But the ordinary attainment of the common days is a truer index of the life, a truer measure of its character and value, than are the most striking and brilliant things of its exalted moments. It re-

quires more strength to be faithful in the ninety and nine commonplace duties, when no one is looking on, when there is no special motive to stir the soul to its best effort, than it does in the one duty, which by its unusual importance, or by its conspicuousness, arouses enthusiasm for its own doing. It is a great deal easier to be brave in one stern conflict which calls for heroism, in which large interests are involved, than to be brave in the thousand little struggles of the common days, for which it seems scarcely worth while to put on the armor. It is very much less a task to be good-natured under one great provocation, in the presence of others, than it is to keep sweet temper month after month of ordinary days, amid the frictions, strifes, and petty annoyances and cares of home-life, or of business life.

Thus it is that one's every-day life is a surer revealer of character than one's public acts. There are men who are magnificent when they appear on great occasions, — wise, eloquent, masterly, — but who are almost utterly unendurable in their fretfulness, unreasonableness,

irascibility, and all manner of selfish disagreeableness in the privacy of their own homes, to those to whom they ought to show all of love's gentleness and sweetness. There are women, too, who shine with wondrous brilliancy in society, sparkling in conversation, winning in manner, the centre ever of admiring groups, resistless in their charms, but who, in their every-day life, in the presence of only their own households, are the dullest and wearisomest of mortals. No doubt in these cases the common every-day, unflattering as it is, is a truer expression of the inner life than the hour or two of greatness or graciousness in the blaze of publicity.

On the other hand, there are men who are never heard of on the street, whose names never appear in the newspapers, who do no conspicuous things, whose lives have no glittering peaks towering high, and yet the level plain of their years is rich in its beauty and its fruitfulness of love. There are women who do not shine in society, who are the idols of no drawing-rooms, who attract no throngs of ad-

mirers about them by resistless charms, but who, in their own quiet sheltered world, do their daily tasks with faithfulness, move in ways of lowly duty and unselfish serving with sweet patience and quiet cheerfulness, and pour out their heart's pure love, like fragrance, on all about them. Who will say that the uneventful and unpraised every-day of these lowly ones is not radiant in heaven's sight, though they

“ Leave no memorial but a world made
A little better by their lives ”?

It is in the every-day of life that nearly all the world's best work is done. The tall mountain peaks lift their glittering crests into the clouds, and win attention and admiration; but it is in the great valleys and broad plains that the harvests grow and the fruits ripen, on which the millions of earth feed their hunger. So it is not from the few conspicuous deeds of life that the blessings chiefly come which make the world better, sweeter, happier; but from the countless lowly ministries of the every-days, the little faithfulnesses that fill long years.

“ ‘ What shall I do to be forever known ? ’

‘ Thy duty ever.’

‘ This did full many who yet sleep unknown.’

‘ Oh, never, never !

Thinkest thou perchance that they remain unknown

Whom thou know’st not ?

By angel trumps in heaven their praise is blown,

Divine their lot.’ ”

A tender and beautiful story of lowly faithfulness is told by a late writer. It was on one of the Orkney Islands where a great rock — Lonely Rock — dangerous to vessels, juts out into the sea. In a fisherman’s hut on this island coast, one night long ago, sat a young girl, busy at her spinning-wheel, looking out upon the dark and driving clouds. All night she toiled and watched, and when morning came, one fishing-boat, her father’s, was missing. Half a mile from the cottage her father’s body was found, washed upon the shore. His boat had been wrecked on Lonely Rock.

The girl watched her father’s body after the manner of her people, till it was laid in the grave. Then when night came she arose and set the candle in her casement, that the fisher-

men out on the waves might see. All night long she sat in the little room spinning, trimming the candle when its light grew dim. After that, in the wild storms of winter, in the quiet calm of summer, through driving mists, illusive moonlight, and solemn darkness, that coast was never one night without the light of that one little candle. As many hanks of yarn as she had spun before for her daily bread she spun still, and one more, to pay for her nightly candle. The men on the sea, however far out they had gone, were sure always of seeing that quiet light shining to give them safe guidance. Who can tell how many hearts were cheered and lives saved from peril and death by that tiny flame which love and devotion and self-sacrifice kept there through the long years?

This is but a leaf out of the story of millions of faithful lives that yet go unpraised among men. The things they do are not the same in all, but the spirit is the same. These humble ones keep the light of love burning where it guides and cheers and blesses others. By the simple beauty of their own lives, by

their quiet deeds of self-sacrifice, by the songs of their cheerful faith, and by the ministries of their helpful hands, they make one little spot of this sad earth brighter and happier.

Lowell's picture of womanly grace and faithfulness is very beautiful, and illustrates the glory of the commonplace:—

“ She doeth little kindnesses
Which most leave undone or despise ;
For naught that sets our heart at ease,
And giveth happiness or peace,
Is low esteemèd in her eyes.

She hath no scorn of common things,
And though she seems of other birth,
Round us her heart entwines and clings,
And patiently she folds her wings
To tread the humble paths of earth.

Blessing she is. God made her so.
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her noiseless as the snow ;
Nor hath she ever chanced to know
That aught were easier than to bless.”

We could lose out of this world's life many of its few brilliant deeds and not be much the poorer, but to lose the uncounted faithful-

nesses of the millions of common lives would leave this world a cold and dreary place indeed in which to live.

There ought to be both cheer and instruction in these glimpses of the glory and blessing of the every-day of life. Most of us can expect to do only plain and commonplace things. Only a few people can become famous. Only a rare deed now and then can have its honor proclaimed from the hilltops. Only a day or two in a lifetime, at the most, can be brightened by the light of popular praise. It is a comfort to reflect that it is the common life of the every-day that in God's sight is the truest and best, and that does the most to bless the world. Many of us need the inspiration which comes from this revealing. The glamour of the conspicuous is apt to deceive us. There is so much glorifying of the unusual and the phenomenal in life, that we come to think the common as of but small importance. People whose days are all alike in their dull routine, feel that their life is scarcely worth living. If only they could do something startling or sub-

lime, or even sensational, to lift them out of the dreary commonplace of their every-days, they would feel that they were living nobly and worthily. But if they could realize that it is by its moral value that life's worth is measured, they would know that ordinarily there is ten times more true glory in long unbroken years of simple faithfulness, without distinction or conspicuousness at any point, than there is in any unusual brilliancy in an occasional day or hour.

The every-day of God's care and revealing is also more to us than his day of wonder-working. The miracles of Christ were not half so rich in blessing for men as his common days with their sweet life, their simple teachings, their ceaseless ministries of good, their compassion, their thoughtfulness, comfort, and helpfulness. Daily providence, with its unrecognized wonders of sunshine and air and rain and snow and heat and cold, and its unfailing gifts of food and raiment and beauty and comfort, is more glorious than the occasional startling events that seem to unveil the very throne of God.

Luther wrote one day in a dark period of the Reformation, when even the boldest were trembling: "I recently saw two miracles. You listen to hear of something startling, some great light burning in the heavens, some angelic visitation, some unusual occurrence; but you hear only this: 'As I was at my window, I saw the stars, the sky, and that vast and glorious firmament in which the Lord has placed them. I could nowhere discover the columns on which the Master has supported this immense vault, and yet the heavens did not fall.' And here was the other miracle: 'I beheld clouds hanging above me like a vast sea. I could neither perceive ground on which they reposed, nor cords by which they were suspended, and yet they did not fall upon me.'"

If we had eyes to see the glory of the Lord in the every-day of divine providence, we should find light and comfort a thousand times where now we walk in darkness with sorrow un comforted. The glory of the Lord is everywhere. It shines in the lowliest flower, in the commonest grass-blade, in every drop of dew, in every

snowflake. It burns in every bush and tree. It lives in every sunbeam, in every passing cloud. It flows around us in the goodness of each bright day, in the shelter and protection of every dark night. Yet how few of us see this glory. We walk amid the divine splendors, and see oftentimes nothing of the brightness. Says Mrs. Browning:—

“ 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 pluck blackberries.”

We cry out for visions of God, when, if our eyes were opened, we should see God’s face mirrored in all about us. There is a legend of one who travelled many years and over many lands, seeking God, but seeking in vain. Then, returning home, and taking up her daily duties, God appeared to her in these, showing her that he was ever close beside her. Whittier, in a beautiful poem, “The Chapel of the Hermits,” represents one seeking the Holy Land, and at last learning that he needed not rock nor sand

nor storied stream of morning-land, to reveal
Christ : —

“ The heavens are glassed in Merrimac ;
What more could Jordan render back ?

We lack but open eye and ear
To find the Orient's marvels here ;
The still, small voice in autumn's hush,
Yon maple wood the burning bush.

Henceforth my heart shall sigh no more
For olden time and holier shore ;
God's love and blessing, then and there,
Are now and here and everywhere.”

So there is glory everywhere in life, if only we have eyes to see it. The humblest lot affords room enough for the noblest living. There is opportunity in the most commonplace life for splendid heroisms, for higher than angelic ministries, for fullest and clearest revealings of God. “ Every day,” says Goethe, “ is a vessel into which a great deal may be poured, if we will actually fill it up ; that is, with thoughts and feelings, and their expression into deeds as elevated and amiable as we can reach to.” The days are well enough : it is with our-

selves whether we make them radiant and beautiful, whether we fill them with life. A mere dreary treadmill round — waking, eating, drinking, walking, working, sleeping — is not enough to make any life worthy ; we must put the glory of love, of best effort, of sacrifice, of prayer, of upward-looking, and heavenward-reaching, into the dull routine of our life's every-day, and then the most burdensome and uneventful life will be made splendid with the glory of God.

CHAPTER II.

OUR DEBT TO THE PAST.

“ We see by the light of thousands of years,
And the knowledge of millions of men ;
The lessons they learned through blood and in tears
Are ours for the reading, and then
We sneer at their errors and follies and dreams,
Their frail idols of mind and of stone,
And call ourselves wiser, forgetting, it seems,
That the future may laugh at our own.”

NEARLY all the precious things of our lives are made sacred to us by their cost. This is true even of material things. We cannot live a day but something must die to become food for the sustaining of our life. We cannot be warmed in winter but some miner must crouch and toil in the deep darkness, to dig out the fuel for our fires. We cannot be clothed but worms must weave their own lives into threads of silk, or sheep must shiver in the chill air, that we may have their fleeces to cover us.

The gems and jewels which the women wear, and which they prize so highly as ornaments, are brought to them through the anguish and the peril of the poor wretches who hunt or dive for them in cruel seas. The furs we wrap about us in the winter cost the lives of the creatures which first wore them, which have to die to yield the warmth and comfort for us. Think, too, of the sweet song-birds that must be captured and cruelly slaughtered to get wings and feathers for the women's hats. Every comfort or luxury that we enjoy comes to us at the price of weariness and pain, sometimes of anguish and tears, in those who procure and prepare it for us.

In the higher spheres the same is true. The books we read, and whose pages give us so much pleasure and profit, are prepared for us, oftentimes, at sore cost to their authors. The great thoughts that warm our hearts and inspire us to noble living, are the fruit, many times, of pain and struggle. "Wherever a great thought is born," says some one, "there has been a Gethsemane." Men had to pass

through darkness and doubt to learn the lessons of faith and hope which they have written in such fair lines for us. They had to endure temptations, and fight battles in which they well-nigh perished, that they might set down for us their bright inspiring story of victory and triumph. They had to meet sorrows in which their hearts were almost broken, to learn how to write the strong words of comfort which so strengthen us as we read them in our times of grief. We do not know what some of the glad hymns of faith and hope, which lift up our hearts as on eagles' wings, cost those who first sang them. They have learned in suffering what they teach in song.

You read a book that helps you. Its words seem to throb with life. You are in sorrow, and it comforts you. You are in darkness, and its lines appear to be luminous for you with an inner light. You feel that he who wrote the book has somehow understood your very experiences, and, like a most skilful physician, has brought to you just the healing your heart needs. But you do not know the pain, the

anguish, the suffering, the struggle, the darkness, through which he had to pass before he could write these living words.

In one of his epistles St. Paul tells us that all things are ours, whether Paul or Apollos or Peter, or the world, or life or death. That is, we are the inheritors of the fruits of all good lives in all past centuries. Every past age has contributed to the wealth we now have. David's songs are ours, and so are Paul's epistles, and Peter's sermons and letters and lessons of failure and restoration. "If there is anything good or true or beautiful in us, the saints and the poets and the sages have entered into our lives, and have helped to develop those qualities in us." We exult in our civilization, our advancement, our refinement, our knowledge, our culture, our arts, our wonderful inventions, our Christian society, the many pleasant things of our modern life. Do we remember that all this comes to us from the toils and tears and sacrifices, the study, the thought, the invention, the sweat, and the pain of thousands who have gone before us? There

has not been a true life lived anywhere in the past, however lowly, that has not contributed in some degree to the good and blessing we now enjoy. George Eliot says, "The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric facts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who have lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest now in unvisited tombs." Not a leaf has ever fluttered down into the dust and perished there, but has helped to enrich the earth's soil; and not a lowly life in all the past has been lived purely and nobly, but the world to-day is a little richer and better for it.

Look at our home life. We should not forget that, though they are ours without price, the good things of our homes have not been without cost to those to whose love we are indebted for them. We have but to think of the untiring affection that sheltered our infancy, and guided our feet in our tender years, and of the self-denials and sacrifices, the toils and watchings, the care and anxiety, the loss of rest, the broken nights, the planning, the pray-

ing, the weeping, and all the cost of love, — for love always costs, — along the days of childhood and youth. Thus oftentimes much of the good in our homes has come down from the past, — the fruit of the labor and suffering of a long line of ancestors. Hence every comfort and joy and beauty should be sacred as a sacrament to us, because it has been gotten for us by hands of love, at cost of toil and saving, pinching economy and self-denial.

Daniel Webster, referring to the early home of his parents in a log cabin, built amid the snow-drifts of New Hampshire, “at a period so early that, when the smoke rose first from its rude chimney and curled over the frozen hills, there was no similar evidence of a white man’s habitation between it and the settlements on the rivers of Canada,” uttered these noble words concerning this rude cabin, “Its remains still exist. I make it an annual visit. I carry my children to it, to teach them the hardships endured by the generations which have gone before them. I love to dwell on the tender recollections, the kindred ties, the early affec-

tions, and the touching narratives and incidents which mingle with all that I know of the primitive family abode. I weep to think that none of those who inhabited it are now among the living; and if ever I am ashamed of it, or if ever I fail in affectionate veneration for him who reared it, and defended it against savage violence and destruction, cherished all the domestic virtues beneath its roof, and, through the fire and blood of a seven years' Revolutionary War, shrank from no danger, no toil, no sacrifice, to save his country, and to raise his children to a condition better than his own, may my name, and the names of my posterity, be blotted forever from the memory of mankind."

Or we may think of our country. We enjoy its liberties and prosperities. We look at our beautiful flag, and our hearts are filled with patriotic pride. We sit in peace beneath its sheltering folds. We think of our institutions, our beneficent government, our civilization, our schools, our churches, the peace and safety we enjoy. But we should not forget what all these national blessings cost those who pro-

cured them, and those who have preserved them for us. Our present Christian civilization is the growth of many centuries of fidelity, of sacrifice, of blood. The story of the struggle for human freedom is a story of tears and suffering and martyrdom. Every school-boy knows what it cost the colonists to lay the foundations of our nation; how bravely they fought, how they suffered in maintaining the principles which enter into the Constitution, and are the basis of all that is noble in our country. Every thread of our flag represents a precious cost in loyalty to the truth, and to the cause of human rights. Our Civil War is not yet too distant for many of us to remember the price that was paid in those dark, sad days on battlefields and in prisons by brave men, to preserve the liberty that is so dear to us, and to wipe out the shame of human slavery that, till then, had still blotted our escutcheon. Thus everything that is noble and good in our country comes to us from sacrifice and blood, somewhere along the past centuries, and should be sacred to every loyal, patriotic heart.

There is one other obvious application of this principle of the cost of all blessings. We have great joy in our Christian hopes. We are freed from sin's curse. We are children of God. We have Christ's peace in our hearts. We walk beneath the smile of God. We have comfort in our sorrow, guidance in our perplexities, help in temptation, the assurance of eternal life. We should never forget that all these priceless blessings, which yet are so free to us, come to us through the cross and passion of our Saviour. By his stripes we are healed. We have joy because he endured sorrow. We have peace in the midst of storm, because he faced the storm. We have forgiveness, because the darkness gathered about his soul on the cross. The hands that save us are pierced hands, pierced in saving us.

“ I fall not on my knees and pray,
But God must come from heaven to fetch that sigh,
And piercèd hands must take it back on high ;
And through his broken heart and cloven side
Love makes an open way
For me, who could not live, but that He died.”

These are illustrations of this great law of the cost of all that is good. Past ages have sent down to us their fruits of pain and sacrifice and loss to enrich us. Our inheritances, others toiled to get them for us. The blessings of our homes and firesides come to us baptized with love's tears and blood. Everything that is beautiful in life has cost, somewhere, anguish and pain. Heaven is entered only by the way of the cross of Christ.

What is the lesson? When three brave men brought to David, shut up in a cave, water from the well that was by the gate of Bethlehem, cutting through the lines of the Philistines to get it for him, he would not drink it, but poured it out unto the Lord. "Be it far from me, O Lord," he said, "that I should do this! Shall I drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" Its cost made the water too sacred to be used even for the gratification of his own natural thirst. It could be fitly used in no way but as an offering to the Lord.

If that cup of water was so sacred because

brought by hands of love through peril, what shall we say of the blessings of our lives which have cost others so much? Are they not all sacred? This is one lesson. Nothing is common or unclean. Everything has been cleansed by its cost. How this thought transfigures all life, all our possessions and enjoyments!

Then a further lesson is, that these sacred things must not be used for common ends, for any mere selfish gratification. We should consecrate them to God. But how can we do this? For one thing, we should never put anything of ours to any sinful or unholy use. We cherish heirlooms, mementoes, and memorials of friends who are gone. We hold them as sacred as life itself. We would not for the world desecrate a keepsake. A poor woman told the other day, how her husband had taken her ring, her dead mother's gift to her, and had pawned it to get a little money to buy drink. No wonder her heart was almost broken by his act. When we think of it, all the blessings of our lives are sacred memorials of love,

because they represent the toil and sacrifice of those who have gone before us. To use even the commonest of them in any sinful way is to desecrate hallowed things.

Even to use our blessings solely for ourselves is also to dishonor them. David would not even quench his own sore thirst with the water which had cost so much. It is sacrilege to use our good things for ourselves alone. We employ them worthily only when we share them with others. This is the true way of giving them to God. This is what he wants us to do with them. We lay them on his altar, but they are not burned up there, as were the ancient offerings. God gives them back to us, that we may take them, and with them bless other lives.

If we would join the ranks of those who have lived worthily in the past, and have bequeathed blessing to the world, we must live worthily ourselves, must live unto God, standing faithfully in our lot, loyal to truth and to duty, withholding no price of love in serving others. And this obligation to the future, our

own debt to the past lays upon us. Other men labored, suffered, and we have entered into their labors and sufferings. As we enjoy the fruits of the love and service and faithfulness of those who have gone before us, let us pay our debt to them by love and service and faithfulness that will bless those who come after us. Woe to the man who leaves a curse in the world instead of a blessing.

“O awful, sweetest Life of mine,
That God and man both serve in blood and tears!
O prayers I breathe not but through other prayers!
O breath of life compact of others' sighs!
With this dread gift divine,
Ah, whither go? — what worthily devise?

If on myself I dare to spend
This dreadful thing, in pleasure lapped and reared,
What am I but a hideous idol smeared
With human blood, that with its carrion smile,
Alike to foe and friend,
Maddens the wretch who perishes the while?

I will away and find my God,
And what I dare not keep ask him to take,
And taking, love's sweet sacrifice to make;
Then, like a wave, the sorrow and the pain
High heaven with glory flood —
For them, for me, for all, a splendid gain.”

CHAPTER III.

THE BEATITUDE FOR THE UNSUCCESSFUL.

“I sing the hymn of the conquered, who fell in the battle of life —
The hymn of the wounded, the beaten, who died overwhelmed in the
strife.

The hymn of the low and the humble, the weary, the broken in heart,
Who strove and who failed.”

— *W. W. Story.*

THERE may be no Bible beatitude saying expressly, “Blessed are the unsuccessful,” but there are beatitudes which are equivalent to this. We take from our Lord’s own lips, “Blessed are they that mourn,” “Blessed be ye poor,” “Blessed are they which are persecuted,” “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you,” “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you.” Then many other Scripture passages have like teaching. Evidently not all blessings lie in the sunshine; many of them hide in the shadows. We do not read far in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, with-

out finding that earthly prosperity is not the highest good that God has for men. Our Lord speaks very plainly about the perils of worldly success.

The Bible is indeed a book for the unsuccessful. Its sweetest messages are to those who have fallen. It is a book of love and sympathy. It is like a mother's bosom to lay one's head upon in the time of distress or pain. Its pages teem with cheer for those who are discouraged. It sets its lamps of hope to shine in darkened chambers. It reaches out its hands of help to the fainting and to those who have fallen. It is full of comfort for those who are in sorrow. It has its many special promises for the needy, the poor, the bereft. It is a book for those who have failed, for the disappointed, the defeated, the discouraged.

It is this quality in the Bible that makes it so dear to the heart of humanity. If it were a book only for the strong, the successful, the victorious, the unfallen, those who have no sorrow, who never fail,—the whole, the happy,—it would not find such a welcome wherever

it goes in this world. So long as there are tears and sorrows, and broken hearts, and crushed hopes, and human failures, and lives burdened and bowed down, and spirits sad and despairing, so long will the Bible be a book believed in as of God—an inspired book, and full of inspiration, light, help, and strength for earth's weary ones.

The God of the Bible is the God of those who have not succeeded. Wherever there is a weak, stumbling one, unable to walk alone, to him the divine heart goes out in tender thought and sympathy, and the divine hand is extended to support him, and keep him from falling. Wherever one has fallen, and lies in defeat or failure, over him bends the heavenly Father in kindly pity, to raise him up and to help him to begin again.

Some people think that the old Mosaic law is cold, loveless; but as we look through it, we find many a word that tells of the gentle heart of God. Every seventh year the people were to let their farms rest, that the poor might eat the fruits that grew upon them. They were

taught to be mindful of the needy in every harvest-time. They were not to reap too closely the corners of their fields, nor glean their vineyards too carefully, picking off every grape. They were to leave something for the poor and the stranger. Thus the needy were God's special and particular care.

In Eastern lands the widow and the orphan are peculiarly desolate and defenceless. But God declares himself their particular helper and defender. In the midst of dreary chapters of laws, we come upon this gleam of divine gentleness. "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all to me, I will surely hear their cry ; and my wrath shall wax hot." Sheaves were to be left in the field, olives on the tree, grapes on the vine, for the fatherless and the widow. The God of the Bible has a partiality of kindness for those who have lost the human guardians of their feebleness.

Wherever there is weakness in any one, the strength of God is especially revealed. "The

Lord preserveth the simple." The simple are those who are innocent and childlike, without skill or cunning to care for themselves, those who are unsuspecting and trustful, who are not armed by their own wisdom and art against the wiles of cruel men. The Lord takes care of these, defends them, keeps and guards them. Indeed, the safest people in this world are those who have no power to take care of themselves. Their very defencelessness is their best protection.

There is a Turkish proverb which says, "The nest of the blind bird is built by God." Have you ever seen a blind child in a home? How helpless it is! It is at the mercy of any cruelty which an evil heart may inspire. It is an open prey to all dangers. It cannot take care of itself. Yet how lovingly and safely it is sheltered! The mother's love seems tenderer for the blind child than for any of her other children. The father's thought is not so gentle for any of the strong ones as for this helpless one. As one says, "Those sealed eyes, those tottering feet, those outstretched

hands, have a power to move those parents to labor and care and sacrifice, such as the strongest and most beautiful of the household does not possess." This picture gives us a hint of the special, watchful care of God for his weak children. Their very helplessness is their strongest plea to the divine heart. The God of the Bible is the God of the weak, the unsheltered. He sends his strongest angels to guard them. The children's angels, the keepers of the little ones, the weak ones, the simple, appear always as heaven's privileged ones before God.

The God of the Bible is the God also of the broken-hearted. There are divine words which tell us that "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart," that "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds." The world cares little for broken hearts. Indeed, men oftentimes break hearts by their cruelty, their falseness, their injustice, their coldness, and then move on as heedlessly as if they had trodden only on a worm. But God cares. The broken-heartedness attracts him.

The plaint of grief on earth draws him down from heaven.

Physicians in their rounds do not stop at the homes of the well, but of the sick. Surgeons on the field of battle do not pay attention to the unhurt, the unwounded; they bend over those who have been torn by shot or shell, or pierced by sword or sabre. So it is with God in his movements through this world; it is not to the whole and well, but to the wounded and stricken, that he comes with sweetest tenderness. Jesus said of his mission: "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." We look upon trouble as misfortune. We say the life is being destroyed that is passing through adversity. But the truth we find in the Bible does not so represent suffering. God is a repairer and restorer of the hurt and ruined life. He takes the reed that is bruised and by his gentle skill makes it whole again, until it grows into fairest beauty. When a branch of a tree is injured, the whole tree begins at once to send of its life to the wounded part to restore it. When a violet is crushed by a

passing foot, air and sun and cloud and dew all at once begin their ministry of healing, giving of their life to bind up the wound of the little flower. So Heaven does with human hearts when they are wounded. The love, pity, and grace of God minister sweet blessing of comfort and healing to restore that which is broken.

Much of the most beautiful life in this world comes out of sorrow. As "fair flowers bloom upon rough stalks," so many of the fairest flowers of human life grow upon the rough stalk of suffering. We take our place with the beloved disciple on the other side, and we see that those who in heaven wear the whitest robes, and sing the loudest songs of victory, are they who have come out of great tribulation. Heaven's highest places are filling, not from earth's homes of glad festivity and tearless joy, but from its chambers of pain, its vales of struggle where the battle is hard, and its scenes of sorrow, where pale cheeks are wet with tears, and where hearts are broken. The God of the Bible is the God of the bowed

down, whom he lifts up into strength. Earth's failures are not failures if God be in them.

The same is true of spiritual life. God is the God of those who fail. Not that he loves those that stumble and fall better than those who walk erect without stumbling; but he helps them more. The weak ones who believe in Christ get more of his grace than those who are strong. There is a special divine promise which says, "My power is made perfect in weakness." That is, we are not weakest when we think ourselves weakest, nor are we strongest when we think ourselves strong. God's power is made perfect in weakness. Human consciousness of weakness gives God room to work. He cannot work with our strength, because in our self-conceit we make no room for him. Before he can put his strength into us, we must confess that we have no strength of our own. When we are conscious of our own insufficiency, we are ready to receive of the divine sufficiency. Thus our very weakness is an element of strength. Weakness is an empty cup that God fills with his own life.

You think your weakness unfits you for noble, strong, beautiful living, or for sweet, gentle, helpful serving. You wish you could get clear of it. It seems a burden to you, an ugly deformity. But really it is something which if you give it to Christ he can transform into a blessing, a source of power. The friend by your side, whom you envy because he seems so much stronger than you are, does not get so much of Christ's strength as you do. You alone are weaker than he; but your weakness draws to you divine power, and makes you strong.

There should be unspeakable comfort and inspiration for us in this truth. For example, we have not been successful in life. We have tried hard but have not gotten on. This is the way it seems, at least on the earth side. But if, meanwhile, we have been true to God, and faithful in duty, there has been an unfailing inner prosperity which men do not see. This world's affairs are but the scaffolding of our real life, and within the rough exterior of earthly failure there has risen continually the noble building of a godly character.

A little story poem tells of an eager throng of youth setting out in a race. One among them excelled all the others in courage, strength, and grace, and gave early promise of winning. The way was long and hard, and the goal far away, but still this favorite held his place in the lead.

“ But ah, what folly! see, he stops
 To raise a fallen child,
 To place it out of danger’s way,
 With kiss and warning mild.
A fainting comrade claims his care, —
 Once more he turns aside ;
Then stays his strong young steps to be
 A feeble woman’s guide.

And so, wherever duty calls,
 Or sorrow, or distress,
He leaves his chosen path, to aid,
 To comfort, and to bless.”

So at last when the race is over and the victors are crowned, some with fame’s laurels, some with love’s flowers, some with gold circlets on their brows, all unknown, unheeded, with empty hands and uncrowned head, stands

this, the real winner of the race. Earth had no crown for him, but on his face shines heaven's serene and holy light.

This tells the story of thousands of earth's failures. Those who might have won highest honors among men, turn aside from their ambitions to do God's work in the world. They stop to bless others, to comfort sorrows, to cheer loneliness, to lift up fallen ones, to help the weak. In the race with the world's men they lose, but in God's sight they are the real winners. Angels applaud them, and Christ will reward and crown them.

The world has honor enough for those who succeed. There are plenty of books about men and women who became famous. There is glory for those who began among the ranks of the poor and climbed upward to the highest places. There are poets enough to sing the story of those who win in the battle. But the Bible wreaths its laurel chaplets for the unsuccessful. It sings the songs of those who fail. Its hand of help is under the fallen. Its brightest crowns are for those whom earth passes by.

When the end comes, and life's revelations are all made, then it will appear that many who in this world have been thrust aside, or trampled down in the dust, or even burned at the stake, or nailed on crosses, have been exalted to highest honor in the life beyond earth.

We would better, therefore, learn to measure life by true standards. No one has really failed who has lived for God, who has lived according to God's law, who has wrought on the temple of truth, in the cause of righteousness.

“Speak, history! Who are life's victors? Unroll thy long annals and say —
Are they those whom the world calls the victors, who won the success of a day?
The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst,
Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges, or Socrates?
Pilate, or Christ?”

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLESSING OF QUIETNESS.

“ Just when we think we’ve fixed the golden mean —
The diamond point, on which to balance fair
Life, and life’s lofty issues — weighing there,
With fractional precision, close and keen,
Thought, motive, word, and deed, there comes between
Some wayward circumstance, some jostling care,
Some temper’s fret, some mood’s unwise despair,
To mar the equilibrium, unforeseen,
And spoil our nice adjustment ! Happy he
Whose soul’s calm equipoise can know no jar,
Because the unwavering hand that holds the scales
Is the same hand that weighed each steadfast star —
Is the same hand that on the sacred tree
Bore for his sake the anguish of the nails.”

Margaret J. Preston.

It would seem that anybody could keep still and quiet. It requires no exertion, we would say. Work is hard, but it ought to be easy to rest. It takes effort to speak ; it ought to be easy just to be silent.

But we all know that few things are harder

for most people than to be still. Our lives are like the ocean in their restlessness. This is one of the proofs of our immortality. We are too great to be quiet. A stone has no trouble in keeping still. A clam never gets nervous. The human soul was made for God, and its very grandeur renders its repose and quiet amid the things of earth the most difficult of all attainments.

Yet quietness is a lesson that is set for us with great frequency in the Bible. We are told that the effect of righteousness is quietness. The Shepherd leads his sheep by the still waters. We are told to study to be quiet, to be ambitious to be quiet, as a marginal reading gives it. The apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, St. Peter says, is a womanly adorning which is in the sight of God of great price. A dry morsel and quietness therewith, the wise man tells us, is better than feasting with strife. Then we are assured that in quietness and in confidence there is strength.

Thus the thought of quietness shines with very bright lustre in the Scriptures. It is used

sometimes in its literal sense. Evidently God does not like noise. Then sometimes it is used to denote the restful spirit. Restlessness is not spiritually beautiful. Peace is a high attainment. Thus quietness indicates a rich Christian culture. It is not easily reached. Soldiers say that in war it is much harder to stand still under fire than it is to rush into the battle. It is easier to be in the midst of the active duties and struggles of spiritual life than it is to be compelled to wait and be still. Waiting is harder than working. For many people it requires more strength to work quietly than it does to bluster. It is only the great engine that runs noiselessly; the little machine fusses and sputters. Quietness in a man or a woman is a mark of strength.

Many persons suppose that noise indicates strength. They think a man is a great preacher just in proportion to the loudness of his voice. Eloquence is noise. Boanerges has great spiritual power. The noisy man is the strong one. People who make the most bluster and show are the greatest workers. But a closer obser-

vation soon shows us that this is an untrue measurement. Noise is not eloquence. Loudness is not power. The great preacher is the one who most deeply and widely impresses other lives, turns them from sin to holiness and makes them blessings in the world. Noise is impertinent in Christ's work and detracts from the preacher's power.

“ We mar our work for God by noise and bustle ;
Can we not do our part and not be heard ?
Why should we care that men should see us
With our tools, and praise the skill with which we use
them ?
And oftentimes we chafe and think it hard
That we should lay our ‘ great ’ and ‘ costly ’ stones
For other men to build on and get praised,
While our names are forgotten or passed o'er.”

In all departments of life it is the quiet forces that effect most. The sunbeams fall all day long, silently, unheard by human ear ; yet there is in them a wondrous energy and a great power for blessing and good. Gravitation is a silent force, with no rattle of machinery, no noise of engines, no clanking of chains, and yet

it holds all the stars and worlds in their orbits and swings them through space with unvarying precision. The dew falls silently at night when men sleep, and yet it touches every plant and leaf and flower with new life and beauty. It is in the lightning, not in the thunder-peal, that the electric energy resides. Thus even in nature, strength lies in quietness and the mightiest energies work noiselessly.

The same is true also in moral and spiritual things. It is in the calm, quiet life that the truest strength is found. The power that is blessing the world these days comes from the purity, sweetness, and self-denial of gentle mother-love, from the voiceless influence of example in faithful fathers, from the patience and unselfishness of devoted sisters, from the tender beauty of innocent child-life in homes; above all, from the silent cross and the divine Spirit's breathings of gentle stillness. The agencies that are doing the most to bless the world are the noiseless ones. Moral power seems to hide itself in silent ministries and to shun those that advertise themselves. The

kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation.

If therefore we would be strong we must learn to be quiet. A noisy talker is always weak, lacking the royal power of control. Quietness in speech is a mark of self-mastery. It is a Bible word which says, "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." The tendency of the grace of Christ in the heart is to soften and refine the whole nature. It makes the very tones of the voice more gentle. It curbs boisterousness into quietness. It represses angry feelings, and softens them into the gentleness of love. It restrains and subdues resentment, teaching us to return kindness for unkindness, gentleness for rudeness, blessing for cursing, prayer for spiteful usage. "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked; beareth all things, believeth all things."

The love of Christ in the heart makes one

like Christ himself, and he was quiet. He was never flustered. He never fumed nor fretted, was never worried. He never spoke hastily nor impatiently. His voice was never heard on the street. There was a calmness in his soul that showed itself in every word he spoke, in every look of his eye, in all his bearing.

It is well that we learn the lesson of quietness. It is a secret of power. It will save us from outbursts of temper and from saying the rash and hasty words which one hour afterward we should be sorry for having said, and which if spoken would make so much bitterness and trouble for us. It will enable us to be cheerful and patient amid the cares and vexations of life.

There is a blessing in being still and quiet in the time of suffering. "Does it hurt you severely?" one asked of a friend who lay with a broken arm. "Not when I keep still," was the answer. This is the secret of much of the victoriousness we see in rejoicing Christians. They conquer the pain and the bitterness by keeping still.

They do not ask questions, nor demand to know why they have trials. They believe in God, and are so sure of his love and wisdom, that they are pained by no doubt, no fear, no uncertainty. Peace is their pillow, because they have learned just to be still. Their quietness robs trial of its sharpness, sorrow of its bitterness, death of its sting, and the grave of its victory.

Quietness is a blessed secret for the wives and mothers in the home. It is impossible for any gentle woman, though her household life be even ideally Christian and happy, to avoid having many experiences that try her sensitive spirit. Probably the most perfect earthly marriage has at times, especially in its earlier years, its harsh incidents and its rude contacts, which tend to disturb the wife's heart and give her pain. It is hard, or at least it takes time, for the average man to learn to be so gentle that no word, touch, act, habit, or disposition of his shall ever hurt the heart of the woman he loves even most tenderly and truly. Nothing but the love on her part that is not provoked,

that doth not behave itself unseemly, that can be silent and sweet — not silent and sullen, but silent and sweet — in any circumstances, can make even holiest wedded life what it should be. Blessed is the wife who has learned this lesson.

Every home with its parents and children presents a problem of love which only the spirit of quietness can solve. Tastes differ. Individuality is oftentimes strong and aggressive. There are almost sure to be wilful, self-assertive spirits in even the smallest family, those that want their own way, that are not disposed to do even their fair share of the yielding. In some homes there are despotic spirits. In the best there are diversities of spirit, and the process of self-discipline and training requires years, before all the household can dwell together in ideal sweetness.

A German musician with an ear exquisitely sensitive to harmony, soon after arriving in our country was drawn by the sound of singing into a church which he was passing. But the singing was most discordant, jarring painfully

upon his trained ear. He could not courteously go out of the house while the service was in progress, and therefore he resolved to endure the torture as patiently as possible. But soon he distinguished, amid the discord of the congregation, one voice, the soft, clear voice of a woman, singing calmly, steadily, and truly. She was not disturbed by the noisy, discordant notes of her companions in the worship, but sang on patiently, firmly, and sweetly. And as the visitor listened, one voice after another was drawn by this one singer's gentle influence into harmony, until before the hymn had been finished, the whole congregation was singing in perfect unison.

So it is often in the making of a home. At first the individual lives are wilful, uncontrolled, and self-assertive, and there is discord in the household life. It takes time and most patient love to bring all into sweet harmony. But if the wife and mother, the real homemaker, has learned the blessed lesson of quietness, her life is the one calm, clear, true song, which never falters, and which brings all the

other lives, little by little, up to its own gentle key, until at last the life of the home is indeed a sweet song of love.

Sometimes it is a daughter and sister in the home, whose quiet sweetness blesses the whole household. She has learned the lesson of patience and gentleness. She has smiles for every one. She has the happy tact to dissipate little quarrels by her kind words. She softens the father's ill temper when he comes in weary from the day's cares. She is a peacemaker in the home, a happiness-maker, through the influence of her own lovingness of spirit, and draws all at length into harmony with her own quietness and peace.

These are familiar illustrations of the blessing of quietness. Wherever we find this quality in any life it has a wondrous influence. It surely is a lesson worth learning, better than the winning of a crown. But can it be learned? Can the blustering, quick-tempered, rash-speaking man or woman learn to be quiet and self-mastered? Yes; Moses learned it, until he became the meekest of men. John learned it,

until he became the beloved disciple, lying on Jesus' bosom. It can be learned by any one who will enter Christ's school, for he says, "Come unto me. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me ; and ye shall find rest unto your soul." Quietness never can come through the hushing of the world's noise so that there shall be nothing to try or irritate the spirit. We cannot find or make a quiet place to live in, and thus get quiet in our own soul. We cannot make the people about us so loving and gentle that we shall never have anything uncongenial or unkindly to vex or annoy us. The quietness must be within us. Nothing but the peace of God in the heart can give it. Yet we can have this peace if we will simply and always do God's will and then trust him. A quiet heart will give a quiet life.

CHAPTER V.

ON BEING A DISCOURAGER.

“ Ask God to give thee skill
 In Comfort’s art,
That thou mayst consecrated be
 And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy.
For heavy is the weight of ill
 In every heart;
And comforters are needed much
 Of Christlike touch.”

A. E. Hamilton.

IT is a sin to be a hinderer. He who makes it harder for others to live is doing the adversary’s work. We are in this world to lighten burdens, to gather the stones out of the way and to make the road of life a little smoother and easier. This is the law of Christian life. *Noblesse oblige*, we say, as we see men enjoying rare privileges of any kind. They cannot live for themselves; if they do they will lose all. They must hold all their gifts and powers for the blessing of others.

“ If I am weak and you are strong,
 Why then, why then,
To you the braver deeds belong ;
 And so, again,
If you have gifts and I have none,
If I have shade and you have sun,
'Tis yours with freer hand to give,
'Tis yours with truer grace to live,
Than I, who giftless, sunless, stand
With barren life and hand.

'Tis wisdom's law, the perfect code,
 By love inspired ;
Of him on whom much is bestowed
 Is much required.

The tuneful throat is bid to sing,
The oak must reign the forest's king ;
The rustling stream the wheel must move,
The beaten steel its strength must prove.
'Tis given unto the eagle's eyes
To face the midday skies.”

It is a radical perversion of the law of Christian life, therefore, when one becomes in any way a hinderer of others. Yet there are many people who do this. There are some who do it in a negative way by withholding from other lives, in their care and burden and sorrow, the cheer, inspiration, or comfort

which they have it in their power to bestow. Sometimes this is done in cold selfishness, from sheer indisposition to lend a hand to a brother. More frequently, however, it is through a lack of sensitiveness to others' needs and sufferings, a want of true sympathy with human life in its weakness. There are those who have never known pain themselves and have no sense of pain in others. Some again there are whose hearts are sympathetic and kindly, but who have never learned the divine art of helping and encouraging others. They lack that delicacy of touch which is needed even when the heart is loving, to impart comfort and inspiration. So it comes that there are many people who are hinderers of others through the withholding of the cheer and help which they might give.

But there are others whose influence is directly and positively hindering. Instead of being wings to those whose lives they touch, they are weights. They are discouragers. They never have a glad, cheerful, hopeful word for any one; on the other hand, they always

find some way to dampen ardor, to chill enthusiasm, to discount hope, and to put clouds into clear skies. They seem to think it a sin to be happy themselves or to encourage happiness in any other person. They find all the shadows in life and persist in walking in them. They magnify small troubles into great trials. They look at little hills of difficulty through lenses of morbid feeling that make them grow into tall mountains.

Thus encompassed with gloom themselves, they make darkness for others, never brightness, wherever they may go. In this way they do a great deal of harm in the world. They make all life harder for those they influence. Instead of being comforters of others, they make sorrow harder to bear, because they exaggerate it, and because they blot out all the stars of hope and comfort which God has set to shine in this world's night. They make others' burdens appear heavier, because by their discouraging philosophy they leave the heart beneath less strong and brave to endure. They make life's battles sorer for men, because, by their ominous

forebodings, they paralyze the arm that wields the sword.

The whole effect of the life of these people is to discourage others ; to find unpleasant things and point them out ; to discover dangers and tell about them ; to look for difficulties and obstacles and proclaim them. If you meet them with buoyant mood, you will not be long in their company before you will find all the buoyancy stealing out of you under the influence of their disheartenment. If you turn to them in your trouble, you will go away feeling that your condition is utterly hopeless, and will be ready almost to despair.

A thoughtful man was asked to contribute to the erection of a monument to one of these discouragers, and replied, "Not a dollar. I am ready to contribute toward building monuments to those who make us hope, but I will not give a dollar to help perpetuate the memory and influence of those who live to make us despair." He was right. Men who make life harder for us cannot be called benefactors. The true benefactors are those who show us

light in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow, hope in our despair.

We all need to be strengthened and inspired, never weakened and disheartened for life's experiences. If we meet others cast down and discouraged, it is our duty as their friends, not to make their trials and their cares seem as great as we can, but rather to point out to them the bright light in their clouds and to put new hope and courage in their hearts. If we find others in sorrow, it is our duty not to tell them merely how sorry we are for them, how we pity them, but, coming close to them in love, to whisper in their ears the comforts of divine grace, to make them stronger to endure their sorrow. If we find others in the midst of difficulties and sore struggles, faint and ready almost to yield, it is our duty not merely to bemoan with them the severity and hardness of their battles, and then to leave them to go on to sure defeat; but to stimulate and inspire them to bravery and victoriousness.

It is of vital importance that we learn this lesson if we want to be true helpers of others in

their life. If we have only sadness to give to men and women, we have no right to go among them. The cloister is the only fit place for such moods. It is only when we have something that will bless others, and lift up their hearts, and give them glimpses of bright and beautiful things to live for, that we are truly commissioned to go forth as evangelists into the world.

“ A singer sang a song of tears,
And the great world heard and wept ;
For he sang of the sorrows of fleeting years,
And the hopes which the dead past kept ;
And souls in anguish their burdens bore,
And the world was sadder than ever before.

A singer sang a song of cheer,
And the great world listened and smiled ;
For he sang of the love of a Father dear
And the trust of a little child ;
And souls that before had forgotten to pray
Looked up and went singing along the way.”

It is better that we should not sing of sadness if our song end there. There are sad notes enough already floating in the world's air, making moan in men's ears. We should

sing always of hope, joy, and cheer. Jeremiah had a right to weep; for he sat amid the crumbling ruins of his country's prosperity, looking upon the swift and resistless approach of woes that might have been averted. Jesus had a right to weep on the Mount of Olives; for his eye saw the terrible doom coming upon the people he loved, after he had done all in his power to avert the doom which sin and unbelief were drawing down upon them. But not many of us are called to live amid griefs like those which broke the heart of Jeremiah. And as for Jesus, we know what a preacher of hope he was wherever he went. Our mission must be to carry to men, not grief and tidings of ill, but joy and good news.

The preachers alone who truly bless the world are preachers of hope. One who has only questions and doubts to give has no right in a Christian pulpit. We ought not to add to the perplexity of men by holding up shreds of torn pages as if our Christianity were something uncertain, a mere "if" or "perhaps." "Give me your beliefs," said Goethe; "I have

doubts enough of my own." So people are saying to us, "Give us your hopes, your joys, your sunshine, your life, your uplifting truths: we have sorrows, tears, clouds, ills, chains, doubts enough of our own."

This is the mission of Christianity in the world—to help men to be victorious, to whisper hope wherever there is despair, to give cheer wherever there is discouragement. It goes forth to open prisons, to unbind chains, and to bring out captives. Its symbol is not a cross only,—that is one of its symbols, telling of the price of our redemption, telling of love that died,—but its final symbol is an open grave,—open and empty. We know what that means. It tells of life, not of death; of life victorious over death. And we must not suppose that its promise is only for the final resurrection; it is for resurrection every day, every hour, over all death. It means unconquerable, unquenchable, indestructible, immortal life at every point where death seems to have won a victory. Defeat anywhere is simply impossible, if we are in Christ and

Christ in us. It is just as true of the Christ in us as it was of the Christ who went down into Joseph's tomb, that he cannot be holden of death.

It follows that there never can be a loss in a Christian's life out of which a gain may not come, as a plant from a buried seed. There never can be a sorrow out of which a blessing may not be born. There never can be a discouragement which may not be made to yield some fruit of strength.

If, therefore, we are true and loyal messengers of Christ, we can never be prophets of gloom, disheartenment, and despair. We must ever be heralds of hope. We must always have good news to tell. There is a gospel which we have a right to proclaim to every one, whatever be his sorrow. In Christ there is always hope, a secret of victory, a power to transmute loss into gain, to change defeat to victory, to bring life from death. We are living worthily only when we are living victoriously ourselves at every point, when we are inspiring and helping others to live victori-

ously, and when our life is a song of hope and gladness, even though we sing out of tears and pain.

So it is our mission to be helpers, never hinderers, of others' faith and hope. Wherever we find one who is weary or disheartened it is our part to take him by the hand and help him to rise, and to hold him by the hand till he is able to walk in safety. One word of discouragement from us in the presence of a human struggler is treason to a soul we are set to help and protect with our own life. Here are some lines which give us our lesson :—

“ So you fell just now in the mud, poor heart !

And to try to rise and be clean is vain ?

Take both my hands, now, and do your part.

So you stand on your feet again.

Did nobody tell you your feet might slip ?

Did some one push you ? (Such things are done.)

Was your path so rough that you needs must trip ?

Ah ! the blame is on many — not on one.

Sobbing still over that ugly stain ?

I may not comfort or hush you, dear.

Through such sad tears in their burning rain

Christ and his cross show clear.

Must you go sorrowing all your day?
Dear, in suffering souls grow white;
Keep my hand through this stony way—
See where the west turns bright.”

That is very beautiful. The world is ever full of human lives whose eternal destiny seems to depend upon whether they meet cloud or sunshine, encouragement or discouragement, hope or despair, in the faces that look into theirs. Guides sometimes warn tourists among the Swiss mountains not to speak as they pass certain points. Even the reverberation of a whisper in the air may start a poised avalanche from its place on the crags. There are times in the story of many human lives when they are so delicately poised that it depends on how the first person they meet greets them whether they sink into the darkness of despair or lift up their head to find hope. We never know when passing mood of ours may decide a soul's destiny. We dare not then, even for a moment, or in one case, be a discourager of another soul.

CHAPTER VI.

MAKING LIFE A SONG.

“ In the still air the music lies unheard ;
In the rough marble beauty hides unseen ;
To make the music and the beauty needs
The master's touch, the sculptor's chisel keen.

Great Master, touch us with thy skilful hands ;
Let not the music that is in us die !
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us ; nor let,
Hidden and lost, thy form within us lie !

Horatius Bonar.

A BEAUTIFUL scrap of instruction out of old rabbinical lore tells us that there are in heaven two kinds of angels—the angels of service and the angels of praise. The latter are of a higher order than the former. No one of them praises God twice, but having once lifted up his voice in the song of heaven, he ceases to be. He has perfected his being. His song is the full flower and perfect fruit of his life, that for which he was made. He has now finished his

work, and his life is breathed out in his one holy psalm.

There is in this delightful fancy a deep truth, that the highest act of which an immortal life is capable is praise. The unpraising life has not yet realized its holiest mission. It has not yet borne the sweetest, ripest, best fruit, that which in God's sight is most precious of all. In heaven all life is praise, and we come near heaven's spirit only as we learn to praise.

No other duty is enjoined so often in the Scriptures as praise. There are not so many texts about prayer as there are about praise. The Bible is full of music. The woods in the summer days are not so full of bird-notes as this sacred book is of voices of song. Christian life can realize the divine thought for it only by being songful. The old fable of the harp of Memnon, that it began to breathe out sweet music the moment the morning light swept its chords, has its true fulfilment in the human soul, which, the instant the light of divine love breaks upon it, gives forth notes of gladness and praise.

The gift of song is one of the noblest endowments bestowed upon mortals. But there is a music that is not vocal. Every one should be able to make music in the world though he cannot sing a note. Milton says that he who hopes to write well in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition of the best and noblest things. One cannot really sing songs that will be music in God's ears, whose own life is not first a song in its sweetness and beauty.

It is a great thing to write a hymn that lives. To have composed such a song as the Twenty-third Psalm, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," or "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," is one of the noblest achievements possible in the world. Think what a ministry such songs have had, how many lives they have blessed, how much sorrow they have comforted. No other human service can be more blessed than to be permitted to give to the world a sweet song which shall go singing on its way through generations. Yet we cannot all write hymns. We are not all poets, gifted to weave sweet thoughts into

rhythmic verse that will charm men's souls. We cannot all make hymns which shall become as angels of peace, comfort, joy, or inspiration to weary lives. To only a few men and women in a generation is the poet's tongue given.

But there is a way in which we may all make songs; we can make our own life a song if we will. It does not need the poet's gift and art to do this, nor does it require that we shall be taught and trained in colleges and universities. The most unlettered man may live so that gentle music shall breathe forth from his life through all his days. He needs only to be true and loving. Every beautiful life is a song.

There are many people who live in circumstances and conditions of hardness and hardship, and who seem to make no music in the world. Their life is of that utterly prosaic kind that is devoid of all sentiment, which has no place for sentiment amid its severe toils and under its heavy burdens. Even home tenderesses seem to find little opportunity for growth in the long leisureless days. Yet even such lives as these, doomed to hardest, dreariest toil, may

and oftentimes do become songs which minister blessing to many others. The other day a workingman presented himself for admission to the church. He was asked what sermon or appeal had led him to take this step. No sermon, no one's word, he answered, but a fellow-workman for many years at the bench beside him had been so true, so faithful, so Christlike in his character and conduct, in his disposition and temper, that his influence had brought his companion to Christ. This man's life, amid all its hardness, was a song of love.

There are many people living in the midst of unattractive circumstances, amid hardship, toil, and care, whose daily life breathes out gentle music which blesses others about them. They do no great services, but they crowd the hours with little ministries which fall like silver bell-notes on weary hearts. They are faithful in all their commonplace duties. They are patient under all manner of irritating experiences. They keep happy and contented even in times of suffering and need, cheerful and trusting even in want. They live in quiet harmony with

the will of God, making no jarring discords by insubmission or wilfulness. Thus in their lowly sphere they make music which is sweet to the ear both of God and man.

God wants our life to be a song. He has written the music for us in his Word and in the duties that come to us in our places and relations in life. The things we ought to do are the notes set upon the staff. After the music is written faultlessly, the singer or the player must render it perfectly, or there will be discord. We all know how one untrue voice may mar even the noblest music by singing falsely. To make our life beautiful music we must be obedient and submissive. Any disobedience is the singing of a false note and yields discord. Any insubmission breaks the melody. Obedience and joyous submission make glad music.

But how much broken music there is in most of our lives! We fail in love's duties. Envious thoughts and feelings, jealousies, bitterness, anger, resentment, selfishness, all unloving words, acts, and tempers, are harsh discords which spoil the melody. Pride mars

it; so does a violent temper. Certain hideous sounds made on musical instruments are called "wolf-notes." There are wolf-notes made sometimes in human lives—anger, hate, lust, the wild utterances of passion. But we ought to strive to make only sweet music.

Our circumstances cannot always be easy. We cannot always have our own way. There will be many things, in the most favored lot, which would naturally jar upon the chords of our life. But we should learn so to live as to yield only the music of love and peace, whatever our experiences may be.

"Our lives are songs; God writes the words,
And we set them to music at pleasure;
And the song grows glad, or sweet, or sad,
As we choose to fashion the measure.
We must write the music, whatever the song,
Whatever its rhyme or metre;
And if it is sad, we can make it glad,
Or if sweet, we can make it sweeter."

A perfectly holy life would be a perfect song. In heaven this ideal melody will be attainable. There these life-harps of ours will be perfectly attuned, and we shall have learned the lessons

of love so well that we shall never strike the wrong note. At the best on the earth, however, our lives are imperfect in their harmonies, like instruments not yet in tune. If we are indeed in Christ's school we are ever coming nearer and nearer in our renewed nature to the perfect divine likeness, and are learning to make sweeter and sweeter music as the days go by.

We need to learn well the truth that only the Master's hand can bring out of our souls the music that slumbers in them. A violin lies on the table, silent and still. We know that it is capable of giving out marvellous music. One weak hand takes it up and begins to draw the bow across the strings, but it yields only harsh, wailing discords. Then a master comes and takes it up. First he puts the strings in tune, and then he brings from the little instrument most entrancing strains. Our lives are like this violin. They are capable of producing rich and beautiful melody. But they must be skilful hands that touch the chords.

There are some people who seem able to bring out the best that is in us. Under their in-

fluence we are stimulated and inspired to noble and beautiful things. There are teachers who have wonderful power in finding and drawing out the best elements in the lives of their pupils. There are parents under whose wise and gentle touch the hearts of their children yield all beautiful qualities. We all have friends whose influence over us is genial and kindly. We are conscious of being drawn ever toward goodness and truth and purity when with them. They arouse in us noble longings and aspirations. They call out our best endeavors and our gentlest and kindest dispositions. Others there are whose touch upon our life is uncongenial and unkindly, like the playing of an unskilled person upon a musical instrument. They arouse not our better, but our worse natures. They bring from us not sweet music, but jarring discord.

There is only One who can take our lives with all their fault and sin, their broken strings and jangled chords, and bring from them the music of love, joy, and peace. It is related that once Mendelssohn came to see the great

Freiburg organ. The old custodian, not knowing who his visitor was, refused him permission to play upon the instrument. At length, however, after much persuasion, he granted him leave to play a few notes. Mendelssohn took his seat, and soon the most wonderful music was breaking forth from the organ. The old man was spell-bound. At length he came up beside the great master and asked his name. Learning it, he stood humiliated, self-condemned, saying, "And I refused you permission to play upon my organ!" There comes One to us and desires to take our life and play upon it. But we withhold ourselves from him and refuse him permission, when if we would but yield ourselves to him, he would bring from our souls heavenly music.

"We are but organs mute, till a master touches the
keys—

Verily vessels of earth into which God poureth the
wine ;

Harps are we, silent harps, that have hung in the willow
trees,

Dumb till our heartstrings swell and break with a
pulse divine.

It is often in sorrow that our lives are taught their sweetest songs. There is a story of a German baron who stretched wires from tower to tower of his castle, to make a great Æolian harp. Then he waited and listened to hear the music from it. For a time the air was still and no sound was heard. The wires hung silent in the air. After a while came gentle breezes, and the harp sang softly. At length came the stern winter winds, strong and stormlike in their forces. Then the wires gave forth majestic music which was heard near and far. There are human lives that never, in the calm of quiet days, yield the music that is in them. When the breezes of common care sweep over them they give out soft murmurings of song. But it is only when the storms of adversity blow upon them that they answer in notes of noble victoriousness. It takes sore trouble to bring out the best that is in them.

“ Spare not the stroke ! do with us as thou wilt !

Let there be nought unfinished, broken, marred ;

Complete thy purpose, that we may become

Thy perfect image, thou our God and Lord ! ”

Come what may, we should make our lives songs. We have no right to add to the world's discords or to sing any but sweet strains in the ears of others. We should start no note of sadness in this world which is already so full of sadness. We should add something every day to the stock of the world's happiness. If we are truly Christ's and walk with him we cannot but sing. If we live according to the law of God, which is really the law of our own inner spiritual life, our lives should be sweet songs.

“ By thine own soul's law learn to live ;
And if men thwart thee, take no heed,
And if men hate thee, have no care —
Sing thou thy song, and do thy deed ;
Hope thou thy hope, and pray thy prayer,
And claim no crown they will not give.”

CHAPTER VII.

LIFE-MUSIC IN CHORUS.

“Walk with thy fellow-creatures ; note the hush
And whisperings among them. Not a spring
Or leaf but hath his morning hymn. Each bush
And oak doth sing *I am*. Canst *thou* not sing?”

THERE is more to be said about making life a song than was said in the last chapter. Each one of us should live so as to make music in this world. This we can do by simple, cheerful obedience. He who does God's will faithfully each day makes his life a song. The music is peace. It has no jarring dissonances, no anxieties, frets, or worries, no rebellings or doubts. For a child who asked him to write a song for her, Charles Kingsley once wrote : —

“My fairest child, I have no song to give you ;
No lark could pipe in skies so dull and gray ;
Yet, if you will, one quiet hint I'll give you
For every day.

I'll tell you how to sing a clearer carol
Than lark who hails the dawn or breezy down ;
To earn yourself a purer poet's laurel
Than Shakespeare's crown.

Be good, sweet maid, and let who can be clever ;
Do lovely things, not dream them all day long ;
And so make life and death and that for ever
One grand, sweet song."

But we must make music also in relations as well as singly. We do not live alone ; we live in companionships, in families, in friendship's circles, in churches, in communities. It is one thing for a singer to sing solos, and to sing expressively, truly, in perfect time, in harmonious proportion. There are no other voices then to be waited for, to hurry after, to harmonize or blend with. The soloist can sing at sweet will, without restriction or limitation or fear of clashing or jarring. But it is quite another thing for several persons to sing together, in choir or chorus, and their voices all to blend in harmony. It is necessary in this latter case that they should all have the same key and that they should sing carefully and unselfishly, each watching the others and controlling, repressing,

or restraining his own voice for the sake of the effect of the whole, full music. If one sings falsely, out of tune or out of time, he mars the harmony of the chorus. If one sings without regard to the other voices, only for the display of his own, his part is out of proportion and the effect is unhappy. It requires the spirit of self-repression, self-effacement, to be one of a company of singers. One must give up all desire for personal prominence or conspicuousness, and be content to lose one's self in the song which all together sing.

Yet it is necessary not only that we make sweet music in our individual lives, but also that in choirs or choruses in which we may find ourselves only individual members, we do our part in making pleasing harmony. Some people are very good alone, where no other life comes in contact with theirs, where they are entirely their own master and have to think only of themselves, and where they can have their own way, who yet make most wretched business of living when they come into relations with others. Then they are selfish, tyrannical,

absorbing, despotic, wilful. They will not brook suggestion, request, authority. They will not make any compromise, will not yield their own opinions, preferences, or prejudices, will not submit to any inconvenience, any sacrifice. They are good in many respects. They live morally. They do good in the world. They are even generous in certain ways, and may be refined and cultured. But they cannot live cordially with people; at least other people cannot live cordially with them. They have not the remotest conception of life with self-denials and sacrifices in it, in which others have to be considered.

But we are not good Christians until we have learned to live Christianly in relations. For example, in the family. A true marriage means the ultimate bringing of two lives into such perfect oneness that there shall not be a discord in the blended music. "They twain shall be one." To attain this each must give up much. Neither can move on independently of the other, without thought or without self-forgetfulness. The relation is not that of mas-

ter and slave, but that of love. There must be on the part of both, self-repression, self-renunciation. The aim of each must be — what always is true love's aim — to serve the other, the deeper love to serve the more deeply. Only in perfect love which is utterly self-forgetful, can there be perfect blending of lives.

Then as a family grows up in the home, it is harder still to keep the music without dissonance, with the varying individual tastes and preferences which are disposed to assert themselves often in aggressive ways. It can be done only by keeping love always the ruling motive. But there are families that never do learn to live together lovingly. Ofttimes the harmony is spoiled by one member of the household who will not yield to the sway of unselfishness nor repress and deny self for the good of all. On the other hand, in homes that do grow into the ripeness of love, there is oft-times one life that by its calm, true, serene peace which nothing can disturb, at length draws all the discordant elements of the household life into accord with itself and so perfects

the music of the home. It takes but little things to mar the music; and it takes but the little things of love, the amenities, the thoughtfulnesses, the words in season, the gentle acts of common kindness, to make home's music almost divinely sweet. Says George MacDon-ald:—

“ Alas! how easily things go wrong;
A sigh too much or a kiss too long,
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.

Alas! how hardly things go right!
'Tis hard to watch on a summer's night,
For the sigh will come and the kiss will stay,
And the summer's night is a winter's day.

And yet how easily things go right,
If the sigh and the kiss of the winter's night
Come deep from the soul in the stronger ray
That is born in the light of the winter's day.

And things can never go badly wrong
If the heart be true and the love be strong;
For the mist, if it comes, and the weeping rain
Will be changed by the love into sunshine again.”

In all relations the same lesson has somehow to be learned. We must learn to live with

other people and live with them in harmony of love. And people are not all good and gentle. Not many of them are so self-forgetful that they are willing to do all the yielding, all the giving up or sacrificing. We must each do our share of this office of love if we are to live happily in relations. Some people's idea of giving up is that the other person must do it all. That is what some despotic husbands in Turkey and some other places think that their wives ought to do.

In all associated life there is the same tendency to let the yielding be done by the other person. "We get along splendidly," a man says, referring to his business, or to some associated work. "So and so is very easy to live with. He is gentle and yielding and always gives up. So I have things my own way, and we get on together beautifully." Certainly, but that is not the Christian way of getting on together. The self-repression and self-renunciation should be mutual. "In honor preferring one another," is St. Paul's rule. When each person in any association of lives does this,

seeking the honor and promotion of the other, not thinking of himself, the music is full of harmony. The essential thing in love is not receiving, but giving; not the desire to be helped or humored, but to help or humor.

Then, not in relations only, but in circumstances also, must we learn to make our life a song. This is not hard when all things are to our mind, when we are in prosperity, when friends surround us, when the family circle is unbroken, when health is good, when there are no crosses, and when no self-denials are required. But it is not so easy when the flow of pleasant circumstances is rudely broken, when sorrow comes, when bitter disappointment dashes away the hopes of years. Yet Christian faith can keep the music unbroken even through such experiences as these. The music is changed. It grows more tender. Its tones become deeper, tremulous sometimes, as the tears creep into them. But it is really enriched and made more sweet and beautiful.

Our lives are harps of God, but many of them do not give out their sweetest music in calm of

quiet, prosperous days. It is only in the heavy storms of trial, in adversity, in sore pain or loss, that the richest, noblest music comes from our souls. Most of us have to learn our best and truest lessons in the stress of trial. In few homes is the music of the glad, tearless days so deep and rich as it is after grief has come. The household song is sweetest when the voices choke with sobbing.

We should seek to have our life so trained, so disciplined, that no sudden change of circumstances shall ever stop its music; that if we are carried suddenly out of our summer of joy to-day into a winter of grief to-morrow, the song shall still go on unbroken, the song of faith, love, peace. Paul had learned this when he could say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound." Circumstances did not affect him, for the source of his peace and joy was in Christ.

How can we get these lessons? There is an old legend of an instrument that hung silent upon a castle wall. Its strings were broken.

It was covered with dust. No one understood it and no one could put it in order. But one day a stranger came to the castle. He saw the instrument on the wall. Taking it down, he quickly brushed the webs and dust from it, tenderly reset the broken strings, then played upon it.

“ Then chords long silent woke beneath his touch,
And hearts and voices round were strangely stilled
As deeper rolled the harmony and grand,
Till all the castle with the notes was filled ;
It pealed the war-notes 'mid the conflict's din,
Then sank into a solemn requiem.

Beneath the fingers of the master hand
Gladly it echoed youth's ambitious dream ;
Then, gently, like the ripples on the shore,
Whispered sweet confidence in love supreme.
Changeful the theme as waves upon the sea,
From low-breathed hope to psalms of victory.”

Every human life in its unrenewed state is such a harp, with broken strings, tarnished by sin. It is capable of giving forth music marvellously rich and beautiful. But first it must be restored, its strings reset ; and the only one who can do this is the Maker of the harp, the

Lord Jesus Christ. Only he can bring the jangled chords of our life into tune so that when played upon they shall give forth rich music. We must, therefore, surrender our hearts to him that he may repair and restore them. Then we shall be able to make music, not in our individual lives only, but in whatsoever relations our lot may be cast, and in whatsoever circumstances it may fall to us to dwell.

“ Learn thou the noble lesson, O my soul,
To find in life's grand symphony thy part ;
And seek the soul-harps in a darkened land
To lay beneath the Master's skilful hand.

For myriad souls there are, on distant shore,
O'er which the dust of sin has settled deep ;
Ah ! could the tender Christ but brush away,
And o'er the slumbering tones his fingers sweep,
A world would pause to catch the echoing chord
Of music wakened 'neath the touch of God.”

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVING THE UNSEEN FRIEND.

“ The world sits at the feet of Christ,
Unknowing, blind, and unconsolated ;
It shall yet touch his garment’s fold,
And feel the heavenly Alchemist
Transmute its very dust to gold.”

LOVE for Christ is transforming the world. Love always transforms. Many a life is made beautiful by a pure, sweet, strong human love. Who has not seen a young wife, with light, girlish nature, without seriousness, caring only for herself as it seemed, almost trivial, her friends thought, until a baby came, when all was changed? She became serious, thoughtful, earnest. Self died, and her soul flowed out in unsparing service. She lived now for her child. The hands that heretofore had been idle became ministering hands. Too dainty before for any toil or any rough touch, they were now used

without thought in caring for her child. Her whole being was transformed and shone now in noble beauty. Love had wrought the change. Little children are God's angels to thousands of young mothers, sent to bless them by drawing their heart away from self. For we never learn to live until we cease to think of ourselves and begin to live for some object outside of self. Selfishness destroys the life, blights its beauty, withers up its powers, lays a curse upon it. Love saves the life, develops its faculties, calls out its best.

There was a childless home. Husband and wife grew up together in mutual love, but, having no interest outside of their own lives, they became selfish, grasping, covetous. Years passed, and they were growing rich, but were miserly, saving every possible cent. They pinched themselves, living almost like beggars, with thin clothing, poor fare, in fireless rooms. They gave nothing away to the relief of the need and distress about them. Appeals for God's work met with no response. Thus time passed till they had reached mid-life. Then the

breaking up of another home by the death of the parents, brought a little child into this cold, loveless, dreary home. At once the child found her way into both these withering hearts, and little by little the love awoke. Almost instantly there was a change. The home was brightened. The hoarded money was brought out and was spent more freely. The poor were remembered. God's cause received help. The faces that were growing old and cold with the lines of greed and grasping desire became soft and warm with love's subtle warmth. The two lives were transformed. God had saved them through a little child.

These are only familiar illustrations of what even human love does continually in this world. We do not know what God is doing for us when he gives us friends to love, especially when he gives us those the loving of whom costs us something. The blessing comes through the serving, through the giving out of life. An invalid or a suffering one in a home is oftentimes the means of softening, refining, and enriching all the household lives. When God sends you

one to love who becomes a burden upon your heart, who calls for sacrifice, service, patient care and thought and cost, lift up your eyes and reverently thank him, for there is a divine blessing for yourself in this ministering in Christ's name. Such loving helps in saving our souls. This is a losing of life which is in reality the finding of it.

But it is the loving of Christ which works the most wonderful transformations. It has changed millions of lives from sin, sordidness, cruelty, degradation, and crime, into beauty, gentleness, refinement, saintliness. It is nearly two thousand years since Christ died upon the cross, rested in the grave, and arose from the dead. All these centuries multitudes in each generation have believed in him and loved him ; and love for him has changed their lives, lifted them up and drawn them after him in holy devotion. His followers have learned the lessons of patience, unselfishness, endurance of wrong, forgiveness of injuries, compassion for the weak, pity for the lost, and kindly ministry to the needy and the sorrowing. The whole

blessed work of Christianity is simply the influence of the love of the unseen Christ in human hearts and lives.

“But how can we love one whom we have not seen and cannot see?” is a question which many ask. For one thing we may learn all the story of Christ as told in the Gospels, until we are familiar with it. Then we may remember that while Christ is unseen on the earth, he is as really present as he was during the years of his abode in Palestine. He promised, “I am with you all the days,” and he certainly meant just what he said. His presence does not depend on our seeing him.

Indeed, we never really see any of our friends. It is not the human form you can see that is the person you love. It is not your mother's face and hair and hand and body that you love; it is her soul, her spirit. It is not her body that is gentle, patient, kind, thoughtful, unselfish. A body cannot love. Even the most lovely face cannot itself be a benediction to you. It is the life that dwells in the body that is your mother. You can say of her, in a

sense that is true, "Whom having not seen I love." Take any friend who is much to you, on whom you lean, and it is not the body that you love. There is sweetness in a face, kindly warmth in an eye, thrilling inspiration in a touch. Why? Because of the soul that is in the body. But the body is not your friend, whom you have really never seen, since you cannot see truth, purity, love, sympathy, constancy, strength.

We cannot see Christ, but if we have become his, he is indeed our personal friend and is really to us all that such a divine Friend can be. What is it in your best human friend that is most to you, on which you lean most in weakness, which comforts you most in sorrow, which is the best help to you in any need or trouble? Is it anything in your friend which you can see? Is it not his truth, his wisdom, his love for you, his sympathy, his faithfulness, his constancy? Even if he is not with you at all so that you can see him, is he not still a strength to you, a comfort, a refuge, a help? The consciousness that he is your friend; that whatever else may

fail you he will not ; that he sympathizes with you, understands you, will be patient with you ; the assurance that if need be he will help you with all the capacity for helpfulness there is in him, — makes you strong, blesses you, gives you peace, though you see him not.

You cannot see Christ, but you believe that he is true, loving, faithful, touched with sympathy when you suffer ; that he knows all about you and loves you with a love personal, deep, tender, strong, everlasting. You know, too, that he has all power and that all his power is yours to support, keep, bless, deliver, protect, save you. You know that he has all wisdom — wisdom that never errs, that never counsels rashly, indiscreetly, short-sightedly, and that all this wisdom is for the guidance of your life, the ordering of your steps. As we think along these lines the unseen Christ becomes very real to us.

Loving this Friend whom we cannot see becomes then a blessed power in our life. For one thing we learn to trust him and leave in his hands all the affairs of our life. “In whom

though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye greatly rejoice."

"I cannot know why suddenly the storm
Should rage so fiercely round me in its wrath ;
But this I know — God watches all my path,
And I can trust.

I may not draw aside the mystic veil
That hides the unknown future from my sight,
Nor know if for me waits the dark or light ;
But I can trust.

I have no power to look across the tide,
To see while here the land beyond the river ;
But this I know — I shall be God's for ever ;
So I can trust."

Many people have altogether too narrow a conception of what Christ does for them. They think of him as forgiving their sins, changing their hearts, helping them in their purely spiritual affairs, and bringing them home at last to heaven. But there is nothing in our life which is not of interest to him, and true believing in Christ implies the putting into his hands of all our affairs. This may not always be easy. We like to have our own way, to carry

out our own plans. We do not like to have sorrow and disappointment break in upon us. Yet if he is to fashion our life into heavenly beauty, he must have his way with us. Thus we get a glimpse of the meaning of trial. If sorrow comes in place of the joy you had planned for yourself, it is because sorrow is better than joy would have been. Christ may oftentimes seem to be spoiling the beauty of our life ; but it is ours to trust him even then, and by and by we shall know that his way was wiser than ours. Tapestry weavers see only the wrong side as they weave.

“ My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me ;
I may but choose the colors —
He worketh steadily.
Full oft he weaveth sorrow ;
And I in foolish pride
Forget he sees the upper
And I the under side.”

Loving this unseen Saviour will draw us into his service. No transformation into his character is complete which does not make us like him in the devotion of our life to the good of

the world. Perhaps we sometimes overlook this, thinking of Christlikeness as gentleness, patience, meekness, purity, truth, without the active element. But when Christ put the thought of his mission into a sentence it was: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Not otherwise can we conceive of our mission as followers of Christ. We must follow him in self-denial and sacrifice, in the true laying of our life upon the altar of love. It is this that the world needs to-day — the life of Christ repeated in the lives of his people, in lowly services that shall fill the earth with the fragrance of love, and carry blessing into every nook and corner of it.

Not long shall he be to us an unseen Saviour.
We shall soon go to be with him.

"A little while, with tides of dark and night,
The moon shall fill;
Glad summer's glow be changed to shrouding white
And winter's chill.

A little while shall tender, winsome flowers
In beauty blow;
And ceaselessly, through shade and sunny hours,
Death's harvest grow.

A little while shall tranquil planets speed
 Round central flame ;
New empires spring and pass, new names succeed
 And lapse from fame.

A little while shall cold star tapers burn
 Through time's brief night ;
Then shall my soul's belovèd One return
 With dayspring bright.

How oft in golden dreams I see him stand,
 I list his voice,
As, winning largess from his lifted hand
 The poor rejoice.

But waking bears that vision dear away,
 My better part,
And leaves in me this pale and empty day,
 This longing heart.

I cannot see thee, but I love thee ! Oh,
 Thine eyes, that read
The deepest secrets of the spirit, know
 'Tis love indeed.

A little while ; but, ah ! how long it seems !
 My Jesus, come,
Surpass the rapture of my sweetest dreams,
 And take me home."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET OF PEACE.

“Let nothing disturb thee,
Nothing affright thee ;
All things are passing ;
God never changeth ;
Patient endurance
Attaineth to all things ;
Who God possesseth
In nothing is wanting ;
Alone God sufficeth.”

Santa Teresa's Bookmark.

PEACE is possible to every believer in Christ. No Christian can say, “That is very beautiful. It shines in my friend's face like heaven's radiance. But it is not for me.” The peace of God is for every believer. God shows no favoritism in dispensing this blessing. There is great diversity in the natural gifts and abilities bestowed upon individuals. A violet could never become a rose. An apple-tree could never become an oak. A sparrow could never

reach the eagle's flight. An owl could never learn the canary's song. Not all men can become fine artists. Not all women can become sweet singers. If it were art, or music, or eloquence, or the poet's power, that was set before us as the ideal of a true life, many of us might say, "I never can attain that." In matters of original endowment God divides severally as he will.

But in grace the best is open to all. The divine peace is not for a few: it is a blessing which all may obtain. No matter how restless, how turbulent, how full of care, how naturally given to worry and anxiety, one may be, this sweet, quiet, restful peace of God is possible of attainment.

Yet there are a great many good people who have not yet learned the secret of peace. There are Christian men in business, and in the midst of life's affairs, who are always full of care, fearful of the outcome of their ventures, restless, tossed on the bosom of life's rough sea like leaves on the billows. There are women, Christian women, who love Christ and read their Bible,

and pray, and partake of the Lord's Supper, and work in the Sunday school, and in missionary societies, and who are very dear to Christ, yet whose lives are certainly full of little anxieties. They are easily annoyed. Their faces show lines of care and fret. Now and then they have brief seasons of restful trust, when they seem to have gotten the victory, but in a little time they are back again in the old broken restlessness.

This is not the best the religion of Christ can do for us. More than two hundred and fifty times does the word "peace" occur in the Bible. St. Paul, the homeless, hunted, suffering apostle, used it more than forty times, writing it oftentimes in prison, with a chain rattling on his wrist as he wrote. One of our Lord's sweetest farewell words was, "Peace I leave with you;" and when he came from the grave, three times did the benediction fall from his lips: "Peace be unto you." The ideal of life for a believer in Christ is one of peace.

It is very evident that this life of peace is not a life without care. Christ nowhere suggests the thought that his disciples are lifted out of

the common conditions of earthly life into a sheltered pilgrimage, where the storms do not beat upon them, where sickness and pain do not reach them, where there are no disagreeable people to live with and no adversities and disappointments to mar the calmness and quietness of the life from year to year. He said expressly that he did not want his disciples taken out of the world. The Christian is called to live in the midst of the ordinary conditions of life. The winds blow no more softly for him. Bad men are no more gentle because one of God's children is beside them. Sickness turns not away from a home because one of Christ's little ones dwells there. Circumstances are no more kindly because it is a Christian who is being hurt by their pitiless grind.

Care is one of the conditions of human life. The birds have no care. The lambs that feed in the meadows have no care. The savage who lives in nature's wilderness has but little anxiety. His wants are few, and his life lacks that sensitiveness which feels trials. But as life grows in the things that ennoble it and make it worthy

care increases. The love which the religion of Christ teaches makes our hearts more and more sensitive, so that instead of taking us out of the world's trying experiences it makes us feel its hardships and burdens all the more. Life's relationships all bring with them burden and anxiety. The peace which Christ promises is not made by emptying a little spot of all the darkness, suffering, and cost of its condition and setting us down into it.

Nor is this peace produced by so changing our nature that we shall not feel the things that cause pain and disturbance. To do this, our hearts would have to be robbed of the very qualities in them which are noblest and divinest. Only think what it would mean to you to have taken out of your life the possibility of suffering from the trials, the losses, the injustices and wrongs, the sorrows of life. To be made so that you would not feel these things would be to lose out of your heart the power to love and to sympathize.

Our purest joys and our deepest sufferings lie very close together. To have the capacity to

love and to be happy is to have also the capacity to suffer. Religion makes our hearts more gentle, more thoughtful, more sympathetic, and prepares us to be pained more, not less, by the frictions, the trials, the frets of life. The Christian suffers no less in sorrow, trial, and care because he is a Christian; he probably suffers more. It is no easier, in a human sense, for a friend of Christ to meet disappointments, adversities, bereavements, and losses, and to endure the frictions and annoyances of life, than it is for the worldly man; it may be harder. It is not by dulling the sensibilities that Christ gives peace. It is a peace in the heart which he gives, a peace which one may have within, while without storms are raging; a calm in the soul in the midst of external agitations and tumults; a quiet restfulness which holds the life in serene composure even while all things seem to be disastrous; a spirit unperturbed, unfretted, unruffled, in the midst of life's multitudinous cares.

What are the secrets of this peace? How is it to be gotten? St. Paul gives the answer in two very definite counsels. The first is, "In

nothing be anxious." Anxiety is worry. We cannot help having things in life that would naturally make us anxious. Yet come what may we are not to be anxious.

There are reasons for this counsel. Worry does no good. It changes nothing. Worrying over a disappointment does not give us the thing we wanted. Worrying about the weather does not make it cold or warm, cloudy or sunny. Worrying over a loss does not give us back the thing we prized. Our Lord reminds us of the uselessness of worry when he says that by being anxious about our stature we cannot make ourselves any taller.

Anxiety enfeebles and wastes one's strength. One day's worry exhausts a person more than a whole week of quiet, peaceful work. It is worry, not overwork, as a rule, that kills people. Worry keeps the brain excited, the blood feverish, the heart working wildly, the nerves quivering, the whole machinery of the life in unnatural tension, and it is no wonder then that people break down.

Anxiety mars one's work. Nobody can do

the best work when fevered by worry. One may rush and always be in great haste, and may talk about being busy, fuming and sweating as if he were doing ten men's duties, and yet some quiet person alongside, who is moving leisurely and without any anxious haste, is probably accomplishing twice as much and doing it better. Fluster unfits one for good work.

Anxiety irritates and frets one. A sweet spirit is an essential feature of every beautiful life. Ungoverned temper is not only unchristian, but is also most unlovely. There may be a difference of taste concerning many matters. What one thinks very beautiful in dress or manner, another may condemn. But no one thinks bad temper lovely. Yet worry leads to irritability, makes one censorious, querulous, of a complaining, repining spirit. One cannot have a uniformly sweet spirit, patient, gentle, amiable, without peace in the heart. Peace makes the face lovely even in homeliness. It curbs the tongue, that it shall speak no hasty, ill-advised, impatient words. It gives quiet dignity to all

the movements. Anxiety spoils many a disposition and writes lines of unrest and care upon many a face which ought to keep lovely into old age.

Then anxiety is sin. It is not a mere unhappy thing that wastes the strength, mars the work, and hurts the temper; it is also distrust of God. We say we believe in the love of God, and then we worry over what he sends—the circumstances he appoints for us, the tasks he sets for us, the place he assigns us, the path in which he leads us, the way he deals with us. Worry is sin.

Hence we are to set it down as a positive rule that we are never to be anxious. There are no exceptions. We are not to say that our case is peculiar; that even Job would be impatient if he had our trials; that even Moses would lose his temper if he had our provocations; or that even St. Paul would worry if he had our cares. This law of life has no exceptions. “In nothing be anxious.”

What then shall we do with the things which would naturally worry us? St. Paul tells us.

“In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” That is, instead of being fretted and distracted over the things which we cannot control, we are to put them out of our own hands into God’s by specific prayer, and leave them there. No human wisdom can explain the mysteries of life. No human hand can take the strange complication of life’s events and so adjust them that they will make beauty and happiness. But there is One to whose wisdom all life’s mysteries are open and clear. There is no confusion in this world as God’s eye looks upon events. What is keen trial to us to-day he sees resulting in blessing and good a little while hence. The thousand apparently tangled circumstances and events amid which our life is moving, are to him threads with which perfect loveliness is being woven.

We are not to try, therefore, to thrust from us the cares and trials that come to us clearly as God’s will, but are quietly to submit to them. It is this restless struggle against the things

we cannot compel out of our life that makes such pain and bitterness for so many of us. The bird which when put in the cage flies against the wires in wild efforts to be free, only bruises its body and beats its wings into bleeding wounds in unavailing struggle. Far wiser is the bird which when put in a cage begins to sing. If we would but learn this lesson and cheerfully accept the things we cannot resist as our Father's will for us, we would have peace in our heart and would get a blessing out of every trial.

“ Just to be still, though tempests break ;
To know he never would forsake
The heart he made to be his own ;
To know he is not King alone,
But Father — infinite in care
Of every waif that breathes the air —
If this be mine, how light the weight
I bear through changing time's estate.

Just to be joyous in to-day ;
To know time's floods — which sweep away
The gold and precious things of life,
With desolation's breathings rife —
Can never touch the arms I hold
Around my gems, more dear than gold,

Unless he wills — if this I know,
Fearless my footsteps come and go.

Just to be still and murmur not ;
To know he never yet forgot
The child he led ; to-morrow's care
To lay on him — my guide — to bear ;
To see the sunlight of to-day,
Nor sigh that it may fade away —
If this my part, my days shall be
Forecasts of immortality."

We are told that the peace of God shall guard our hearts and thoughts. It is a military figure that is suggested. Men sleep in quiet confidence, in their tents, with enemies all about, because waking sentinels keep watch through all the night. Our hearts may be quiet and confident in any danger because God watches. "The Lord is thy keeper." "He that keepeth thee shall not slumber." It is not a mere philosophy of self-control that is taught us. There is a keeping not our own. "The peace of God shall keep your heart and thoughts." It is possible, therefore, for us so to commit all our life's sorrows, cares, and alarms to Christ, that the divine love shall wrap us around like a

blessed atmosphere, quieting all fear and filling us with holy peace. One asks a question and then answers it :—

“ How shall I quiet my heart? How shall I keep it still?
How shall I hush its tremulous start at tidings of good
or ill?
How shall I gather and hold contentment and peace
and rest,
Wrapping their sweetness, fold on fold, over my
troubled breast?

The Spirit of God is still, and gentle and mild and sweet ;
What time his omnipotent, glorious will guideth the
worlds at his feet,
Controlling all lesser things, this turbulent heart of mine
He keepeth us under his folded wings in a peace serene
—divine.”

Is not the lesson worth learning at any cost ?
It can be learned ; it has been learned. Its one
secret is perfect submission to the will of God.
Every resistance or disobedience causes unrest
and sorrow ; but quiet acceptance, with loving
confidence and joyous song, will bring the peace
of God into the soul.

CHAPTER X.

IN TIME OF LONELINESS.

“ He never smiled so sweet before
Save on the Sea of Sorrows, when the night
Was saddest on our heart. We followed him
At other times in sunshine. Summer days
And moonlight nights he led us over paths
Bordered with pleasant flowers ; but when his steps
Were on the mighty waters, when we went
With trembling hearts through nights of pain and loss
His smile was sweeter, and his love more dear ;
And only heaven is better than to walk
With Christ at midnight over moonless seas.”

LONELINESS is one of the most pathetic of all human experiences. The yearning for companionship is one of the deepest of all yearnings. The religion of Christ has something to meet every human need ; what is its blessing for loneliness ? We may turn to the Master's own life for answer to our question. He met all the experiences that ever become ours, and he found for himself the best there is to be found

in the divine love to meet each experience. Thus he showed us what we may find in our times of need and how we may find it.

Christ's loneliness was one of the most bitter elements of his earthly sorrow. All great men are solitary men, for there are so few others in whom they can find companionship. Christ was the greatest man who ever lived on the earth. His very greatness of character made it impossible for him to have any real companionship among men. Besides, those whom he came to bless and save, rejected him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The only human relief to his loneliness along the years of his public ministry was in the love of his chosen friends, and this was most imperfect and unsatisfactory.

But we know where he ever turned for solace and comfort in his experiences. After a day of pain and suffering he would climb the mountain and spend the night in communion with his Father, returning in the morning renewed and strong for another day of beautiful life. In his darkest hour he said that though left alone

as to human companionship, he was not alone, because his Father was with him.

The comfort of our Lord's heart in his loneliness is for us too if we are walking in his steps. We too have our experiences of loneliness in this world, and we too may have the blessed companionship that shall fill the emptiness. In a certain sense all life is lonely. Even with sympathetic companionships all about us, there is an inner life which each of us lives altogether alone. We must make our own choices and decisions. We must meet our own questions and answer them ourselves. We must fight our own battles, endure our own sorrows, carry our own burdens. Friendship may be very close and tender, but there is a sanctuary of each life into which even the holiest friendship may not enter.

“ Still in each heart of hearts a hidden deep
Lies, never fathomed by its dearest, best.”

Blessed are they who in loneliness can say, “ Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” God's is the only friendship that can

really meet all our soul's deep needs and cravings. Human companionship helps us at a few points; the divine has its blessing for every experience. We never shall be left alone when we have Christ. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, he will ever stand close beside us. When other faces fade out of view his will shine out with tender love, pouring its light upon us.

There are special experiences of loneliness in every life for which Christ is needed. Youth is one of these times. Youth seems happy and light-hearted. Companionships swarm all about it. But oftentimes a young person feels lonely even amid such scenes and friendships. All life is new to him. As his soul awakes a thousand questions arise demanding answer. He is in a world with a thousand paths, and he must choose in which he will walk. Everything is mysterious. There are perils lurking on all sides. Choices must be made. Lessons must be learned. All is new, and at every step the voice is heard, "You have not passed this way heretofore." This

loneliness of inexperience, when a young soul is taking its earliest steps in life, is one of the most trying and painful feelings of all the years. If Christ be not then the companion, lonely and perilous indeed is the way. But if he walks beside the young soul in its inexperience all is well.

There are those who are lonely because they are homeless. It is impossible to estimate too highly the value and the helpfulness of a true home of love. Home is a shelter. Young lives nest there and find warmth and protection. There is also guidance in a true Christian home. Many of life's hardest questions are answered by a wise mother or father. Blessed is that young man or young woman who can take every perplexity, every mystery, every doubt or fear, every hunger, home to the sacredness of love's sanctuary, and who gets there true sympathy, patient counsel, and wise guidance.

Home has also its blessed companionship. It is the one place where we are absolutely sure of each other and do not need to be on our

guard. Youth has its unspeakable longings, its deep hungers, its cravings for tenderness. In the true home these are all met. Those who have such a home do not realize the half it is to them. It is the very shadow of Christ's wings over their lives, the very cleft of the Rock, the very bosom of divine love. Life's loneliness means far less to them while home shields them and blesses them with its companionships and its gentle, patient, wise, helpful, nourishing love.

But sometimes the home is pulled down over youth and its shelter broken up. Few things are sadder than homelessness. Loneliness begins to be really felt when the home is gone, when there is no longer a wise and loving mother to give her counsel in life's inexperience, to lay her hand on the head in benediction, to listen to eager questions and answer them, to restrain the impetuous spirit, to quiet the soul when it is perturbed and when its peace is broken, to lead through perplexing paths, to fill the hungry heart with the comfort of love when it longs for sympathy and com-

panionship. Bitter indeed is the sense of loneliness when a young person, used to all that a mother's love means, turns away from a mother's grave to miss thenceforward the blessings that have been so much in the past. Nothing earthly will in any full and adequate measure compensate for the loss. Other human friendships may be very sweet, but they will not give back home, with its shelter, its affection, its trust, its guidance, its soothing, its security.

Only less lonely is it for the young people whom circumstances take away in early years from the home where through childhood their life has been gently nourished. The home still stands, and the love is still there with all its blessed warmth, and letters can be sent and received, and now and then there can be a return for a brief stay in the sacred shelter. This mitigates the loss and the loneliness; yet even this experience is oftentimes a very sad one. Away from home there is always a loss not of love only, but also of protection. The young people who leave quiet rural homes for life in the midst of a great city, plunge into perils from which only Christ can shield them.

But blessed is that life which in any earthly homelessness can say, "Yet I am not alone, because Christ is with me." Blessed is that loneliness or homelessness which has Christ to fill the emptiness. With Christ unseen yet loved and made real to the heart by love and faith, even a room in a boarding-house may become a home, a sanctuary of peace, a shelter of divine love.

Another time of special loneliness is when sorrow strips off the sweet friendships of life. Old age is an illustration. Old people are oft-times very lonely. Once they were the centre of groups of friends and companions who clustered about them. But the years brought their changes. Now the old man stands alone. Still the streets are full; but where are the faces of forty, fifty years ago? There is a memory of vacant chairs, of marriage altars with the unbindings and the separations that followed. The old faces are gone. It is young life that now fills the home, the street, the church, and the old people are lonely because their old friends are gone.

Yet in Christ even old age can say, "I am not alone." No changes in life can take him away. He is the companion of life's feebleness. He loves the old people. There is a special promise for them: "Even to old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Christian old age is very near to glory. It will not be long till the old people reach home to stand again amid the circle of loved ones who blessed their youth and early years.

"So long thy power has blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

But not the old people only are left lonely by life's changes; sorrow touches all ages, and if we have not Christ when other friends are taken, desolate indeed shall we be. Blessed is that life, any life, which, when human friends are taken away, finds the friendship of Christ all-filling, all-satisfying, and can say, "Yet I am not alone, for Christ is with me."

The loneliest of all human experiences is that of dying. We cannot die in clusters, not even two and two ; we must die alone. Human hands must unclasp ours as we enter the valley of shadows. Human faces must fade from our vision as we pass into the mists. "I cannot see you," said one dying, as the loved ones stood about his bed. So it will be with each one of us in turn. Human love cannot go beyond the edge of the valley. But we need not be alone even in the deepest of all loneliness, for if we are Christ's we can say, "Yet I am not alone, for my Saviour is with me." When human hands unclasp, his will clasp ours the more firmly. When human loved faces fade out, his will shine above us in all its glorious brightness. When we must creep out of the bosom of human affection, it will be only into the clasp of the everlasting arms, into the bosom of Christ. Death's loneliness will thus be filled with divine companionship.

The inference from all this is our absolute need of the friendship and companionship of Christ, without which we can only sink away

into life's loneliness and perish. One reason, no doubt, why our lives are so full of experiences of need, is that we may learn to walk with Christ. If earth's human companionships satisfied us, and if we never lost them, we might not care for Christ's. If earth's homes were perfect, and if they never crumbled, we might not grow homesick for heaven.

“ There is a mystery in human hearts ;
And though we be encircled by a host
Of those who love us well and are beloved,
To every one of us from time to time
There comes a sense of utter loneliness.
Our dearest friend is ‘ stranger ’ to our joy,
And cannot realize our bitterness.
‘ There is not one who really understands, —
Not one to enter into all I feel ; ’
Such is the cry of each of us in turn.
We wander in a ‘ solitary way,’
No matter what or where our lot may be ;
Each heart, mysterious even to itself,
Must live its inner life in solitude.

And would you know the reason why this is?
It is because the Lord desires our love.
In every heart he wishes to be first ;
He therefore keeps the secret key himself,

To open all its chambers, and to bless
With perfect sympathy and holy peace
Each solitary soul that comes to him.
So, when we feel this loneliness, it is
The voice of Jesus, saying, 'Come to me ;'
And every time we are 'not understood,'
It is a call for us to come again,
For Christ alone can satisfy the soul ;
And those who walk with him from day to day
Can never have a 'solitary way.'

And when beneath some heavy cross you faint
And say, 'I cannot bear this load alone,'
You say the truth. Christ made it purposely
So heavy that you must return to him.
The bitter grief which 'no one understands,'
Conveys a secret message from the King,
Entreating you to come to him again.
The Man of Sorrows understands it well ;
In all points tempted, he can feel with you.
You cannot come too often or too near.
The Son of God is infinite in grace ;
His presence satisfies the longing soul ;
And those who walk with him from day to day
Can never have a 'solitary way.'"

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT KNOWING.

“ My heart gives thanks for yonder hill
That makes this valley safe and still ;
That shuts from sight my onward way,
And sets a limit to my day ;
That keeps my thoughts, so tired and weak,
From seeking what they should not seek.
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It shields me from the day to come,
And makes the present hour my home.”

Louise Bushnell.

SOME people say they wish they could know their future. They are sincere enough ; they wish they could. But this would not be a blessing. It is better we should not know. It would shadow and sadden our lives if we knew from the beginning all the trials and sorrows we shall have. This was one of the peculiar elements of the life of Christ ; he knew what lay before him. The cross cast the shadow over the manger where he slept his first sleep.

This foreknowledge made his life sadder than if he had gone on unaware of what was awaiting him.

It is one of the mercies of our life that we do not know what shall come to us. In the unopened years there may be waiting for us trials, disappointments, and losses. None of us know what chapters of sorrow will yet be written ere our life-story is finished. Would it be a blessing if the veil were lifted to-day, showing us all, down to the close, that will be painful or sad?

There are old people now well through life's journey. They have had many cares and trials. Friends have failed them. Children have been taken away. They have had struggles and hardships. They have endured sicknesses and losses. They have not found what they hoped to find in life. Supposing they had known all this, seen it all from some lofty spot when they set out in sunny youth; would it have been a blessing to them? Would it have made their life a happier, richer, better one? No; it would have cast a tinge of sadness over it. It would

have taken out of it much of that zest and interest which have been such inspiration to them through all their years.

If a man had known, for example, that after all his toil, pain, struggle, and self-denial, a certain great undertaking would fail, he would not have begun it. Yet perhaps that very labor of years, though it proved in vain at last, has been the richest blessing of his life. It drew out his soul's energies. It developed his strength. It taught him lessons of diligence, patience, courage, and hope. It built up in him a splendid manhood. The mere earthly results of our work in this world are but a means to a higher, nobler end, and are of small importance in comparison with what our work does in us. But if a man had known in advance that nothing permanent would come out of all his toil, economy, and self-denial, he would probably have said, "I may as well have an easy time. What is the use of working like a slave for forty or fifty years, and having only weariness and emptiness of hand at last?" Not knowing, however, that his efforts would fail

in the end, hoping that they would succeed, he lived earnestly, laboriously, putting his whole soul into them. His work failed, but he did not fail. There is no material result to tell men of any achievement, but there are imperishable results in the man himself, in life, in character, in manhood,—results far nobler than the noblest he could have achieved in mere material forms. It was better he did not know that all would fail, for if he had known it he would have missed all this good.

People say sometimes, in hours of great sorrow, that they wish they had never known the friend they have now lost. The friendship was deep, rich, and tender. It absorbed the whole life. It brought sweetest joy. It filled the heart during precious years. It was faithful to the end. There was no stain upon its memory. No falseness ever marred its nobleness. But just because the friendship had been so pure, so rich, so tender, so unselfish, so satisfying, its loss at last was such an overwhelming sorrow that it seemed as if it would have been better never to have had it at all.

Our deepest joys and our bitterest griefs grow on the same stalk. To love always involves suffering, sooner or later, for one or other of the friends, for there must some time be separation. One must be taken and the other left. One must go on alone from a new-made grave,

“Eyes lifted to the icy north,
Hands crossed, head bowed, heart frozen numb.”

If we knew that ours must be this deep anguish and loneliness some time, we might be tempted to say, “It is better to go through the years unblessed by tender love than to take into my life this joy only to lose it yonder, and then walk on without it, all the lonelier and more desolate for having had it so long.

But to do this would be to miss rich blessing and good. It might indeed be easier in a sense for us never to have any friends. It might spare us the pain and sense of loss when they are taken away from us. But we should miss meanwhile all that rich, pure friendships bring into our life. Love blesses us with unspeak-

able blessings. It saves us from ourselves. It inspires us for noble living. It transforms our dull nature and transfigures it. No depth of sorrow that can possibly follow the loss of the companionship could overbalance the blessing of a holy friendship given to us even for a few years. Tennyson says most truly in "In Memoriam :"—

“ 'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.”

To have known of the sorrow and loneliness, and to have shut one's heart against the friendship in dread of its loss, would have been to rob one's life of its best blessing. Even grief is not too great a price to pay for love. Love's blessing stays in the life when the beloved one is gone. Its influence is permanent. The work it does is on the soul's very substance and abides forever. Its impression is ineffaceable. Tennyson says again :—

“ God gives us love ; something to love
He lends us ; but when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.”

So it is better that we do not know the end of friendship's stories from the beginning, lest we might rob ourselves of love's blessing and good.

It is better, too, that we should not know the time of our death. If we knew it, it would take out of our life one of the strongest motives for earnest and noble living. If a young man knew, for example, that he would live to be eighty years old, he would be strongly tempted—human nature being what it is—to live leisurely, not to be in haste to begin his life-work, to postpone important duties, even to delay his preparation for death. The fact that he does not know how long he will live, that he may die even to-morrow, that he really has but to-day, and that he must put into the swift passing hours the best that he can do, acts as a constant pressure upon him in all duty. He dare not loiter, or something will be omitted that ought to be done and the end may find him with his tasks unfinished.

If, on the other hand, a young man knew that he would die at thirty, while it would make him intensely earnest, if he were a true-hearted

man and eager to crowd his brief days with noble living, it would tend to keep out of his life-plan all such things as he could not hope to finish before the end. Not knowing, however, how many years he may live, that possibly he may have till old age to work, he begins many things which will require scores of years to complete. He does not finish them, but he starts them. He plants trees which will bear fruit long after he is gone to his grave.

And after all, none of us really finish anything in our short life. We only begin things, and then leave them for others to take up and carry on. It is better, therefore, that we should work as for the longest life, though our days be but few. Hence it is better we should not know the time we are to live. It keeps in our heart all the while the element of expectation and hope, for we may live to reach fourscore. At the same time it holds upon us perpetually the pressure of urgency and haste, for any day may be our last.

Not knowing what is before us teaches us trust in God. If we could see all our paths

open in advance and knew just what is coming, what temptations, what rough places to be gone over, what heavy burdens to be carried, what enemies to be encountered, what duties to be done, we should grow self-confident, should try to direct our own life, and should not feel the need of God's guidance, help, shelter, and wisdom. One of the blessings of not knowing is that we must walk by faith ; and nothing could be better than this. Self-confidence is the bane of Christian life. It is through faith that we are saved.

A young mother holds in her own her baby's little hands. She knows that folded up in them is the tangled skein of a life's destiny. She knows that she must teach those hands to do life's duties. A deep sense of responsibility and fear fills her heart as she holds these little hands in hers and prints passionate kisses upon them.

“ How will they build, these little hands ?
Upon the treacherous, shifting sands,
Or where the rock eternal stands ?
And will they fashion strong and true

The work that they shall find to do ?
Dear little hands, if but I knew !
Could I but see the veiled fate
Behind your barred and hidden gate !”

Thus the mother's heart longs and cries as she holds her child's little hands in hers. But it is better she should not know what her child's life will be. It is better that this should lie wholly in God's hands. Her part is only to be faithful in the training of her child. She must lead its young feet in true and holy paths. She must fill its mind with pure thoughts and desires and awake in its soul all heavenward longings. All the rest she must commit to God and leave with him. That is better than if she could know all and herself be her child's guide. God is better than even the best, wisest, and most loving human mother.

In personal life also, as well as in work for others, it is better that we should trust God. The walk of faith is always the safest and the best of all earth's paths. If we knew what the day would bring to us we could not pray in the morning as trustingly as when we know only

that our times are in God's hands, not knowing what they shall be. Not only is there safety in thus leaving all in the divine hands; there is also an element of interest in moving ever amid surprises, new scenes, new experiences, new circumstances. We can say, —

“It may be that he keeps waiting
Till the coming of my feet
Some gift of such rare blessedness,
Some joy-so strangely sweet
That my lips can only tremble
With the thanks they cannot speak.

So on I go, not knowing;
I would not if I might;
I would rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I would rather walk with him by faith
Than walk alone by sight.

My heart shrinks back from trials
Which the future may disclose;
Yet I never had a sorrow
But what the dear Lord chose;
So I send the coming tears back
With the whispered word, ‘He knows.’”

Thus all along our earthly life we are shut in with God, as it were, in little spaces. We must live a day at a time. The mornings are little hill-tops from which we can look down into the narrow valley of one little day. What lies over the next hill we cannot tell. Perhaps when we come to it, it may reveal to us a lovely garden through which our path shall go on. Or it may show us a vale of shadows, or a path amid briers. No matter: we have but the one little valley of the day now in sight. Evening is our horizon. Here in this one little day's enclosure we can rest as in a refuge. To-morrow's storms and cares cannot touch us.

We should be thankful that life comes to us in such little bits. We can live one day well enough. We can carry one day's burdens. We can do one day's duties. We can endure one day's sorrows. It is a blessing that this is all God ever gives us at a time. We should be thankful for the nights that cut off from our view our to-morrows, so that we cannot even see them till they dawn. The little days, nestling between the nights, like quiet vales between the hills, seem so safe and peaceful.

“ I thank thee, Lord, that thou dost lay
These near horizons on my way.
If I could all my journey see,
There were no chance of mystery,
No veiled grief, no changes sweet,
No restful sense of tasks complete.
I thank thee for the hills, the night,
For every barrier to my sight,
For every turn that blinds my eyes
To coming pain or glad surprise ;
For every bound thou settest nigh
To make me look more near, more high ;
For mysteries too great to know,
For everything thou dost not show ;
Upon my limits rests my heart ;
Its safe horizon, Lord, thou art.”

I am glad I do not have to know the future.
I am glad I do not have to understand things.
It is such a restful experience to be able to
leave all in God's hands.

There may come times when it will seem to
us that if we could have known a little of the
future, it would have saved us much trouble.
If we had known that this business would turn
out so badly, we would not have gone into it.
But the experience has done us good, and we

could not have had the lesson without the experience. If we had known that this person was so dishonorable, we would not have taken him as our friend. But one of Christ's lessons was learned through a betrayal; and this brings us into fellowship with him at a new point. If we had known that a certain journey would have made us ill, we would not have taken it. But our sickness has been a blessing to us. If we had known that we should never see our friend again, we would not have parted from him in angry or impatient mood. But we have learned gentleness and thoughtfulness through our pain, and will never forget the lesson. No doubt in all such cases there is some reason why it is better we did not know.

We have no responsibility for results. It is ours only to be faithful to our duty; the rest is God's. The engineer down in the heart of the great steamer does not know whither the force he sets free will propel the vessel. It is not his place to know. It is his only to obey every signal, to start his engine, to quicken, or slow, or reverse it, as he is directed. He has

nothing whatever to do with the vessel's course. He sees not an inch of the sea.

It is not our part to guide our life in this world, amid its tangled circumstances. It is ours just to do our duty. Our Master's hand is on the helm. He knows all; he pilots us.

We may thank God that we cannot know the future, that we do not have to know it. Christ knows; and it is better to go in the dark with him than to go alone in the light, choosing our own way.

CHAPTER XII.

WORDS ABOUT CONSECRATION.

“ Oh, let me give
Out of the gifts thou freely givest ;
Oh, let me live
With life abundant because thou livest ;
Oh, make me shine
In darkest places, for thy light is mine ;
Oh, let me be
A faithful witness for thy truth and thee.”

Frances Ridley Havergal.

“I do sincerely and earnestly want to give everything to the Lord, my whole self and all that he has given me in trust. But I do wish he would show me more definitely what he wants me to do. I do not feel at all certain that my life up to the present time has been what he would have it to be. How much easier it would be if he would only say to me each day, ‘ Elise, do this.’ ”

Thus writes one who eagerly desires to be

altogether Christ's. Yet the desire seems to outrun the attainment. The difficulty is in knowing what the Master would have his disciple to do. She is ready, she believes, to do anything, to go anywhere, to take up any duty, to render any service, to make any sacrifice ; but she cannot hear her Lord's voice telling her his will. She longs for direct, definite, personal guidance.

But it is not thus that Christ guides us in duty. No pillar of cloud moves in the air above our head. No bright angel goes before us to show us the way. No divine voice is heard giving instructions as to the details of our work or service. Yet doubtless there is a way in which we may learn at each step what Christ would have us do. He would not require service of us and yet hide from us what that service is. If every one's life is a plan of God, it must be possible for us to learn the divine plan for our own life. God would not expect and require us to fill a certain place and do a certain work, and yet not be ready to give us clear and sure guidance. There is

nothing unreasonable or unjust in our Father's requirements. He would never demand any duty of us and not be willing to tell us what the duty is. We may therefore be sure that he will in some way direct us as to what he would have us to do.

How, then, may we learn God's will for us, his plan for our life, what he wants us to do? The first condition must always be entire readiness to accept his will for our life when it is made known. It is not enough to be willing to do Christian work. There are many people who are quite ready to do certain things in the service of Christ, who are not ready to do anything he might want them to do. Many of us have our little pet projects in Christian work, our pleasant pastimes of service for our Master, things we like to do. Into these we enter with enthusiasm. They are to our mind. We give ourselves to them eagerly and with ardor. We suppose that we are thoroughly consecrated to Christ's work because we are so willing to do these things. Possibly we are, but there is a severer test. It is not whether we

are ready to do things for Christ which we like to do, but whether we are ready to do just as heartily anything he may give us to do.

The heart of consecration is not devotion to this or that kind of service for Christ, but devotion to the divine will. It may not be any form of activity; sometimes it is quiet waiting. It is not bringing a great many souls to Christ, visiting a great many sick or suffering ones, attending a great many meetings, talking a great deal. Some weary one, shut away in the darkness, in the chamber of pain, may be illustrating true consecration far more beautifully than those whose hands are fullest of Christian activities in the bustling world. Consecration is devotion to the will of Christ. It is readiness to do, not what we want to do in his service, but what he gives us to do. When we reach this state, we shall not need to wait long to find our work. When the continual prayer is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the answer will soon be given in each case.

The next condition of consecration, resulting from this, is the holding of our life directly

and always at the disposal of Christ. Not only must we be willing to do his will, whatever it is, but we must do it. This is the practical part. The moment Christ wants us for any service we must drop everything and respond to his call. Our little plans must be made always under his eye, as fitting into, and as parts of, his perfect plan for our life. This is the meaning of the prayer we are taught to make continually, "Thy will, not mine, be done." We hold everything of our own most loosely, knowing that it is not our own, and that it may be asked for any moment. We make our arrangements and engagements, with the consciousness that the Master may have other use or other work for us, and that at his bidding we must give up our own plan for his.

We are apt to chafe at interruptions which break in upon our own favorite work. We anticipate a quiet, unbroken day in some occupation which we have very much at heart, or perhaps in some retirement which we have sought in order to obtain needed rest. We hope that nothing will spoil our dream for the

day. But the first hour is scarcely gone before the quiet is broken. Some one calls. The call is not one that gives personal pleasure. There seems no real necessity for it. Perhaps it is to ask a favor or some service which we do not see how we can render. Or it may seem even more needless and purposeless — a neighbor just dropped in to sit awhile, some one without occupation come to pass away an hour of time that hangs heavily. Or you are seeking rest and there breaks in upon your quiet a call for thought, sympathy, and help which can be given only at much cost to yourself.

In all such cases the old nature in us rises up in protest. We do not want to be interrupted. We want to have this whole day for the piece of work we are doing, or for the delightful book we are reading, or for the little pet plans we had made for it. Or we are really very tired and need the rest for which we have planned, and it does not seem to be our duty to let anything interrupt our quiet.

This is the way one voice within us meets these demands for time or service. But there

is another voice which says: "You are not your own. You belong to Christ. You have recognized and also voluntarily accepted his ownership in you and his absolute right to command you and all you have. You gave yourself to him this morning and gave him your day. You asked him to prosper your plans if they were his plans; if not, to let you know what he had for you to do."

It soon becomes very clear to you that the calls which have so disturbed you have some connection with your consecration and with your morning prayer. The people who called, Christ sent to you. Perhaps they need you. There may be in one a discouragement which you should change to cheer, possibly a despair which you should change to hope. With another it may be an hour of sore temptation, a crisis-hour, and the destiny of an immortal soul may be decided in a little talk with you.

Or if there is no such need in any of those who come in and spoil your dream of quiet, perhaps the person may bring a blessing to you in the very discipline which comes in the interrup-

tion. God wants to train us to such condition of readiness for his will that nothing he sends, no call that he makes, shall ever disturb us or cause one moment's chafing or murmuring. Ofttimes it takes a long while, with many lessons, to bring us to this state of preparedness for his will. The more of resistance and chafing there is when any bit of God's will breaks into our plans, the more need there is for such interruptions, until the lesson is well learned.

Once our Lord himself took his disciples apart to rest awhile, since there were so many coming and going that they had scarcely time to eat. But no sooner had they reached their place of resting than the eager people, flocking around the shore of the lake, began to gather about them with their needs, their sorrows, and their sicknesses. But Christ did not murmur when his little plan for rest was thus broken in upon. He did not resent the coming of the throngs nor refuse to receive them. He did not say to them that he had come to this quiet place for needed rest and they must excuse him. He forgot his weariness and gave himself at

once, without reluctance or the slightest withholding, with all of his heart's loving warmth and earnestness, to the serving and helping of the people who had so thoughtlessly followed him to his retirement.

At the well of Jacob, too, though so weary that he sank down exhausted to wait alone till his disciples came with food for his hunger, he yet turned instantly to the serving of the poor, sinful woman who came to draw water. He might have pleaded that he was too tired, but he did not. He even spoke of what he had done for the woman as the will of his Father.

From the example of our Master we get our lesson. He may follow us into our vacations and to our vacation-resorts with fragments of his will. He may call us out into the darkness and the storm on errands of mercy after we have wrought all day and have put on our slippers and prepared ourselves for a cosey rest with our loved ones around the home lamp. He may wake us up out of our sleep by the loud ringing of the bell, and send us out at midnight on some ministry of kindness.

We would seem to have excuse for not listening to these calls. It would not appear greatly unreasonable if we should say that we are exhausted and cannot go on these errands. There are limits to human strength and endurance. Perhaps, too, these people who want us have no just claims on us. Besides, why did they not send for us at an earlier hour instead of waiting till this most unreasonable time? Or why will not to-morrow do? Then we will be fresh and strong and the storm will be over.

But ordinarily none of these answers will quite satisfy the spirit of our consecration. It is the will of God that rings our bell and calls us out. Somewhere there is a soul that needs us, and we dare not shut our ears. A beautiful story is told of Francis Xavier. He was engaged in his missionary work, and hundreds kept coming until he was literally worn out. "I must have sleep," he said to his servant, "or I shall die. No matter who comes, do not disturb me. I must sleep." Hastening to his tent, he left his faithful attendant to watch. In a little while, however, the servant saw Xavier's

white face at the tent-door. Answering his call, he saw on his countenance a look of awe, as if he had seen a vision. "I made a mistake," said the missionary. "I made a mistake. If a little child comes, waken me." There are needs to which we dare not deny ourselves. When Christ sends the least of his little ones to us for any ministry — hungry to be fed, thirsty to receive a cup of cold water, in trouble to be helped, to refuse to answer the call is to neglect Christ himself.

This true consecration becomes very practical. There is no place in it for beautiful theories which will not work, for splendid visions which will not become hands and feet in service. "Consecration meetings," with their roll-call and their Scripture verses and their pledges and their hymns, are very pleasing to God, if — if we go out to prove our sincerity in the doing of his will.

Another condition of consecration is humility. It does not usually mean great things, conspicuous services, but little lowly things, for which we shall probably get neither praise

nor thanks. Most of us must be content to live commonplace lives. Ninety-nine hundredths of the work which chiefly blesses the world, which makes the bulk of human happiness, and which most sets forward the kingdom of Christ, must always be inconspicuous, along the lines of common duties, in home relationships, in personal association, in neighborhood helpfulness. It is in these lowly spheres that consecration must prove itself. It is here too that the noblest lives of the world have been lived. Sir Edwin Arnold has written beautifully of these obscure heroes: —

“They have no place in storied page,
No rest in marble shrine;
They have passed and gone with a perished age;
They died and made no sign.
But work that will find its wages yet,
And deeds that their God did not forget,
Done for their love divine —
These were the mourners, and these shall be
The crown of their immortality.

Oh! seek them not where sleep the dead —
Ye shall not find their trace;
No graven stone is at their head,
No green grass hides their face;

But sad and unseen is their silent grave —
It may be the sand or deep sea wave,
Or a lonely desert place ;
For they need no prayers and no mourning bell —
They were tombed in true hearts that knew them well.

They healed sick hearts till theirs were broken,
And dried sad eyes till theirs lost light ;
We shall know at last by a certain token
How they fought and fell in the fight.
Salt tears of sorrow unbeheld,
Passionate cries unchronicled,
And silent strifes for the right, —
Angels shall court them, and earth shall sigh
That she left her best children to battle and die.”

When we speak of consecrating our lives to Christ it is to the common deeds of the common days that we must think of turning. Consecration must first be a spirit in us, a spirit of love, a life in our hearts which shall flow out to every one we desire to bless and help and make better. Thackeray tells of one who kept his pockets full of acorns, and whenever he saw a vacant place in his estate he took out one and planted it. In like manner he exhorts his readers to do with kind words as they go through

life, never losing a chance of saying one. "An acorn costs nothing, but it may sprout into a prodigious bit of timber." To such a life true consecration prompts and inspires. It takes lowliness of mind in many of us to accept such obscure services. We think too often of some great things to be given to us to do when we devote ourselves to Christ.

"My soul was stirred ; I prayed : ' Let me
Do some great work so purely
To right life's wrongs, that I shall know
That I have loved thee surely.'
My lips sent forth their eager cry,
The while my heart beat faster.
' For some great deed to prove my love,
Send me, send me, my Master.'

From out the silence came a voice
Saying, ' If God thou fearest,
Rise up and do, thy whole life through,
The duty that lies nearest.
The friendly word, the kindly deed,
Though small the act in seeming,
Shall in the end unto thy soul
Prove mightier than thy dreaming.

' The cup of water to the faint,
Or rest unto the weary,

The light thou givest another life
Shall make thine own less dreary,
And boundless realms of faith and love
Will wait for thy possessing ;
Not creeds, but deeds, if thou wouldst win
Unto thy soul a blessing.' ”

These reflections may help us to answer the question of the letter at the beginning of this chapter. Christ tells us through our various relationships what he wants us to do each day, each hour. To the little child he gives duty through the parents' guidance, command, example, and teaching. In home life all relative duties become plain and clear. In our contact with friends and neighbors the voice of Christ speaks to us continually in the human needs that appeal to us, and in the opportunities of usefulness that come to us. In our church life, also, work is brought to our hand in the calls for service.

True, we cannot do everything that offers. There are many things, too, which we could not do if we were to try. "To every one his work," according to his gifts. There is wide room for

good judgment in choosing the things we can do and ought to do. God has given us brains to be used. We are to think for ourselves. It is very foolish for any one to try to have a hand in all manner of good work. "This one thing I do," is a motto which it is wise to follow in all lines of life. It is usually better that we do one thing well than give ten things a touch and then leave them.

The most useful people in any community are the plodders who make choice of one class of work and devote themselves to it year after year. It is better for most of us that we devote ourselves to the helping and uplifting of a few people than that we scatter our influence over hundreds. Then we can make impressions on their lives that will last forever. Jesus gave his whole public life to twelve men, but he so stamped his impress on their lives that they went out and moved the world.

We cannot expect the guidance that little children get in finding the duties of our consecration; but we shall never lack true guidance if only we will follow. One day's work leads to

another. One duty opens the way to another. We are never shown maps of continents with all the course of our life projected on them; but we shall be shown always the next duty, and then the next. If only we are obedient, there shall never come a time when we cannot know what our next duty is. One disobedience, however, breaks the continuity of the guidance, and the thread may be hard to find again. Those who follow Christ never walk in darkness.

There is need of preparation. The life must be holy that Christ will employ. The vessel must be clean that the King will use. The heart must be broken through which God's love may flow. Some one gives a consecration prayer: "Lord, take me, break me, make me," and tells the story of a golden cup which had been made out of old gold coins. These had lost the image and superscription originally upon them, and were then thrown into a melting-pot and wrought into a beautiful cup. So oftentimes a human life has lost its beauty; and then the Master takes it, breaks it, and makes it over again in form of beauty. Then the King will use it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DUTY OF SPEAKING OUT.

“ In the desert where he lies entombed
He made a little garden and left there
Some flowers that but for him had never bloomed.”

No doubt there is a duty of silence. There are times when silence is golden. But there is also a duty of speech. There are times when silence is sin. There are times when it is both ungrateful and disloyal to God not to speak of his love and goodness, or witness for him before men in strong, unequivocal words.

We ought to speak out the messages given us for others. God puts something into the heart of every one of his creatures that he would have that creature utter. He puts into the star a message of light, and you look up into the heavens at night and it tells you its secret. Who knows what a benediction a star may be to the weary traveller who finds his way

by it, or to the sick man lying by his window, and in his sleeplessness looking up at the glimmering point of light in the calm, deep heavens? God gives to a flower a mission of beauty and sweetness, and for its brief life it tells out its message to all who can read it. Wordsworth says, —

“ To me the meanest flower that blooms can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

Who can count up the good that even a flower may do, as it blooms in the garden, or as it is carried into a sick-room, or into the cheerless chamber of poverty?

Especially does God give to every human soul a message to deliver. To one it is some revealing of science. A great astronomer spoke of himself as thinking over God's thoughts after him, as he traced out the paths of the stars and the laws of the heavens. To the poet God gives thoughts of beauty which he is to speak to the world, and the world is richer, sweeter, and better for hearing his message. We do not realize how much we owe to the

men and women who along the centuries have given forth their songs of hope, cheer, comfort, and inspiration.

To every one of us God gives something that he wants us to say to others. We cannot all write poems or hymns, or compose books which will bless men; but if we live near the heart of Christ, there is not one of us into whose ear he will not whisper some fragment of truth, some revealing of grace or love, or to whom he will not give some experience of comfort in sorrow, some new glimpse of glory. Each friend of Christ, living close to him, learns something from him and of him which no one has learned before, which he is to forth-tell to the world.

Each one should speak out therefore his own message. If it be only a single word, it will yet bless the earth. If only one of the flowers that bloom in summer days in the fields and gardens had refused to bloom, hiding its little gift of beauty, the world would be poorer and less lovely. If but one of the myriad stars in the heavens had refused to shine, keeping its

little beam locked in its breast, the nights would be a little darker than they are. And every human life that fails to hear its message and learn its lesson or fails to speak it out, keeping it locked in the silence of the heart, leaves this earth a little poorer. But every life, even the lowliest, that learns of God and then speaks out its message, adds something to the world's blessing and beauty.

We ought to speak out our heart's gladness. There is something very strange in the tendency which seems so common in human lives to hide the gladness and tell out the misery. Any one who will keep an account of what people he meets say to him, will probably find that a large proportion of them will say little that is pleasant and happy and much that is dreary and sad. They will tell him of their bodily aches and pains and infirmities. They will complain bitterly of the heat if it is warm, or of the chill if it is cold. They will speak of the discouragements in their business, the hardships in their occupation, the troubles in their various duties, and all the manifold miseries, real or imagined,

that have fallen to their lot. But they will have very little to say of their prosperities, their health, their three good meals a day, their encouragements, favors, friendships, and manifold blessings.

But it is of this latter class of experiences that the world ought to hear the most. There is no command in the Bible which says we should empty the tale of all our woes into people's ears. We really do not have so many woes as some of us imagine we have. Of course everybody has some cares, pains, and losses. We cannot live in this world without such things. But most of us have at least a hundred mercies to one misery. We need cares, as a clock needs its weights, to keep our life machinery in healthy motion. God makes this world a little rough for most of us, to keep us from settling down too contentedly in it as our home.

But he does not want us to complain continually about the roughnesses that are for our good. It is neither loyal nor brave in us to do so, and surely it is not beautiful. None of us

think it beautiful in another when he speaks always of his miseries and never of his mercies.

Then we have no right to add to the world's shadows and burdens and pains by unloading our worries and frets into every ear we find open. It would be a far sweeter service if we would speak only of the pleasant things. And there always is something pleasant even in the most cheerless circumstances, if only we have an eye to find it. There is a legend which says that once Jesus and his disciples, as they journeyed, saw a dead dog lying by the wayside. The disciples showed disgust and loathing, but the Master said, "What beautiful teeth the creature has!" The legend has its lesson for us. We should see the beauty even in loathsomeness. Miss Mulock tells of a gentleman and a lady passing through a lumber-yard, by a dirty, foul-smelling river. The lady said, "How good the pine boards smell!" "Pine boards!" exclaimed her companion. "Just smell this foul river!" "No, thank you," the lady replied; "I prefer to smell the pine boards." She was wiser than he. It is far better for us to find the sweetness

that is in the air than the foulness. It is better to talk to others of the smell of pine boards than of the heavy odors of stagnant rivers.

There is a large field of opportunities for saying kind and loving words which will do good to others. Many people seem too chary of words of encouragement. They have the kindly thoughts in their heart, but they do not utter them. Of course there are things in many a breast that had better not be expressed. There are silences that are better than speech. Some persons indeed boast of saying always just what they think. That is very well so long as they think only nobly, charitably, generously, lovingly. But saying what one thinks means oftentimes speaking rashly, impulsively, in flashes of anger and bad temper, and then the words are not wise nor good. "As well say them as think them," says some one. No. Thinking harsh or unkind things hurts ourselves, but does not yet hurt others. A moment later we shall repent of the bitter thoughts, and if they have not been spoken we will be most thankful that they are not. If they are uttered,

however, they crash like darts into tender spirits and we never can withdraw them.

“ Oh, many an arrow will reach the heart
For which it was never intended,
If a careless marksman wings the dart,
And a hurt can never be mended :
And many a friendship may be lost,
And many a love-link broken,
Because of neglect to count the cost
Of words that are lightly spoken.”

We should never speak harsh, uncharitable, hurtful words, which will only give needless pain, break hearts, and sunder friendships, and which can never be unsaid. It is bad enough in ill temper to have even bitter thoughts of others, of our friends, of any who bear God's image ; but it is far worse to let such thoughts find utterance. Then the injury done is irreparable.

But we should never fail to speak out the kindly thoughts and feelings. Some people seem to think that the utterance of complimentary words, however well deserved, is weak, sentimental, and unworthy. But it is not, if the things said are sincere and altogether true.

Other persons fail to recognize the value of cheerful, hopeful words, and do not understand that it is worth while to speak them. The truth is, however, that words of encouragement, of inspiration, of cheer, are better oftentimes than angels' visits to those to whom they are spoken. We ought not to withhold that which it is in our power to give without cost, which will so richly bless hungry hearts and weary spirits.

“ If any little word of mine
 May make a life the brighter,
If any little song of mine
 May make a heart the lighter,
God help me speak the little word
 And take my bit of singing
And drop it in some lonely vale,
 To set the echoes ringing.”

Here is a young man in sore temptation. He is tangled up with evil associations which have thrown their chains about him. He is in danger of being swept away. You know it and see it all. You are near to him, and your heart is full of sympathy with him. You speak to some of your friends of his danger, but you do not say a word to him. Yet it may be that a

true word, the expression of your loving interest at the right time, might have saved him. Unspoken sympathy is little better than indifference.

Your neighbor is in sorrow. It is known for days and days that a loved one is hovering between life and death. Then the crape on the door announces that death has conquer'd and that the home is darkened. You want to help, but you shrink from intruding upon the sorrow. With a heart full of affection, longing to be of use, you do nothing. Is there no way by which your brotherly love might make your neighbor's load a little lighter or his heart a little stronger? Are we not too timid in the presence of others' sorrows?

God wants us all to be true comforters. The priest passed coldly by on the other side when he saw the wounded man. The Levite seemed to do better, for he drew nigh and looked upon the sufferer with a feeling of compassion. But his compassion issued only in a sigh, for he too passed on without giving any help. The good Samaritan alone illustrated love's whole minis-

try, for his sympathy took shape immediately in most practical relief. Sorrow is very sacred, and we must enter its sanctuary with reverence; but we must beware that we do not fail in affection's duty in the hour when our brother's heart is broken.

Perhaps it is in our homes that the lesson is most needed. There is a great deal of love there that never finds expression. We keep sad silences oftentimes with those who are dearest to us, even when their hearts are crying out for words. In many homes that lack rich and deep happiness, it is not more love that is needed, but the flowing out of the love in little words, acts, and expressions. A husband loves his wife and would give his life for her; but there are days and days that he never tells her so, nor reveals the sweet truth to her by any sign or token. The wife loves her husband with warm, faithful affection, but she has fallen into the habit of making no demonstration, saying nothing about her love, going through the duties of the home life almost as if there were no love in her heart. No wonder husbands and

wives drift apart in such homes. Hearts too need their daily bread, and starve and die if it is withheld from them.

There are parents who make the same mistake with their children. They love them, but they do not reveal their love. They allow it to be taken for granted. After infancy passes they quietly drop out of their intercourse with their children all tenderness, all caresses, and marks of fondness. On the first intimation of danger of any kind their love reveals itself in anxious solicitude and prompt efforts to help; but in the daily life of the home there is no show of tenderness. The love is unquestioned, but like the vase of ointment unbroken, it gives out no perfume. The home life may be free from all bitterness, all that is unloving or unkind, and yet it has sore lack. It is not in what we do that the secret of the want of happiness must be sought, but in what we do not do. Mrs. Sangster writes, —

“ It isn't the thing you do, dear,
It's the thing you've left undone,
Which gives you a bit of heartache
At the setting of the sun.

The tender word forgotten,
The letter you did not write,
The flower you might have sent, dear,
Are your haunting ghosts to-night.

The stone you might have lifted
Out of a brother's way,
The bit of heartsome counsel
You were hurried too much to say ;
The loving touch of the hand, dear,
The gentle and winsome tone,
That you had no time or thought for,
With troubles enough of your own.

The little act of kindness,
So easily out of mind ;
Those chances to be angels
Which every mortal finds —
They come in night and silence,
Each chill, reproachful wraith —
When hope is faint and flagging,
And a blight has dropped on faith."

It is not enough to love ; the love must find expression. We must let our friends know that we care for them. We must do it, too, before it is too late. Some people wait till the need is past, and then come up with their laggard sympathy. When the neighbor is well again,

they call to say how sorry they are he has been sick. Would not a kindly inquiry at the door, or a few flowers sent to his room, when he was ill, have been a fitter and more adequate expression of brotherly interest? When a man without their help has gotten through his long battle with business difficulties or embarrassments, and is well on his feet again, friends come with their congratulations. Would it not have been better if they had proved their care for him in some way when he needed strong practical sympathy? The time to show our friendship is when our friend is under the shadow of enmity, when evil tongues misrepresent him, and not when he has gotten vindication and stands honored even by strangers.

There are those, too, who wait till death has come before they begin to speak their words of appreciation and commendation. There are many who say their first truly generous words of others beside their coffins. They bring their flowers then, although they never gave a flower when their friends were living. Many a person goes down in defeat, under life's burdens, un-

helped, uncheered, and then, when the eyes are closed and the hands folded, there comes, too late, love enough to have turned the tide of battle and given victory, had it come a little earlier.

“ Delayed till she had ceased to know,
Delayed till in its vest of snow
Her loving bosom lay.
An hour behind the fleeting breath,
Later by just an hour than death, —
Oh, lagging yesterday !

Could she have guessed that it would be ;
Could but a crier of the glee
Have climbed the distant hill :
Had not the bliss so slow a pace —
Who knows but this surrendered face
Were undefeated still ? ”

Life is hard for many people, and we have no right to withhold any look or word or touch or act of love which will lighten the load or cheer the heart of any fellow-struggler. The best use we can make of our life is to live so that we shall be a benediction to every one we meet.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEARNING BY DOING.

“ The busy fingers fly, the eyes may see
Only the glancing needle which they hold,
But all my life is blossoming inwardly,
And every breath is like a litany ;
While through each labor like a thread of gold
Is woven the sweet consciousness of thee ! ”

Susan Coolidge.

THERE is a great deal more in life's common task-work than we dream. We think of it oft-times as the dreariest kind of drudgery. Many a man never learns to go to his daily toil with hearty enthusiasm. Many a woman never goes through her household duties but with a weary heart and a feeling of constraint. It is this dullness of life's common tasks that makes them seem so hard. If people loved them and took them up with delight, they would be light and easy, for love makes anything easy. It is the dreariness of this unending plod and grind

that wears out so many lives, not the real burden of it. People are fretted and become discontented as they must go every day over and over the same routine. It seems so idle. Nothing comes of it. Nothing is built up by all this toil, nothing beautiful is made by it. It is weaving ever only to have the web unwoven.

“ O trifling tasks so often done,
 Yet ever to be done anew !
O cares that come with every sun,
 Morn after morn the long years through !
We shrink beneath their paltry sway —
The irksome calls of every day.

The restless sense of wasted power,
 The tiresome round of little things,
Are hard to bear, as hour by hour
 Its tedious iteration brings ;
Who shall evade, or who delay,
The small demands of every day? ”

But is there no better way to look at all this dreary work? Is there no heavenly ray that may illumine it? Is it merely idle iteration? Does nothing come out of it all? Is it in any sense working for Christ? If we will answer these questions in the light of New Testament

teaching we shall see that there is a sense in which "drudgery" is indeed "divine." All this task-work our Father sets for us. This alone will give it grandeur, if we but realize it. "Let us not depreciate earth," says Lucy Larcom. "There is no atom in it but is alive and astir in the all-penetrating splendor of God."

"Lo! amid the press,
The whirl and hum and pressure of my day,
I hear thy garments sweep, thy seamless dress,
And close beside my work and weariness
Discern thy gracious form, not far away,
But very near, O Lord, to help and bless."

Besides, this very task-work which to many of us seems so dreary is one of God's ways of teaching us some of the greatest lessons of life. We are not in this world merely to do the pieces of work, large or small, that are set over against our hand. We are here to grow in strength and beauty of character. And it is not hard to see how this growth may go on continually amid life's daily toils and cares. If we are diligent, careful, faithful, prompt, accurate, energetic, in the doing of the thousand little things of com-

mon life, we are building these qualities meanwhile into our soul's fabric. Thus we are ever learning by doing, and growing by doing. There is an unseen spiritual building arising within us continually as we plod on in our unending tasks. Negligence in common duties mars our character. Faithfulness in all work builds beauty into the soul.

If we remember this as we go about our dull task-work it will grow bright under our hand. Every little fragment of it will appear as a lesson which our divine Master has set for us, in the learning of which we shall add a new touch to the spiritual temple we are building. There is a blessing in the doing of even the smallest duty. It lifts us a little nearer to God.

This lesson has a very wide application. Our Lord said that he that willeth to do the will of God shall know of the teaching. Doing is therefore a great deal more important in life than we sometimes think. In times past there has been a tendency to exalt believing, not unduly, for believing is always important, but to the disparagement of doing. Even now we are often

told that being is more important than doing. But there can be no noble being without noble doing. Character is built up by doing. According to our Lord's word, knowledge comes through doing. We can get to know more of our Father's will only by doing what we already know.

We never get to understand the Bible merely by studying it. It will not reveal itself to us until we begin to do what it teaches. He that seeks to obey it shall know it. Many people have the impression that there is something occult and mysterious about the words of the Scriptures. But this impression vanishes if they accept the divine teachings and begin to fashion their lives according to them. Many Christians will readily recall how dim and obscure faith in Jesus Christ seemed to them before they believed, when they were trying to find the way, and then how simple and clear it appeared after they had begun to follow the Saviour.

The same principle is found in other kinds of learning besides that of spiritual truth. A pupil wants to acquire music. He may get books and

a teacher and learn all the principles. But he can never become a musician save by practice. So one will never become an artist merely by studying the rules and principles of art; he must take his brush and paint as he studies.

It is the same with the Bible. You read a command with a promise annexed. You say, "I cannot understand that. I cannot see how if I do so and so, this shall be the result." While this is your attitude, the truth will not become plain to you. But if you accept the teaching as a revealing of a fragment of God's will for you, and begin to do it, light will break from it. As you obey the teaching, you shall know.

Duties seem hard. We think we cannot do them at all. The door appears shut before us, preventing our progress. But when we quietly and in childlike faith move forward, the door opens. The Israelites lay in their camp on the eastern side of the Jordan river. The command came to cross over. They struck their tents and formed their columns, ready to march. But still the river flowed on, with full floods, with

no sign of abatement. They began to move — the advance of the host is now only a few steps from the brink. Still the muddy water rushes on. Shall they turn back? Or shall they stand there on the edge of the river and wait for it to pause in its flowing to let them pass through? That is what many people do on the margin of life's rivers. But no; they willed to do God's will, and the advance guard of priests, bearing the sacred symbol of God's presence, paused not, but moved quietly on as though there were no river before them. The moment their feet touched the water's edge the flood was cut off above, and the channel was emptied. This old fragment of history has its living lesson. If we will to do God's will we shall find the way open for our feet. The path of duty is never really an obstructed path.

Daily life is full of points where this lesson may find application. One bright morning you give yourself anew to Christ. You resolve to do his will all the day. You will find the will of God not in your Bible only, as you read its words, but in many circumstances and experi-

ences ; for remember you are learning by practice, not merely by theory. Something goes wrong at breakfast. Some one says a quick word, needless of course, thoughtless perhaps, even rude it may be. It hurts, and the color flies to your face, the flash of anger to your eye, and the unadvised word to the very door of your lips. But there is a still, small voice which reminds you that you have willed to do God's will to-day. It is his will that you should keep your heart loving and sweet and not be provoked. Do it and you will learn the sweet meaning throughout all the day, in the blessing that will come to you.

Many of us find our plans broken into continually by what we are apt to call the accidents of life. The mothers in the home are interrupted all day and kept back in their work by their children who clamor for attention, for nursing, for care. Busy men meet constant hindrances which break into their hours and interfere with their plans. Who does not many a time have his day's beautiful schedule disarranged by little things that come in, without

announcement, and claim his thought, his time, his strength? Sometimes we may be disposed to chafe a little at what seems to be interferences with the programme we have mapped out for ourselves in the morning. But we should remember that we are learning by practice. We promised to do God's will all the day, and these things are God's will for us. We had left no place for doing things for God, and he had to force them into our well ordered schedule. Susan Coolidge has put this thought in very striking way in one of her poems — "Interrupted." The day's plan was made with the resolve that nothing should turn the feet aside.

“ But interruptions all day long,
 And little vexing hindrances,
Each weak, but all together strong,
 Came one by one to fret and tease,
 And balk my purpose, and displease.

Friendship laid fetters on the noon,
 And fate threw sudden burdens down,
And hours were short, and strength failed soon,
 And darkness came the day to drown ;
 Hope changed to grief and smile to frown.

Then I said sadly: ' All is vain ;
No use there is in planning aught.
Labor is wasted once again,
And wisdom is to folly brought,
And all the day has gone for naught.'

Then spoke a voice within my soul :
' The day was yours, and will was free,
And self was guide, and self was goal ;
Each hour was full as hour could be —
What space was left, my child, for *Me* ?

' Where was the moment in your plan
For work of mine which might not wait —
The need, the wish of fellow-man,
The little threads of mutual fate
Which touch and tangle soon or late ?

' These " hindrances " which made you fret,
These " interruptions " one by one,
They were but sudden tasks I set,
My errands for your feet to run :
Will you disdain them, child, or shun ?

Oh, blind of heart and dull of soul !
I only felt, the long day through,
That I was thwarted of my goal,
And chafed rebelliously, nor knew
The Lord had aught for me to do.

Forgive me, Lord, my selfish day,
Touch my sealed eyes, and bid them wake
To see thy tasks along the way,
Thy errands, which my hands may take,
And do them gladly for thy sake."

This is the only way God can get some of us to do anything for him. We have no time for his special work. We leave no little gaps in our schedule in which to do little errands for him. We crowd our hours so full of things for ourselves that we have not a moment left for ministries for Christ. The only way he can get us to do these things is to press them right into the midst of our scheduled hours.

Here is the lesson: These things that we call "interruptions" are little fragments of God's will breaking into the midst of the plans we had willed for our own pleasure or profit. We have set ourselves for the day to do his will, and we must not turn any of these interruptions away. He knows what he wants us to do. Supposing that we are tired, or that our own work is waiting, or that we are thwarted of our goal, dare we turn away from the service

which God is asking of us, — some little ministry to a child, some comfort to a sorrowing one, some gentle touch to a life that will carry the benediction for days, some showing of the path to a bewildered soul that knocks at our door asking the way, some lightening of the burden for one bowed down, — dare we, would we for worlds, turn away what God has sent us — these heavenly ministries, these tasks that angels would leap to do — that we may keep on with our own poor little earthly tasks ?

We must never forget, at least, that we are learning by doing God's will, and that God's will does not all come to us out of a written Bible. Some of it comes fresh from God's own lips in our life's circumstances. In whatever way it may come, we are to do it, and in doing it we will find a blessing. Hard tasks and duties are like nuts : they are rough and unsightly, and the hull is not easy to break ; but when it is broken we find it full of rich meat.

Once Jesus, tired and hungry, sat down by an old well to rest, while his disciples went to

the village to buy food. He was too weary to go with them ; but while he sat there exhausted, resting, a woman came to draw water. Weary as he was, he treated her with compassionate interest, entering into conversation with her, leading to spiritual themes, and saving her from her old sinful life.

That fragment of ministry was his Father's will for that hour. To be sure it broke into his rest, but he forgot his weariness in blessing a sad, lost life. Then when the disciples came with the food he was no longer hungry. They could not understand it. They thought some one must have brought him bread in their absence, but he said in explanation, and the words reveal a blessed secret of the spiritual life, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Taking up the duty that came to him, he found in the doing of it real food for his life. It is always so. Do the duty God sends ; do it gladly, lovingly, and you will find a blessing wrapped up in it. We get the goodness of divine love by doing the divine will.

Many people complain that they cannot be sure of the right path in life. They are continually coming to points where duty is uncertain. The way before them is dark, even close up to their feet. The horizon seems to shut down like a heavy curtain, or a thick wall, right before them. But here, again, this principle applies : " If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know." We can learn the path of duty only by walking in it. There is no promise of anything more than this. The word of God is a lamp unto our feet ; not a sun to light a hemisphere, but a lamp or a lantern to carry in our hand, to give light unto our feet, to show us just one little step at a time. If we move on, taking the step that lies full in the light, we carry the light forward too, and it then shows us another step. That is, we learn to know the road by walking in it. If we will not take the one step that is made clear, we cannot know the part of the way that is hidden in the shadow. But doing the duty that lies nearest will ever bring us to the next duty. Doing we shall know.

These are but little fragments of a great lesson which has very wide-reaching applications. We may get at least the heart of it, which is, that, doing our duty as it is made clear to us, we shall learn. Do the little of God's will you now perceive, and he will reveal more and more of it to you. Instead of wondering what mystery the long, unopened future holds for you, take the task, or the ministry of the moment now in sight, and do that.

God's will is an angel, bearing in his hand a little lamp to light you step by step on your heavenward way, at last bringing you to the door of home. If there are perplexities before you, simply begin to do your duty, — the little of it that is clear, — and the perplexities will vanish. If the task set for you seems impossible, still begin the doing of it. It would not be a duty and be really impossible. God never requires anything he does not intend to help us to do. The giving of a duty always implies strength to do it. In due time the mountain will yield to your faithful strokes. You will learn by doing. Life will brighten as you go on.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BENEDICTION OF PATIENCE.

“ O wait, impatient heart !
As winter waits, her song-birds fled
And every nestling blossom dead.
Beyond the purple seas they sing !
Beneath soft snows they sleep !
They only sleep. Sweet patience keep,
And wait, as winter waits the spring.”

PATIENCE and passion are near of kin. A fragment of etymology will shed light on the meaning of the words. Says Crabb, in his English synonyms : “ Patience comes from the active participle to suffer ; while passion comes from the passive participle of the same verb ; and hence the difference between the two names. Patience signifies suffering from an active principle, a determination to suffer ; while passion signifies what is suffered from want of power to prevent the suffering. Patience, therefore, is always taken in a good sense, and passion always in a bad sense.”

Patience, therefore, is the spirit of endurance, without complaint or bitterness, of whatever things in our life are hard to endure. It is a lesson that is hard to learn, but which is well worth learning at whatever cost. So important is it that our Lord himself said of it: "In your patience ye shall win your souls." That is, life is a battle in which we fight for our soul. The battle can be won only by patience. To fail in this grace is to lose all. This suggests how necessary it is that we learn the lesson, however hard it may be. Not to learn it is to lose the battle of life, and that is the losing of the soul.

In one of St. Paul's epistles is a benediction which in the Revised Version reads, "The Lord direct your hearts . . . into the patience of Christ." This is a benediction which all of us would like to bow our heads low to receive. In Christ's own life, patience, like all virtues, had its perfection. And his was not a sheltered life, without such trials of patience as we must endure, but one exposed to all that made it hard for him to live sweetly. He met enmi-

ties, antagonisms, and uncongenialities at every step. Besides, his nature was one that was sensitive to all rudeness and pain, so that he suffered in his contacts with life far more than we do.

Yet his patience was perfect. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He pressed upon them the gifts of love, but they rejected them. Yet he never failed in his loving, never grew impatient, never wearied in his offers of blessing, never withdrew his gracious gifts. He stood with his hands outstretched towards his own until they nailed those hands back on the cross, and even then he let drop out of them, from their very wounds, the gifts of redemption for the world.

His patience appears also in his dealings with his own disciples. They were very ignorant and learned their lessons very slowly. They tried him at every point by their want of faith, their lack of spirituality, and their weak, faltering friendship. But he never wearied in his love for them nor in his teaching.

His patience is seen, too, in his treatment of

the people who pressed about him wherever he went, with their clamors for healing. We have only to think what a motley mass an oriental crowd is, at its best, and then remember that it was the very wreckage of misery and wretchedness that came to him, if we would get a thought of the wearisomeness of moving day after day among these poor sufferers as Jesus did. Yet he never showed the slightest impatience with any of them, however loathsome or repulsive, but gave out freely and lovingly of the richest and best of his own precious life to heal and comfort them, even the vilest and most repulsive of them.

His patience with his enemies is also wonderful. It was not the patience of weakness ; for at any moment he might have summoned legions of angels from heaven to strike down his opposers. Nor was it the patience of stoicism that did not care for nor feel the stings of hate and persecution ; for never was there another life on earth that felt so keenly the hurts of human enmity. Nor was it the patience of sullenness, such as is sometimes seen

in savages, who bear torture in grim, haughty silence. Never did the world see any other patience so sweet, so gentle. He prayed for his murderers. He gave back gentlest answers to most cruel words. His response to the world's enmity was the gift of salvation. From the cruel wounds made by nail and spear came the blood of human redemption.

We see his patience also in his work. He saw very few results from his preaching. He was a sower, not a reaper. Multitudes flocked after him and heard his words, but went away unimpressed. Yet he never lost heart.

Thus to whatever phase of Christ's wonderful life we turn, we see sublime patience. He was patient in accepting his Father's will, patient toward the world's sin and sorrow, patient with men's unreasonableness, uncharity, unkindness, patient with ignorance and prejudice, patient in suffering wrong. Marvelous, indeed, is this quality in our Lord's life. Who is not ready to turn the benediction into a prayer, saying, "Lord, direct my heart . . . into the patience of Christ" ?

We all need patience. It is one of the rarest adornments of character. "Patience," says one, "is like the pearl among the gems. By its quiet radiance it brightens every human grace and adorns every Christian excellence." In the work of our life, too, and in our contacts with others, patience is essential. We need it in our homes. The very closeness and the familiarity of the relations of the lives within our own doors make it hard at times for us to preserve perfect sweetness of spirit. There is much undiscipline as yet in most earthly families! We too easily throw off our reserve and our carefulness, and are too apt now and then to speak or act disagreeably, unkindly. We assert ourselves, and are wilful and exacting.

It is easy in the frictions that too often are felt in our homes to lose patience and speak unadvisedly and unkindly. Husband and wife in their mutual relations do not always exercise patience. They seem to forget that love should never be ungentle, but should be thoughtful, kindly, affectionate in look and word and manner. Parents fail sometimes in the duty of

patience with their children. The children of a household, in too many cases, do not live together in that lovingness which belongs to the ideal Christian home. Many words are spoken which show irritation and even bitterness. Such words hurt gentle hearts, sometimes irreparably. But family-life ought to be free from all impatience. Wherever else we may fail in this gentle spirit, it should not be in our own home. Only the gentlest life should have place there. We have not long to stay together in this world, and we should be patient and gentle while we may.

“ The hands are such dear hands ;
They are so full ; they turn at our demands
So often ; they reach out,
With trifles scarcely thought about
So many times ; they do
So many things for me ; for you —
If their fond wills mistake,
We may well bend, not break.

They are such fond, frail lips,
That speak to us. Pray if love strips
Them of discretion many times,
Or if they speak too slow, or quick, such crimes

We may pass by, for we may see
Days not far off when those small words may be
Held not as slow or quick, or out of place, but dear,
Because the lips are no more here.

They are such dear, familiar feet that go
Along the path with ours — feet fast or slow,
And trying to keep pace. If they mistake,
And tread upon some flower that we would take
Upon our breast, or bruise some reed,
Or crush poor hope until it bleeds,
We may be mute,
Not turning quickly to impute
Grave fault; for they and we
Have such a little way to go — can be
Together such a little while along the way,
We will be patient while we may.

So many little faults we find.
We see them, for not blind
To love. We see them, but if you and I
Perhaps remember them some by and by,
They will not be
Faults then — grave faults — to you and me,
But just odd ways, mistakes, or even less,
Remembrances to bless.
Days change so many things — yes, hours;
We see so differently in sun and showers.
Mistaken words to-night
May be so cherished by to-morrow's light!
We may be patient for we know
There's such a little way to go."

We need the patience of Christ also in our mingling with others, in our business associations and contacts, in our social relations, and in all our dealings with our neighbors. Not all people are congenial to us in spirit and manner. Some want their own way. Some are exacting and unreasonable. Some fail to treat us kindly. Possibly in some cases the fault may be ours, at least in part. Others may think of us as we do of them, that it is hard to live peaceably with us. However this may be, the patience of Christ will teach us to bear sweetly and lovingly with even the most unreasonable people. He was patient with all, and we are to be like him. It is not to the gentle only that we are to show this grace ; any one can be patient with loving and gentle people, but we are to be kind to the froward and the evil. If we are impatient with any one, however unworthy or undeserving, we fail to be true to the interests of our Master, whom we are always to represent.

We need the patience of Christ in meeting the trials of life. We have but to remember how quietly he himself endured all wrongs, all

pain and suffering, to get a vision of a very beautiful ideal of life set by him for our following. The lesson is hard to learn, but the Lord can direct our hearts even into this sweetness of spirit. He can help us to be silent in the time of distress. He can turn our cry of pain into a song of submission and joy. He can give us this gentle peace, so that even in the wildest strifes our heart shall be quiet.

We need the patience of Christ to prepare us for his service. The moment we enter the company of his disciples he gives us work to do for him. We are sent to find other souls, to bind up broken hearts, to comfort sorrow, to help lost ones home through the gloom. All this work is delicate and important, and we need for it the patience as well as the gentleness of Christ. It must be done lovingly, in faith, un-hurriedly, under the Spirit's guidance.

The mothers need the lesson that they may wisely teach and train their children and not hurt their lives by impatience. All who are dealing with the young, with inexperience, all who work among the ignorant and the lost need

it. Those who would put their hands in any way to other lives need a large measure of the patience of Christ. We must teach the same lessons many times over and over, and if we grow impatient we may never see any result. If we become vexed with those we are striving to help, we hinder and spoil the beauty we are seeking to produce in their lives. Nothing but patience in the Christian worker fitly represents the Master. That is the way he would work. He would never show petulance or irritability, or any lack of perfect lovingness, in dealing with even the most trying life. In no other spirit or temper can we do this work for him. They are Christ's little ones with whom we are dealing as for himself, and we must seek to do his work for them as he would do it with those gentle hands and that gentle heart of his, if he were here.

We need Christ's patience also in waiting, as we work for God. We are in danger, continually, in our very interest in others, of speaking inopportunately, of trying to hasten our work. Eager, loving words, must wait the true time

for speaking them, else they may do harm. There are many who speak too soon to young souls, and only close the heart they sought to open. Even in our hunger we must not pluck the fruit while it is yet unripe.

How can we learn the lesson? Some of us find it very hard to be patient. Can we ever get the gentle grace into our life? Yes; Christ can teach it to us.

“He doth not fail
For thy impatience, but stands by thee still,
Patient, unfaltering,—till thou too shalt grow
Patient,—and wouldst not miss the sharpness grown
To custom, which assures him at thy side,
Hand to thy hand, and not far off in heaven.”

CHAPTER XVI.

HURTING THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

“ The elm was broken after many years ;
The great trunk yielded when it seemed most sound ;
And, while its wreck yet trembled on the ground,
A curious man, putting aside all fears,
Found in the wood fragments of broken spears
A lad had cast there in his round
Of boyish fun. He thought : ‘ The strength profound
Of Nature’s life, which every spring uprears
The tiny bud and cares for each small leaf,
Nursed well these wounds, the tree grew sturdily.’
One answered : ‘ Love’s hand, drawing out the steel,
Had outweighed years in its prompt service brief :
A weak place in the heart of man and tree
Leaves he who waits for time such wounds to heal.’ ”

Charles N. Sinnett.

It seems to have been the nurse’s fault. Perhaps she was only careless. However it may have been, the maiming that came to the child that day was something he never got over. Down along the years we see a man lame, so lame that he had to be carried about

by attendants, — crippled, unable even to walk, because that day the nurse tripped and fell with the baby. No doubt there are many people continually in the world who carry scars and injuries which mar their usefulness and cause them suffering or loss, simply through the negligence of those who in childhood were set as their guardians and protectors.

But there are other hurts besides bodily ones, which come to people's lives through the fault of others. There are woundings of children's minds which stunt or cripple them all their days, limiting or marring their development and hindering their usefulness. There are marrings of character which leave child-life distorted, wounded, scarred, deformed, sending men and women into the world unfitted for duty ; to be a curse, not a blessing ; to do harm, not good, to their fellows all their days. There are maimings of immortal souls in the cradle, in the home, in the school, which leave their sad mark on lives for all eternity.

George MacDonald says, "If I can put one touch of a rosy sunset into the life of any man or

woman, I shall feel that I have worked with God." That is very beautiful: but suppose it be not a touch of rosy sunset, but a touch of wounding, of marring, of defiling, that we put into a life,—have we not wrought with the enemy of souls, in the harming of immortalities?

We all know, too, that it is easier to do harm than good to other lives. There is a quality in the human soul which makes it take more readily, and retain more permanently, touches of sin than touches of holiness. Among the ruins of some old temple there was found a slab which bore very faintly and dimly the image of the king, and in deep, clear indentations the print of a dog's foot. So human lives are apt to take less deeply the image of the Father's face, and more ineffaceably the impressions of evil things. It needs, therefore, in us, infinite carefulness and watchfulness as we walk ever amid other lives, lest by some word, or look, or act, or disposition, or influence of ours, we hurt them irreparably.

The lesson touches home-life. It is a sad thing if we stumble with our children in our

arms, and maim them. It is sad if the harm be only in their bodies, making them lame or infirm through all their years; but it is sadder still when their characters are marred through faulty education or training; when they are sent into life unfitted for its duties, unprepared for meeting its responsibilities, only to fail in its struggles, because we were negligent in our training of them. Saddest of all is it when by sinful example, or by the lack of religious culture, we maim their souls, wound or scar their spiritual natures, and send them, moral cripples, into life. Greatest of crimes is the hurting of a child's soul.

But parents are not the only persons who may harm the lives of others. There is not a fallen life anywhere in the depths of sin and shame that once was not innocent and beautiful. Somebody whispered the first unholy thought in the unguarded ear. Somebody started the first suggestion of evil and kindled the first wrong desire in the breast. Somebody led the unwary feet into the first steps of wandering. Somebody first caused Christ's little one to

stumble, and after that, through all the years, the life was misshapen. There is always a first tempter, one who causes the innocent to stumble. The tempter may go his way, and may walk among honorable men with no brand upon his brow, with no finger pointed at him, while the victim of his tempting moves in weakness and sadness toward deeper shame and utter ruin. Society is full of such moral tragedies. But God does not forget. The hidden things shall be brought to light. The maiming or hurting of a soul, though no man know now whose the sad work is, some day will reveal its own story. Its secret will be declared in the glare of noon.

It is stated that within ten years a certain merchant in a great city lost six book-keepers by death. He could not understand the strange fatality attending these young men. The symptoms were similar in all the cases, and all the men finally died of consumption. An investigation at last convinced the merchant that the room in which the book-keepers worked was unhealthy. It was a small office in the back part of the building, into which no sunlight ever

came. The merchant then prepared another room, high up in his store, where the sunlight streamed in all day, and almost instantly the health of his men became better. Unconsciously he had been committing a sore wrong against the lives of his clerks. We may say this was only a bodily hurt; but does God not care for our bodies? Is it no sin to injure the health of another, to send men and women down their years with broken constitutions, unable for the tasks and duties that God assigns to them? Is there not a commandment against murdering the body?

The time must come when the law of Christian love shall assert its sway over all the relations of life. Employers must recognize it, and must treat every man, woman, and child in their service as a child of God. Business must recognize it, and the Golden Rule must become its basis, instead of the hard, soulless, godless, grinding law of greed and gain, which yet in too many establishments has sway. Men cannot afford to get rich by oppressing the hireling in his wages, by grinding the poor into the dust,

by doing injustice to the least of God's little ones. With the New Testament in our hand, containing the Sermon on the Mount, the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, and the thirteenth of First Corinthians, we dare not forget that all men are brethren, and that he who hurts the least or the weakest hurts Christ himself, and smites God in the face. There is need for very plain teaching all along the line of the great burning question of capital and labor. Men must learn that money which comes into their hands through the slightest wronging or harming of another life brings a curse with it. Or an employee may be unjust to his employer, and the law applies equally to him. There are not two gospels, one for capital and another for labor, and none are exempt from the law of love.

We may hurt our neighbors in many ways. We may do injury to their business, to their influence, to their good name. We may treat them rudely, unkindly, or we may do them harm by neglecting to do the good we owe to them. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no

meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." All about us are human needs which are silent prayers to us for help. We may shut our eyes, if we will, and say it is no affair of ours, and these suffering or imperilled ones may go down in the current, while we go on in our busy life and prosper. But we cannot thus get rid of the responsibility. They are our brethren, these hurt ones. Christ died for them. To pass them by is to pass him by. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Then the lesson has another side. It is not enough that we do not hurt the lives of others ; we must do the part of Christ in healing the hurts which have already been given. Everywhere they move, — children with pinched faces and sad eyes ; young people wounded in their souls by sin, victims of evil habits ; lives crippled and maimed ; the poor, hurt by man's oppression and greed.

A workman with a gentle heart told recently, with pathetic detail, how he had once saved the life of his canary-bird. The bird had

escaped from its cage into the room, and had flown against the surface of some boiling water. There seemed little hope of saving the poor suffering creature. But this kindly man quickly applied soothing remedies, and, with womanly gentleness, nursed the bird for many weeks, until at last he saw it fully restored, and heard again its sweet songs.

That is like Christ, who did not break a bruised reed. That is what we should do in Christ's name with the hurt lives about us, whether hurt by the wrong of others or by their own sin. We should pray for gentleness, — nothing but gentleness can perform such holy ministry. Then we should seek to be restorers of lives that are wounded or bruised. That is Christlikeness.

“ He hears one's life-blood dripping
Through the maddest, merriest hour ;
He knows what sackcloth and ashes hide in the purple of
power.
The broken wing of the swallow
He binds in the middle air.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COST OF BEING A FRIEND.

“All like the purchase; few the price will pay;
And this makes friends such miracles below.”

Young.

“Friendship’s best fate is, when it can spend
A life, a fortune, all to serve a friend.”

Katherine Philips.

WE use the word friend very lightly. We talk of our “hosts of friends,” meaning all with whom we have common friendly relations, or even pleasant acquaintance. We say a person is our friend when we know him only in business or socially, when his heart and ours have never touched in any real communion. There may be nothing amiss in this wide application of the word; but we ought to understand that in this use of it its full sacred meaning is not even touched.

To become another’s friend in the true sense is to take the other into such close, living fel-

lowship that his life and ours are knit together as one. It is far more than a pleasant companionship in bright, sunny hours. It is more than an association for mutual interest, profit, or enjoyment. A true friendship is entirely unselfish. It seeks no benefit or good of its own. It loves not for what it may receive, but for what it may give. Its aim is "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

There are many people who take others into what they call relations of friendship, but who think only selfishly of what these persons may be to them. They seek social advancement and hope to enter new circles through certain friends. Or they aspire to enter some brilliant intellectual *coterie* and seek the *entrée* by forming a friendly connection with one whose name is on the honored list. Or they wish to win business success, and they spare no cost to make friends of those who are influential in the community and can help them in the achieving of their ambition. Or they seek merely passing enjoyment, and choose for companionship one who seems amiable, kindly, congenial,

with a good measure of sweetness and power to please and thus minister to their own cravings. In all these instances there is nothing but selfishness, not one trace of true affection. To apply to them the name of friendship is to degrade and desecrate a sacred and holy word. The friendship that is true "seeketh not its own."

It costs to be a friend. "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health," runs the marriage engagement, and true marriage is a type of all true friendships. When we take a person into our life as a friend we do not know what it may cost us to be faithful to our trust. Misfortune may befall our friend, and he may need our help in ways that will lay a heavy burden upon us. It may be in his business or in his secular affairs that he shall suffer. Timely aid may enable him to overcome his difficulties and attain to prosperous circumstances. It is in our power to render him the assistance that he needs, without which he must succumb to failure. It will cost us personal inconvenience and trouble to

do this. But he is our friend. We have taken him into our life, thus becoming partner in all his affairs. Can we withhold from him the help which he needs and which we can give, without breaking the holy covenant of friendship and failing in our sacred obligations to him?

Or it may be the misfortune of sickness, broken health, that falls upon our friend. He is no longer able to be helpful to us as he was in the days when the compact of friendship was first formed. Then he could contribute his part in the mutual ministering, giving as well as receiving. Then friendship for him brought us no care, no anxiety; exacted from us no self-denial, no sacrifice; laid on us no load, no burden. On the other hand, it was full of helpfulness. It brought strength to our heart by its loving cheer. It was a benediction to our life, in its warm inspirations, in its sweet comfort, in its satisfying affection. It stood beside us in all our times of trial, with full sympathy, putting its shoulder under our burdens, aiding us by its counsel, its encourage-

ment. It brought its countless benefits and gains. But now in its feebleness and brokenness it can give us no longer this strong helpfulness and uplifting. Instead, it has become a burden. We must carry the loads alone which his friendship so generously shared. He needs our help, and can give in return only a weight of care.

For example, a wife becomes an invalid. In the early days of her wedded life she was her husband's true helpmate, his royal partner in all duty, care, toil, and burden-bearing. Her friendship brought back far more than it received. But now she can only lie still amid the cares and see her husband meet them alone. Instead of sharing his burdens, she herself has become an added burden which he must carry. But his love falters not for a moment. He loved her, not for the help she was to him, but for her own dear sake. Hence his love changes not when she is no longer a strong helpmate, but a burden instead, which he must carry. His heart only grows tenderer, his hand gentler, his spirit braver. He finds

even deeper, sweeter joy now in serving her than he found before in being served by her.

That is the meaning of true friendship wherever it exists. It is not based on any helpfulness or service which it must receive as its condition. Its source is in the heart itself. Its essential desire is to help and serve. It makes no nice calculation of so much to be given and so much to be received. It stops at no cost which faithfulness may entail. It hesitates at no self-denial which may be necessary in the fulfilment of its duties. It does not complain when everything has to be given up. It only grows stronger and truer and more constant as the demands for giving and serving become larger.

There is another phase of the cost of friendship which must not be overlooked,—that which comes with the revealing of faults and flaws and sins. We see persons at first only on the surface of their life, and we begin to admire them. We are attracted to them by elements that win our attention. As we associate with them we

become interested in them. At length our affection goes out to them, and we call them our friends. We walk with them in pleasant companionship that makes no demands on our unselfishness, and that discloses but little of their inner life. We know them as yet only on the surface of their character, having no real acquaintance with the self that is hidden behind life's conventionalities. Nothing has occurred in the progress of our friendship to bring out the things in their disposition which are not altogether lovely.

At length closer intimacy or ruder contacts reveal faults. We learn that under the attractive exterior which so pleased us there are blemishes, spots, flaws, infirmities, which sadly disfigure the beauty of the life. We discover in them elements of selfishness, untruthfulness, deceitfulness, or meanness which pain us. We find that they have secret habits which are repulsive. There are uncongenial things in their disposition, never suspected in the days of common social intercourse, which show offensively in the closer relations of friendship's inti-

macy. This is sometimes so inwedded life. The longest and freest acquaintance previous to marriage reveals only the better side of the life of both. But the same is true in greater or less degree in all close friendships.

This is oftentimes a severe test of love. It is only as we rise into something of the spirit of Christ that we are able to meet this test of friendship. He takes us as we are, and does not weary of us whatever faults and sins discover themselves in us. There is infinite comfort in this for us. We are conscious of our unworthiness and of the unloveliness that is in our souls. There are things in our lives which we would not reveal to the world. Many of us have pages in our biography which we would not dare to spread out before the eyes of men. There are in our inner being feelings, desires, longings, cravings, jealousies, motives, which we would not feel secure in laying bare to our dearest, truest, and most patient and gentle friend. Yet Christ knows them all. Nothing is hidden, nothing can be hidden, from his eyes. To him there is perfect revealing of the inner-

most springs of being. Yet we need not be afraid that his friendship for us will change, or grow less, or withdraw itself, when he discovers in us repulsive things. Mrs. Browning's sonnet voices what many of us have felt :—

“ If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
For life than pity, — I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge ; I should fear
Some plait between the brows, — some rougher chime
In the free voice. . . . O angels, let your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me ! do ye hear
What *I* say, who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face-to-face with God ? ”

Yet, what we would not reveal to gentlest-hearted friend of the innermost things of our life, not daring to trust the strongest, truest, most compassionate human friendship, lest the discovering of our faults, blemishes, and infirmities should cost us our friend, Christ knows

continually, and his eye sees always. Yet he loves us, loves unto the uttermost.

This is the ideal human friendship. It is not repelled by the finding of blemishes. Even if the friend has fallen into sin, the love yet clings, forgiving and seeking his restoration. No doubt there are such friendships. A gentleman had a friend whom through long years of intimacy he had learned to love deeply and to trust implicitly. A sacred covenant of friendship had passed between them and had been sealed and was regarded as inviolable. One evening he found his friend in great distress, and, pressing to know the cause, he received at last the confession of a sin, or a series of sins, involving debasement and dishonor of a very grievous kind in the past. The revelation almost killed him. After the first shock came revulsion. He would thrust his friend from him forever. But after a struggle, love triumphed. There were extenuating circumstances. His friend was weak, and had fallen under sore temptation, and was now penitent, crushed by a sense of shame and sorrow. The

sin was forgiven, condoned, put away forever, and the friend restored to the old sacred place. From that time their relations were closer than ever until the friend died, and since death the love is cherished most sacredly.

This was Christlike friendship. He loved his own in spite of all there was in them to hinder or check his love. We are apt to complain if our friends do not return as deep, rich, and constant love as we give them. We feel hurt at any evidence of the ebbing of love in them, when they fail us in some way, when we think they have not been altogether faithful and unselfish, or when they have been thoughtless and ungentle toward us. But Christ saw in "his own" a very feeble return for his deep love for them, a most inadequate requital of all his wondrous goodness and grace. They were inconstant, weak, unfaithful. They were ungentle. Yet he continued to love them in spite of all that he found unbeautiful and unworthy in them.

And this is the friendship he would teach his disciples. As he loves us he would have us

love others. We say men are not worthy of such friendship. True, they are not. Neither are we worthy of Christ's wondrous love for us. But Christ loves us not according to our worthiness, but according to the riches of his own heart. So should it be with our giving of friendship ; not as the person deserves, but after the measure of our own character.

“ He is not worthy, so you say,
 And hence my love is thrown away.
 You say, Of nature weak and small,
 Giving not much but asking all,
 He hath not grace to value it,
 This love so almost infinite.
 And if or not your words are true,
 'Tis thus and thus I answer you :

According to my cup I must
 Pour out my wine, although the dust
 Doth drink it up, when it should be
 A living draught perpetually ;
 And I must break my wheaten bread,
 Though none upon its strength are fed.

Remember that I must give as
 I have to give, not as he has.
 And that my nature, dear, not his,
 The measure of my giving is.

Remember love's heaven lies within
The heart that loves ; that it doth win
From its own great munificence
Its amplest, truest recompense."

These are illustrations enough to show what it may cost to be a friend. When we receive another into this sacred relation, we do not know what responsibility we are taking upon ourselves, what burdens it may be ours to bear in being faithful, what sorrow our love may cost us. It is a sacred thing, therefore, to take a new friend into our life. We accept a solemn responsibility when we do so. We do not know what burdens we may be engaging to carry, what sacrifices we may unconsciously be pledging ourselves to make, what sorrow may come to us through the one to whom we are giving our heart's love. We should choose our friends, therefore, thoughtfully, wisely, prayerfully ; but when we have pledged our love we should be faithful whatever the cost may be.

" If thou'rt my friend, show me the life that sleeps
Down in thy spirit's deeps ;
Give all thy heart, the thought within thy thought —
Nay, I've already caught

Its meaning in thine eyes, thy tones. What need
Of words? Flowers keep their seed.

Many there be who call themselves our friends ;
Yet, ah ! if heaven sends
One, only one, so mated to our soul,
To make our half a whole,
Rich beyond price are we."

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR UNSUSPECTED PERILS.

“Lord, I had chosen another lot,
But then I had not chosen well ;
Thy choice, and only thine, was good ;
No different lot, search heaven or hell,
Had blessed me, fully understood ;
None other which thou orderest not.”

Christina Rosetti.

MANY of life's worst dangers are unsuspected. Where we suppose there are good and blessing, there is really hidden peril. Disease lurks oftentimes in a soft, still, dreamy atmosphere, which we think delicious with its sweet odors, while the chill, rough, wintry blast, from which we shrink as too severe, comes laden with life and health. Most of us think of a life of ease, leisure, and luxury as the most highly favored lot, one to be envied. We are not apt to think of it at least as one of danger. Yet there is no doubt that a life of rugged toil,

hardship, and self-denial, which we look upon as almost a misfortune, is far safer than one of ease.

It is said that there was laid one morning on the minister's pulpit a little folded paper which, when opened, contained the words, "The prayers of this congregation are requested for a man who is growing rich." It certainly seemed a strange request for prayer. If it had been for a man who through misfortune or calamity had become suddenly poor; or for a man who was suffering in some great adversity; or for one who was in sorrow and distress, who had met with sore loss or bereavement, every heart would at once have felt deep sympathy. Such experiences as these are thought to be trying and perilous ones, in which men need special grace. We instinctively pray for those who are in any trouble. We think these need our prayers. We regard such conditions as fraught with danger. But to ask prayers for a man who was growing rich, no doubt to many people in the congregation seemed incongruous. Was he not indeed spe-

cially favored? Was he not receiving peculiar blessing? Should it not rather have been a request for thanksgiving for this man's success?

Yet when we open our Bible we find that the experience of growing rich is indeed set down as one full of spiritual peril. It was Jesus who said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" And St. Paul said, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all evil." There is no doubt that when a Christian is prospering and growing rich is indeed a time when he needs the prayers of God's people, whether they are requested and offered for him or not.

True, this is an experience which but few people are known ever to have dreaded. It is not often that men are heard to say that they are afraid to get rich. It is not the popular impression that this condition is one in which danger lurks. Yet thousands of souls have been lost in the valley of gold. Countless

men have buried their manhood in the fabrics of earthly prosperity which their hands have reared. Many a man's envied fortune is in Heaven's sight but the splendid mausoleum of his soul. We do indeed need the prayers of God's people if we are growing rich, that our hearts may be kept warm and soft ; that the fires may not be suffered to go out on the secret altar ; that we may continue humble and simple with all divine simplicity ; that we may be held ever near to the heart of Christ, and that we may be sheltered by the love of God from all the insidious dangers and hurtful influences that belong to the experience of growing rich.

Another kindred condition which, according to the Scriptures, hides an unsuspected peril, is one of unbroken prosperity. "Because they have no changes ; therefore they fear not God." Those who are thus described are free from trouble. They do not suffer from adversity, from misfortune, from losses, from disappointments. They move along, year after year, without any breaks in their human happiness.

It is not usual that such an experience as this is regarded as one of danger. Indeed, we naturally consider such persons peculiarly favored. For example, here is a home which has gone on for a long time without saddening changes. Business has been prosperous, and the circumstances of the household have become more and more easy. Additions have been made to the comforts and luxuries enjoyed in the home. There have been no long, serious illnesses, causing pain and anxiety, and draining the resources of the family. There have been no deaths, breaking the happy circle of loved ones.

No one naturally looks upon such a household as in any peculiar danger. The neighbors do not have special prayer requested for it in the church. Friends do not feel distressed about its condition. Yet there is no doubt that insidious moral dangers do lurk in such an experience of unbroken prosperity. Ofttimes it is true that God has less and less welcome in such a home. The fires burn low and then go out upon the altar. The voice of prayer dies

out of the home. Christ is lost out of the household life. And beneath the bright earthly prosperity the angels see spiritual death.

The same is true of individual life. Unbroken worldly prosperity is the bane of spiritual good. For one thing, it hinders growth in knowledge and experience. There are truths that can be learned better in darkness than in light. We should never see the stars if there were no night to blot out for the time the glare of the day. And there are truths in the Bible which are perhaps never learned in the brightness of human joy. There are divine promises which by their very nature are invisible in the noonday of gladness, hiding away like stars in the light, and revealing themselves only when it grows dark around us. The deeper, richer meaning of many a word of Scripture is learned only amid life's painful changes.

There are also developments in spiritual growth which cannot come in time of unbroken prosperity. The artist was trying to improve on a dead mother's picture. But the son said, "No; don't take out the lines; just

leave them, every one. It wouldn't be my mother if all the lines were gone." It was well enough, he said, for young people who had never known a care to have faces free from wrinkles ; but when one has lived seventy years of love and service and self-forgetfulness, it would be like trying to cover up the tracks of one's real life to take out the marks. The very beauty of that old face was in the wrinkles and the lines which told of what her brave heart and strong hands had done for love's sake. There is a blessing in such a life. But in the life of ease and luxury which many a woman lives, there hide sore perils.

Another of the unsuspected perils of "no changes" is in the lessening of dependence upon God. While all things go well with us, and there are no breaks in the flow of favors, we are apt to forget that all our good gifts come from our Father's hand. It is a sad hour in any life when consciousness of the need of God fades out of it. It seems pleasant to be able to go on, making plans of our own, and carrying them out without check or defeat.

We like to be victorious. We like to say that we are master of circumstances, that we make all things serve us, that we turn obstacles into stepping-stones, climbing continually upward upon them. But a little thought will show the peril that hides in this having always one's own way. It is not our own will, but God's, that leads to perfect character and to blessedness. Unless, therefore, we are doing always God's will, filling out his plan for our life, the unbrokenness of prosperity is not an unmixed good.

Most of us need to be baffled oftentimes in our schemes, to be defeated in our projects, to have our plans fail, to be compelled to yield to a stronger will. In no other way can the sense of dependence and of obligation be kept warm in the heart. If we always get our own way, we are apt, being human, to grow wilful, proud, and rebellious. Quiet trust in God and unswerving obedience and submission to his will can be learned at least by most of us only through long discipline and much thwarting of our own will. It is a sore misfortune to

any of us if in having our own way we forget God and cease to love and follow Christ. Says Archdeacon Farrar—and we would better read the words twice: “God’s judgments—it may be the very sternest and most irremediable of them—come, many a time, in the guise, not of affliction, but of immense earthly prosperity and ease.”

Another unsuspected peril of prosperity lies in its easy circumstances, which make toil and severe exertion unnecessary. It is the young who are most exposed to this danger. They are not required to work to provide for themselves. All that they need comes to them without effort of their own. Such young people are envied by those of their companions and neighbors who have to work hard to earn their own bread and to win whatever opportunities for improvement they may gain. The latter do not suspect that there is any peril lurking in the easy condition of those they envy. They suppose it is in their own condition that the disadvantages lie, in their poverty and hardship, and in the necessity in their

life for pinching economy and unceasing toil. They do not dream that theirs is really the safer condition, that there is a blessing in work and self-denial and care, and that there is always danger in ease and luxury.

The story of the outcome of life shows that early disadvantages, instead of being a hindrance to the development of what is best in manhood, are helpful and stimulating. Most people are naturally indolent, indisposed to exertion, needing to be impelled to it by the pressure of necessity. No greater blessing can come to young people than to be compelled to endure hardship, to bear the yoke in their youth, to have their exacting tasks to perform, their burdens to carry, their responsibilities to meet, their own way to make.

Another hidden peril of continuous prosperity is the dropping of heaven out of our life-plan. The years pass without break, and all things go on well and prosperously, until at length we begin to grow content with earth, and lose our hunger, our homesickness, for the city which hath foundations. Spiritual things begin to

have less and less interest for us and power over us. We grow materialistic, if not in our creed, yet in our life. Our souls begin to cleave to the dust, no longer flying aloft like the eagle, but grovelling like the worm.

This is a most serious peril. A picture which has no sky in it is without the highest beauty. "It is the horizon that gives dignity to the foreground." A life without sky in it is most unworthy and incomplete. A man who sees only bonds and stocks and deeds, bales of goods and blocks of houses, stores and factories and machinery and chimney tops, with no gleams above and beyond all these, of stars and blue skies and a Heavenly Father's face, is not living as an immortal being should live. There is no sky in his vision of life. This world is very beautiful in its place, and God means us to enjoy it and do faithful, earnest, and beautiful work in it; but it is only one little part of our Father's house. When in our thinking, planning, and doing we do not look beyond this world, we are not living worthily. When we lose the sky out of our life-vision the glory

fades from it. The only secret of spiritual safety and good in prosperous times is in keeping the eye fixed on heaven.

These are a few illustrations of the truth that the best things of life are oftentimes found in conditions that are not thought to be kindly or congenial, while in conditions regarded by men as exceptionally favorable and desirable there often lurk subtle perils to life's highest good. This truth lets in strong light upon some of God's ways with his people. He does not allow them to be hurt, even by kindness. He breaks the prosperity, that its bane may not leave poison in our lives. He gives us changes, that we may not forget him, but that the consciousness of our dependence upon him may never fade out. He thwarts us when we would let our own folly rule us, and baffles us when our selfish ambitions would only work our ruin. He breaks into our plans and schemes with the resistless requirements of his own will, to save us from the wilfulness which would destroy us. He lets us have hardship and toil, that our lives may be disciplined into strength and energy.

These are not pleasant interferences, for they break into our cherished hopes, and cut oft-times into our very heart ; but they are blessings which some day in the clearer light of the future we shall recognize and for which we shall give thanks. Our heart shall then sing :—

“ Lord, for the erring thought
Not into evil wrought ;
Lord, for the wicked will,
Betrayed and baffled still ;
For the heart from itself kept,
Our thanksgiving accept.

For ignorant hopes that were
Broken to our blind prayer ;
For pain, death, sorrow sent
Unto our chastisement ;
For all loss of seeming good,
Quicken our gratitude.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BEARING OF OUR BURDEN.

“ Put any burden upon me, only sustain me.
Send me anywhere, only go with me.
Sever any tie but the one that binds me
To thy service and to thy heart.”

Fly-leaf, Miss Brigham's Bible.

WE all have our burdens. Of course they are not the same in all of us. Some are more evident than others. There are people whose burdens we all see. These get our compassion and our sympathy. We come up to them with love's warmth and help. There are others, however, whose burdens are not visible or apparent. These seem to us to have no trouble, no struggle, no load to carry. We envy their lot. But probably if we knew all about their condition that the angels know, our envy would change to sympathy. The burdens that the world cannot see are often the heaviest. The sorrows that wear no weeds of mourning, and

close no shutters, and hang no crape on the door-bell, are oftentimes the bitterest and the hardest to endure.

It is not wise for us to think that our load is greater than our neighbor's ; perhaps his is greater than ours, although to us he seems to have none at all. We sometimes wish we might change places with some other persons we know. We imagine our life would be a great deal easier if we could do this, and that we could live more sweetly and beautifully than we do, or more usefully and helpfully. But most likely we are mistaken. If we could change places with any one, the one of all we know who seems to have the most favored lot ; if we could take this person's place, with all its conditions, its circumstances, its cares, its responsibilities, there is little doubt that we should quickly cry out to God to give us back our own old place and our own old burdens. It is because we do not know all, that we think our neighbor's load lighter and more easily carried than our own. We all have our own burdens.

There are three Bible words about the bear-

ing of burdens. One tells us that "every man shall bear his own burden." There are burdens which no one can carry for us, not even Christ, and which no one can share with us; we must carry them ourselves alone. This is true in a very real sense of life itself, of duty, of personal responsibility. No one can live your life for you. Friends may help you by encouragement, by sympathy, by cheer, by affection's warm inspirations, by counsel, by guidance; but after all, in the innermost meaning of your life, you must live it yourself. No one can make your choices for you; you must make them for yourself. No one can have faith in God for you. No one can believe in Christ for you. No one can meet the obligations of the moral law for you. No one but yourself can get your sins forgiven. No one can do your duty for you. No one can meet your responsibility for you. A thousand other people all about you may be faithful to their trust; but, if you fail in faithfulness, their faithfulness will not be of any avail for you. There is no vicariousness of this kind in life. You must live your own life.

No one can come up in loving interest and unselfishly take your load and carry it for you. A friend may be willing enough to do it, but it is simply impossible. David would have died for Absalom; he loved his erring son well enough to do it, but he could not do it. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Many a mother would willingly take her child's burden of pain as she sees its anguish, but she cannot do it. There is a burden which every one must carry for himself.

Then there is a second Bible word which tells us that we should "bear one another's burdens." So there are burdens in the carrying of which others can help us. No one can suffer for us, but true human friendship can put strength into our hearts to make us better able to endure our own sufferings. No one can do our duty for us, but human sympathy can nerve us for greater faithfulness and heroism in duty. Sympathy does not take away the pain, nor remove the sorrow, nor give back our dead, nor lighten the load; but it gives companionship, puts another shoulder under the burden.

It is a great thing to have brotherly help in life. We all need each other. Not one of us could get on without others to share his loads. We do not begin to live truly until we begin to put of our own strength into the hearts of others. We should notice that "Bear ye one another's burdens" is called "the law of Christ." We begin to become like Christ only when we begin to be of use, when we begin to help others, to make life a little easier for them, to give them something of our own strength in their weakness, something of our joy in their sorrow. Even the smallest ministries of unselfish helpfulness redeem a life from utter earthliness. Says Emily Dickinson :—

“ If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain ;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.”

The third Bible word about burdens is, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain

thee." There are burdens we must carry ourselves. There are others which our friends may help us to carry. Then there are those which we can cast only upon God.

This promise discloses special preciousness when we study it closely. In the margin of our Common Version we find the word "gift" as an alternative reading for "burden." Then in the Revised Version the marginal reading is, "That he hath given thee." "Cast that he hath given thee upon the Lord."

"That he hath given thee." It may be duty. Ofttimes the burden of duty is heavy. It is heavy with fathers, who must provide for their families, and hold and fill their places in the world's busy life. It is heavy with mothers, who have the home-care in their hands, with the training of their children. It is heavy with those that have large business interests intrusted to them, which they must manage wisely and faithfully. It is heavy with the minister who watches for souls. Duty is always enough to fill heart and hand, and sometimes it seems a greater burden than can be borne.

But it is "that he hath given thee," and therefore it may be cast upon God. He will help us in it, and then, we know it comes only for one little day at a time.

"Charge not thyself with the weight of a year,
Child of the Master, faithful and dear —
Choose not the cross for the coming week;
For that is more than He bids thee seek.

Bend not thine arms for to-morrow's load;
Thou may'st leave that to thy gracious God.
'Daily,' only, he saith to thee,
'Take up thy cross and follow me.'"

It may be struggle. Life is not easy for any of us. Every day is a prolonged conflict. We desire to live right; but there is an old law in our members, a law of sin, which contests every holy advance. We want to live lovingly, but the natural heart's bitterness keeps breaking out in us continually, in bad tempers, in ugly dispositions, in envies, jealousies, selfishnesses, and all hateful things. We wish to live purely; but the dark streams of lust ever well up out of the deep, black fountains of our being, staining the white flowers that Christ has planted in our

life's garden. Thus the days are full of struggle and conflict, and sometimes we feel that there is no use trying to be good. Yet this burden is "that he hath given thee," and therefore we may cast it upon God.

Or sorrow may be the burden. God has no children without sorrow, and in many cases the load seems too heavy to be borne; but again it is "that he hath given thee," and we may lay the burden on him who is mighty.

Or your lot in life may be your burden. It is uncongenial. The circumstances are unkindly. It seems to you impossible to live lovingly, to grow up into beauty, and to ripen into Christlikeness in your environment. But again it is "that he hath given thee." God planted you just where you are, and when he did it he knew it was the place in which you could grow best into noble character. He gives you this burden of environment, and you may cast it again upon him. Says Mr. Longfellow: "The every-day cares and duties, which men call drudgery, are the weights and counterpoises of the clock of time, giving its pendulum

a true vibration and its hands a regular motion ; and when they cease to hang from the wheels, the pendulum no longer swings, the hands no longer move, the clock stands still."

Our burden, whatever it is, is God's "gift," and has a divine blessing in it for us, if we take it up in faith, in love. "That he hath given" we may always bring to him again, seeking his help in bearing it for him.

"Thy burden is God's gift,
And it will make the bearer calm and strong ;
Yet, lest it press too heavily and long,
He says, 'Cast it on me,
And it shall easy be.'

And those who heed his voice,
And seek to give it back in trustful prayer,
Have quiet hearts that never can despair,
And hope lights up the way
Upon the darkest day.

It is the lonely load
That crushes out the light and life of heaven ;
But borne with him, the soul restored, forgiven,
Sings out through all the days
Her joy and God's high praise."

We need to notice also the precise form of the promise. It is not that the burden shall be lifted away from our shoulder, or that it shall be borne for us, but that we shall be sustained in carrying it ourselves. If it is God's gift, it is his will that we should keep it, at least for the time. There is some blessing in it for us, and it would not be kindness to us for God to take it away, even at our earnest pleading. It is part of our life, and is essential to our best growth. This is true of duty; however hard it is, to relieve us of it would be to rob us of the opportunity for reaching larger usefulness. It is true of struggle; all nobleness and strength of character come out of conflict. It is true of suffering; it is God's cleansing fire, and to miss it would be a sore loss to us.

Human love, in its short-sightedness, often seeks to lift away the burdens that seem heavy; but this is not God's way. He bids us keep our load, and then he gives us grace to bear it. He does not, every time we groan under a burden, run up to us and lift it away. This is often our way, but it is never God's.

Parents oftentimes think they are showing deep and true affection for their children when they make their tasks and duties seem easy for them; but really they may be doing them irreparable harm, dwarfing their life and marring their future. So all tender friendship is in danger of overhelping in the lifting away of loads, taking hindrances out of the way, when it would help far more wisely by letting God's arrangement of burdens alone. That is not the greatest kindness to us which seeks to make life easy as possible to us, but that which inspires us to do our best, and so to make something of us. Not a good time, but a God-like character, is the only true aim for a life. Hence, while God never fails us in need, he loves us too well to relieve us of weights which are essential to our best growth and to the largest fruitfulness of our life. He does not take the load from our shoulder, but instead he puts strength in us to enable us to carry the burden and thus grow strong.

This is the secret of the peace of many a sick-room, where one sees always a smile on

the face of the weary sufferer. The pain is not taken away, but the power of Christ is given, and the suffering is endured with patience. It is the secret of the deep, quiet joy we see oftentimes in the home of sorrow. The grief is crushing; but God's blessed comfort comes in gentle whispers, and the mourner rejoices. The grief is not taken away. The dead is not restored. But the divine love comes into the heart, making it strong to accept the sorrow and say, "Thy will be done."

"Nothing that hour was altered;
I had still the weight of care;
But I bore it now with gladness
That comes from answered prayer.
Not a grief the soul can fetter,
Nor cloud its vision when
The dear Lord gives the spirit
To breathe to his will, Amen."

CHAPTER XX.

THE INFLUENCE OF COMPANIONSHIP.

“ I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

THE power of life over life is something almost startling. There have been single looks of an eye which have changed a destiny. There have been meetings of only a moment, which have left impressions for life, for eternity. No one of us can understand that mysterious thing we call influence. We read of our blessed Lord that virtue went out of him and healed the timid woman who came behind him in the crowd and touched the hem of his garment; again, when the throng surged about him and sought to touch him, that virtue went

out of him and healed them all. Of course there never was another such life as Christ's; yet out of every one of us continually virtue goes, either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison, to stain other lives.

We are forever either adding to the world's health, happiness, and good, or to its pain, sorrow, and curse. Every moment's true living, every victory we win over self or sin, every fragment of sweet life we live, makes it easier for others to be brave and true and sweet. We are always giving out influence.

“Where'er a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts in glad surprise
To higher levels rise.

The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.”

Thus it is that companionship always leaves its impress. Eye cannot even look into eye, in one deep, earnest gaze, but a touch has been

left on the soul. An artist of distinguished rank would not permit himself to look at any but good pictures. He said the mere seeing of inferior paintings hurt the tone of his own conceptions. If this be true, how we should guard our hearts and minds against the receiving of any impression that is not refining and elevating. The reading of a book that is unworthy, the indulgence in thoughts or imaginations that are unwholesome, the admitting into the life even for a little time of a companionship that is not what it should be, cannot but lower the tone of the life.

A man well past middle life said, that in sensitive youth another young man drew him aside and furtively showed him a vile picture. He looked at it just for one moment and then turned away. But a spot had been burned upon his soul. The memory of that glance he had never been able to wash out. It had come back to him along all the forty years he had lived since, even breaking in upon him in his most sacred moments, and staining his most hallowed thoughts. We do not know what we

are taking into our life when we admit into companionship, even for one hour, one who is not good, nor pure, nor true. Then, who can estimate the debasing influence of such companionship when continued until it becomes intimacy, friendship; when confidences are exchanged, when soul touches soul, when life flows into and blends with life?

When one awakes to the consciousness of the fact that he has formed or is forming a companionship with another whose influence cannot but hurt him and may perhaps destroy him, there is only one true thing to do,—it must instantly be given up. A rabbit's foot was caught in the hunter's steel trap. The little creature seemed to know that unless it could get free, its life must soon be lost. So with a bravery which we cannot but admire, it gnawed off its leg with its own teeth, thus setting itself free, though leaving its foot in the trap. But who will say that it was not wiser thus to escape death, even with the loss of its foot, than it would have been to keep the foot and die?

If any one discovers that he is in the snare of evil companionship or friendship, whatever it cost him, he should tear himself away from it. Better enter into pure, noble, and worthy life, with one hand or one foot, or with both hands and feet cut away, than to save these members and be dragged down to eternal death. Young people should beware of the beginnings of evil companionship. It is like the machinery in the mill, which, when it once seizes the outermost fringe of one's garments, quickly winds in the whole garment and whirls the person's body to swift and terrible death.

But a good and true character has also its influence. Good companionship has only blessings and benediction for a life. There have been mere chance meetings just for a moment, as when ships speak at sea, and pass each on its course, never to meet again, which yet have left blessings whose influence shall never perish. There was an old legend about the origin of the pearl. It was said that a star dropped out of the sky into the sea, and being folded in a shell, became a pearl.

“There was a star
Which out of the height of heaven fell,
And was lost, ah me!
The beautiful star fell into the sea,
And falling, was folded into a shell;
And the beautiful star became a pearl
In the sea.”

So it is with the influence of good lives. Words, thoughts, songs, kindly deeds, the power of example, the inspiration of noble things, drop out of the heaven of pure friendship into the depths of the heart, and, falling, are folded there and become beautiful gems and holy adornments in the life.

“There was a smile
Which out of her eyes' blue heaven fell
As the sunbeams dart.
The beautiful smile fell into my heart,
And, falling, was folded in love's sweet shell,
And the beautiful smile became a song
In my heart.”

Even brief moments of worthy companionship leave their mark of blessing. Then, who can tell the power of a close and long-continued friendship, running through many happy years, sharing the deepest experiences, heart and heart

knit together, life and life woven as it were into one web? There is a little poem by a gentle writer which asks, "What is the best a friend can be?" and answers it. A friend is not only shelter, comfort, rest, refreshment, a guide, but also an atmosphere warm with all kindly inspirations of pure life which has no taint of death.

"Our friend is an unconscious part
Of every true beat of our heart;
A strength, a growth, whence we derive
God's health, that keeps the world alive.
Can friend lose friend? Believe it not.
The tissue whereof life is wrought,
Weaving the separate into one,
Nor end hath, nor beginning; spun
From subtle threads of destiny,
Finer than thought of man can see.
God takes not back his gifts divine;
While thy soul lives, thy friend is thine."

This is not sentimental exaggeration. Life indeed flows into life in true sympathetic union, and the two blend as the fragrance of the flowers blends with the air into which it is diffused. And ever after, each life carries something of the other in its very fibre and tissue, something

ineradicable. No one of us is ever altogether the same again when we have had a friend or even an intimate companion for a time.

“What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be.”

Our friends are also our ideals. At least in every beautiful friend's life we see some little glimpse of life “as it is in heaven,” a little fragment of the beauty of the Lord, which becomes part of the glory into which we should fashion our life. When we truly love a friend we unconsciously reach toward what he is and grow into or toward his likeness. Thus a father and mother are ideals to their child who copies their life, their speech, their faults as well as their virtues. The same is true in all friendships and close companionships. If these be not good, the influence can be only hurtful and evil.

There is a wonderful restraining and constraining power over us in the life of one we love. We dare not do wrong in the sacred presence of a pure, gentle friend. Every one knows how

unworthy he feels when he comes, with the consciousness and recollection of some sin or some meanness, into the companionship of one he honors as a friend. It is a kind of "Jesus-presence" that our friend is to us, in which we dare not do evil things. Thus one writes of the hallowing influence of a friend's pure presence:—

"Each soul whispers to herself: 'Twere like a breach
Of reverence in a temple, could I dare
Here speak untruth, here wrong my inmost thought.
Here I grow strong and pure; here I may yield
Without shamefacedness the little brought
From out my poorer life, and stand revealed
And glad, and trusting, and in the sweet and rare
And tender presence which hath filled the air."

George Eliot, too, puts a like thought thus: "There are natures in which, if they love us, we are conscious of having a sort of baptism and consecration. They bind us over to rectitude and purity by their pure belief about us; and our sins become the worst kind of sacrilege which tears down the invisible altar of trust." Another says, "A friend has many functions. He comes as the brightener into our life, to

double our joys and halve our griefs. He comes as the counsellor, to give a wisdom to our plans. He comes as the strengthener, to multiply our opportunities and be hands and feet for us in our absence. But above all use like this he comes as our rebuker, to explain our failures and shame us from our lowness ; as our purifier, our uplifter, our ideal, whose life to us is a constant challenge in our heart — ‘ Friend, come up higher, higher along with me ; that you and I may be those truest true lovers who are nearest to God when nearest to each other.’ ”

Even when they leave us in death the influence of our friends and companions abides upon us, like an afterglow when day is done. The memory of their purity is a gentle restraint upon us when we would sin. Many a mother is more to her children when she is in heaven than she was when with them on the earth. Whether they ever see us — those sainted ones in glory — we know not, but there is an influence ever in the sacred thought of them above us which inspires us to noble things. One exhorts :—

“Whether near or far,
On earth or in yon star,
 Their dwelling be,
So live that naught of dread
Would make us bow the head
Should we be told, ‘The dead
 Can all things see.’”

Thus the influence of companionship projects even far beyond the earthly story of those who touch and impress our lives. Indeed, we can never get away from it, and can never be as though we had not experienced it.

If these things are true—and no one can doubt their truth—this matter of companionship is one of vital importance. Especially is it important for young people to give most watchful thought and care to the choosing of their associates and friends. Of course, they cannot choose those with whom they shall mingle in a general way, at school, or in work or business. One is compelled oftentimes to sit or stand day after day beside those who are not good or worthy.

The law of Christian love requires that in all such cases the utmost courtesy and kindness shall be shown. But this may be done and the

heart not be opened to real companionship. It is companionship that leaves its mark on the life, that is, the entering into relations in which the spirits blend. Jesus himself showed love to all men, but he took into companionship only a few chosen ones. We are to be like him, seeking to be a blessing to all, but receiving into personal relations of affection and confidence only those who are worthy and whose lives will help in the upbuilding of our own life.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.”

“ Like a snowy mountain peak above us,
‘ Be ye perfect ’ dazzles our dim eyes.
Canst thou look from thy pure height and love us ?
May our earth-clogged feet to thee arise ?
We before the vision veil our faces,
Yet would have it not a ray less bright ;
Shine into our sin’s dark hiding places,
Flood our lives with thy transfiguring light.”

Lucy Larcom.

• “As it is in heaven” is the standard of the doing of God’s will on earth which the Lord’s Prayer sets for us. It is a high ideal, and yet there can be no lower. The petition is a prayer that heaven may begin in our hearts right here on the earth. Indeed, it must begin in us here or it will never begin at all for us. None can ever enter heaven save those into whom heaven has first entered. Heaven only can be wings to lift us to heaven. “The kingdom of heaven

is within you,” was the Master’s own word. Every one goes at last “to his own place,” the place for which his character fits him. There can be no heaven for men of unheavenly mind. It is time we had right views upon this subject. We must have the life of God in us before we are ready to dwell in blessedness with God.

A gentle author has recently said, “We are too much in the habit of looking forward to heaven as something that *will be* an easier, pleasanter story for us to read when we have finished this tiresome earth-narrative; a luxurious palace-chamber to rest in after this life’s drudgery is ended; a remote celestial mountain-retreat, where the sound of the restless waves of humanity forever fretting these shores will vex our ears no longer.” We forget that heaven is not far off yonder,—at least our heaven is not,—but begins right here in our common days, if it is ever to begin at all for us. Is not that what the prayer means —“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”? “On earth” — in our shops and stores and schools; in our homes and social life; in our drudgery

and care ; in our times of temptation and sorrow. It is not a prayer to be taken away out of this world into heaven, to begin there the doing of God's will ; it is a prayer that right here on the earth and now we may learn to live as they do in heaven.

When we think a little of the true mission of Christian lives in this world, — to make at least one spot of it better, changing briars to roses, darkness to light, hate to love, we see how important it is that our prayer be not, “ Lord, take me home out of all this sorrow and sin ; ” but, “ Lord, let me stay here longer and do thy will and bless a corner of earth.” Well does Susan Coolidge sing, —

“ When I sit and think of heaven so beautiful and dear,
Think of the sweet peace reigning there and the contentions here,
Think of the safe, sure justice beside the earthly wrong,
And set our ringing discords against celestial song,
And all the full securities beside ‘ O Lord, how long ? ’
Oh, then I long to be there, and in my heart I pray,
‘ Lord, open thou the pearly gates, and let me in to-day.’

And then I turn to earth again, and in my thoughts I see
The small, unnoted corner given in charge to me,

The work that needs be done there which no one else
will do,
The briars that rend, the tares that spring, the heart-
ease choked with rue,
The plants that must be trained and set to catch the
sun and dew ;
And there seems so much to do there, that in my heart
I pray,
' Lord, shut thy gate, and call me not, and let me work
to-day.' "

How do they live in heaven? What is that sweet, beautiful life into whose spirit we ask now to be introduced and ultimately to be altogether transformed? There all wills are in perfect accord with the divine will. We begin our Christian life on earth with hearts and wills estranged from God, indisposed to obey him. Naturally we want to take our own way, not God's. The beginning of the new life is the acceptance of God as our King. But not at once does the kingdom in us become fully his. It has to be subdued, and the conquest is slow. Christian growth is simply the bringing of our wills into perfect accord with God's. It is learning to do always the things that please

God. Tennyson puts this truth in striking way in two lines of "In Memoriam :"—

“Our wills are ours, we know not how—
Our wills are ours to make them thine.”

“Our wills are ours.” This is the profound truth of human sovereignty. God made us in his own image, made us free to do as we will. Even God himself cannot compel our will. “Our wills are ours.” Their freedom is inviolable. But this is only half the truth.

“Our wills are ours to make them thine.”

They are ours to give to God, to yield to his will. The giving must be our act, must be voluntary. Yet until we make this surrender, we have not begun to live the Christian life, nor have we begun to grow into that ideal holiness which is heaven's common life. We begin making our wills God's when we first begin to follow Christ. But it takes all life to make the surrender complete. Taught of God and helped by the divine Spirit, we come every day, if we are faithful, a little nearer doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven.

"Thy will be done." That means obedience, not partial, but full and complete. It is taking the word of God into our heart and conforming our whole life to it. It is accepting God's way always, cheerfully, quietly, with love and faith. This is not easy. Our natures do not incline us to do God's will. We like to have our own way. To obey God is oftentimes to take up a cross. Much of the doing of God's will is passive — letting the divine will be done in us. Sometimes this is like driving a ploughshare through our life's fair garden. It cuts into our plans and destroys our cherished expectations. Still, whatever this will may require, whatever it may crush, we know it is ever preparing us for the heavenly life.

In the wasting of the marble under the chisel the image grows more and more into the beauty of the sculptor's thought. When God's will cuts away our cherished things we know it is well, and that we are being fashioned into the beauty of the divine thought for us.

What is the heavenly pattern after which our lives are to be fashioned? Can we know

what we are to be? We get the answer in what God has given us as the rule for our life — his law. The divine law is summed up in one word—love. “Thou shalt love.” God is love. “As it is in heaven” means love wrought out in all pure, beautiful, holy life. “Thy will be done on earth” means therefore love in all earthly life. All the lessons may be gathered into one—learning to love. Loving God is first. Then loving God begets in us love to all men; for, as George MacDonald says, “When God comes to man, man looks round for his neighbor.” We cannot have the love of God in our heart and not love our fellow-men.

If, then, we know what love really is, we can readily find our pattern for life “as it is in heaven.” What is love? We have a portrait of it in St. Paul’s wonderful thirteenth of First Corinthians. “Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all

things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." Then we see the perfect incarnation of this vision of love in our blessed Lord's human life, as portrayed for us in the Gospels. "As it is in heaven" is like Christ.

But what is the love that is the whole of the will of God? Do we really understand it? Do not many of us think only of its earthly side? We like to be loved, that is, to have other people love us and live for us and do things for us. We like the gratifications of love. But that is only miserable selfishness, if it goes no further. It is a desecration of the sacred name to think that love, at its heart, means getting, receiving. Nay, love gives. Getting is earthly; "as it is in heaven" is giving. That is what God's love does — it finds its blessedness in giving. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." That is what Christ's

love did — it poured out its very life-blood to the last drop. The essential meaning of loving must always be giving, not receiving.

Perhaps our thought of the heavenly blessedness is often a selfish one, that it will be all enjoyment, all receiving. But even heaven will not be an eternity of self-gratification, of the bliss of receiving. Even there, especially there, where all imperfections will be left behind, love must find its supreme blessedness in giving, in serving others, in pouring out into other lives. It will forever there be more blessed to give than to receive, to minister rather than to be ministered unto.

“On earth as it is in heaven” means therefore not merely the gratification of being loved, but the blessedness of loving others and giving out the richest and best of one’s life for others. Sometimes we hear people sighing to have friends, to be loved. This is natural. We all hunger for love. But this craving may become unwholesome, even miserably morbid. As one writes, “It may be only a covetous outreach after a blessing which belongs to another, and

without which that other life must be left wholly unsunned and unrefreshed." A great deal more wholesome desire is the craving to give love, to be a blessing to others, to pour out the heart's sweet life to refresh other weary hearts.

It is God's will that we should love; it may not always be God's will that we should be loved. It seems to be the mission of some in this world to give and not to receive. They are set to shine in the darkness, burning up their own life as the lamp's oil burns, to be light to other souls, while no one gives light to them. They are called to serve, to minister, to wear out their life in giving sweetness, comfort, and help to others, while none come to minister to them, to pour love's sweetness into their hearts, and to give them daily bread of affection, cheer, and help. In many homes we find such lives—a patient wife and mother, or a gentle, unselfish sister—blessing, caring for, serving, giving perpetually love's richest gifts, herself meanwhile unloved, unserved, unrecognized, and unhelped.

We are apt to pity such persons ; but may it not be that they are nearer the heavenly ideal of doing God's will than are some of those who sit in the bright sunshine of love, receiving, ministered unto, but not giving or serving. Was it not thus with our Lord himself? He loved and gave and blessed many, at last giving his very life, but few came to give him blessing and sweetness of love in his own soul. It is more divine to love than to be loved. At least God's will for us is that we should love, pouring out our heart's richest treasures upon others, not asking meanwhile for any return. Loving is its own best return and reward.

“ This is life — to pour out love unstinted,
Good and evil, sunlike, blesseth he ;
Through your finite is his infinite hinted —
Children of your Father must ye be.”

Thus “ as it is in heaven ” shines ever before us as the ideal of our earthly life. It is not a vague, shadowy ideal, for it is simply the complete doing of God's will. Perfect obedience is heaven. Sometimes it is serving others, some-

times it is quiet, patient suffering, or passive waiting. The one great lesson to be learned is, perfect accord with the will of God for us every moment, whatever that will may be.

“Father, I do not ask
That thou wouldst choose some other task,
And make it mine. I pray
But this; let every day
Be moulded still
By thine own hand; my will
Be only thine, however deep
I have to bend, my hand to keep.
Let me not simply do, but be content,
Sure that the little crosses each are sent,
And no mistake can ever be
With thine own hand to choose for me.”

“As it is in heaven” may seem far above us to-day. The song is too sweet for our unmusical voice to sing. The life is too beautiful for us, with our imperfect, inharmonious nature, to live. But if only we are true to our Christian faith; if only we strive ever to do our Father’s will; if only we keep our heart ever open to the love of Christ and to the help and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, we shall rise

day by day toward heaven's perfectness, until at last we shall enter the pearl gates and be with Christ and be like him. For the present our striving and our prayer should ever be: "Thy will be done on earth, in us, as it is done in heaven."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ENDING OF THE DAY.

“Who’s seen my day?
’Tis gone away,
Nor left a trace
In any place.
If I could only find
Its foot-fall in some mind,
Some spirit-waters stirred
By wand of deed or word,
I should not stand at shadowy eve
And for my day so grieve and grieve.”

From “Rest, The Tranquil Hour.”

THERE is always a sacredness about last things. We remember the last things in the life of a loved friend who is gone,—the last walk we had together, the last talk, the last letter our friend wrote to us, the last book he was reading, with the mark at the place where he left off, the last piece of work the gentle hands did, the last words the dear lips spoke.

We are ever coming to last things, things we shall never meet again. Now it is the last hour of our day, the day which came to us new and clean in the morning, which we have spent well or ill, and which, however we have spent it, we cannot live over again. Now it is the last hour of a year which came to us with its thousand tasks and hopes and opportunities. Now it is the last hour of a life. The doctor says you can live but a little while, and if there are any matters you ought to attend to, you would better not put them off any longer.

But it is not death only that ends things. Each period of life has its closing which is as final and irrevocable in its place as death in its place. Childhood has its last hour. Childhood is the great sowing-time of life. Seed should then be sown in the tender soil, seeds that will grow up into beautiful things in the after years. This is the parents' opportunity. While it lasts love should be alert to pour into the young mind and heart the germs of all true and beautiful things. It is also the child's opportunity. A wasted childhood is apt to mean a marred, if

not a maimed, manhood or womanhood. There are things that can be gotten into the life only in childhood ; not to get these lessons, or qualities, or impulses, or tendencies, into mind and heart in the bright, sunny days, is to go through all the after years without them. Childhood has its last hour ; then the veil drops and we are done forever with that period of life. It never will come again to us.

Then, in turn, youth has its last hour. Youth is wonderful in its opportunities and possibilities. It is the time for training and storing the mind, the time for the forming of habits, the time for the selection of friends, the time for the choosing of a calling, the time for the shaping of character. There are things that can be gathered into life only in this period. Few of us have any adequate conception of the crippling of lives, the marring of characters, the spoiling of careers, the poverty of the results of toil along the after years, the failure of splendid hopes and possibilities, because of the misimprovement of youth.

There are thousands of men who struggle help-

lessly and hopelessly with the responsibilities and duties of places they were meant to fill, but which they cannot fill because they made no preparation for them in the days when preparation was their only duty. There are countless women in homes, with the cares and tasks of households now upon their hands, failing in their lot, and making only unhappiness and confusion where they ought to have made happiness and beauty, because in their youth they did not learn to do the common things on which in home-making so much depends. When the last hour of youth is gone, with its opportunities for preparation neglected and unimproved, there is nothing that can be done to repair the harm. "Some things God gives often. The seasons return again and again, and the flowers change with the months; but youth comes twice to none."

Thus each period of life has its own closing, its last hour, in which its work is ended, whether well done or neglected. Indeed, we may say the same of each day; its end is the closing of a definite season through which we can never pass again. We may think of each single day

as a miniature life. It comes to us new; it goes from us finished. There are three hundred and sixty-five days in a year. The only way to have a well-finished year is to finish the tasks and duties of each day as it passes. A marred or a lost day anywhere along the years may lead to loss or even sore misfortune afterward.

A student missed learning but one single lesson. At the end of the year the principal problem given to him in the examination fell in the lesson he had missed, and he failed in it. Then a hundred times in after years did he stumble and make mistakes in problems and calculations, because he had lost that particular day's lesson. Thus failure in any duty, any day, may fling its shadow to the close of life.

We are thus ever in last hours, because no hour is without its importance in its relation to other hours, and because no hour comes twice to us. Every hour is a last hour because we can never live it a second time. Then it is true, too, that any day or hour may really be our last. We are never sure of any to-morrow. One of the best measures and standards of living is to live

each day as if it were the last we should live. Supposing that one morning we were told that we should have but the one day now before us : how would we pass the day? Would we not be very careful not to grieve God? Would we not be faithful in all duty and all tasks, that nothing should be left undone, nothing unfinished, when the day closed? Would we not bear ourselves very lovingly and gently toward all about us, that the last day's memories might be kindly, without bitterness, or anything to cause regret?

“ We should fill the hours with the sweetest things

 If we had but a day ;

We should drink alone at the purest springs

 In our upward way ;

We should love with a life-time's love in an hour,

 If the hours are few ;

We should rest, not for dreams, but for fresher power

 To be and to do.

We should guard our wayward or wearied wills

 By the clearest light ;

We should keep our eyes on the heavenly hills

 If they lay in sight ;

We should trample the pride and the discontent

 Beneath our feet ;

We should take whatever a good God sent

 With a trust complete.

We should waste no moment in weak regret
 If the day were but one,
If what we remember and what we forget
 Went out with the sun.
We should be from our clamorous selves set free
 To work or to pray,
And to be what the Father would have us to be,
 If we had but a day."

If we knew that this present day were our very last, we should certainly strive to make it a most beautiful day. We should fill it with all loving service and gentle ministries. We should not mar it with selfishness and ugly tempers. We should awake every energy of our being to its best power, and should work with all our might. We should not have one moment to spare for discontent, for idle dreaming, for complaint or murmuring, for pride, for regret; we should crowd the day to its last moment with love's fidelities and duties.

Since any day may really be our last, we should live continually as if it were the last. We should make each day that God gives us beautiful enough to be the end of life. How may we do this?

We should keep all our work completed as we go on. This applies to our business and all our routine task-work. The week-day side of our life has a great deal more to do with our spiritual life, with the building of our character, with our growth in grace, than many of us think. Some people seem to imagine that there is no moral or spiritual quality whatever in life's common task-work. On the other hand, no day can be made beautiful whose secular side is not as full and complete as its religious side. If we have read our Bible, and said our prayers, and observed the commandments, and been reverent toward God and loving toward our neighbor all the day, and yet have been indolent or negligent in our business, letting things run behind, putting off important duties till to-morrow, not paying debts that fell due, not keeping engagements or promises, leaving affairs tangled and in confusion, at the going down of the sun, we cannot call our day's work well done.

Therefore, to be beautiful enough for the last day of life, each day must see all its work

done with painstaking carefulness and fidelity. Nothing must be left undone. No piece of work must be slighted or done in a slovenly way. No duty which belonged in the day must be postponed. Especially should all matters of business affecting or involving others be attended to, so that if we never come again to our desk there shall be no confusion, no entanglement, no hurt done to any one. Men have died suddenly, and their affairs have been left in such shape that they never could be straightened out. Others with large plans for philanthropic bequests have deferred the writing of their will until death snatched them away, leaving all their liberal intentions to fail through their own negligence. There should never be an hour in any man's life when instant dying would leave any of his matters in confusion, or in a shape which would cause litigation or controversy after he is gone, or so that his matured purposes concerning the distribution of his property shall come to naught. We should finish each day's work and close its business affairs as carefully and conscientiously as if we knew it to be our last day.

The same rule should be observed in all our relations with others. Long ago St. Paul taught that we should never let the sun go down upon our wrath. If frictions occur in our busy days, and strifes mar the pleasure of our intercourse with neighbors or friends, we must make sure — he said — that before the setting of the sun all bitterness shall pass out of our heart, as we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.” This is a lesson we would do well to carry into practice with very literal application. No resentment should ever be allowed to live in our heart over night. Every feeling of bitterness, of anger, of malice, of envy or jealousy, that the day may have aroused in our breast, should be put away before the last hour passes. If we have injured another by word or act, we should hasten before we sleep to make amends and seek the restoration of the peace of love which we have broken. If we have omitted any duty of kindness, any ministry of affection, which we ought to have rendered, we should hasten to do, even so tardily, the

neglected service, before the day altogether closes.

We should never lay our head on the pillow while any of the day's duties of love remain not done. We should never sleep with any friend's heart carrying hurt from us which we have not sought to heal with love. We should never let a day end with record of duty to one of the least of Christ's little one's neglected. God hears the cries of his children, and knows of their sufferings and their tears, when the help or the comfort they needed came not. We should never disappoint God when he expects us to be his messengers to his children in their pain or want.

No day should ever be allowed to close over us with its ministry of love unfulfilled, and its sins against love unatoned and unforgiven. We may never have another day in which to set things right that have gone wrong in this, to do the duties omitted, to show the kindnesses neglected, to unsay the angry or bitter words spoken, to undo the unloving things done. We should take heed, therefore, that the close of

each day shall leave all our relations with others so true, so right, so loving, that if that day should prove to be our last all shall be well.

So it should be also with our relation to God and to our own eternal future. We should let no day end for us without being at peace, our sins forgiven, our duty well done up to that hour. We do not know, when we lay ourselves down to rest any night, that we shall have another morning in this world. Therefore we should leave nothing uncertain as to our own awakening if it should be in the presence of God. Preparation for death is simply life's work well done up to the moment.

We need only, therefore, to make each day complete and beautiful with the completeness and beauty of fulfilled duty. There will always be sins and faults and mistakes in even the best day's record; but if we have been truly faithful, doing what we could, God will receive our work, blotting out its stains, filling up its defects, and correcting its faults. At the close of such a day we can breathe the beautiful evening prayer of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps:—

“Take unto thyself, O Father!
 This folded day of thine,
 This weary way of mine;
Its ragged corners cut me yet,
Oh, still the jar and fret!
Father, do not forget
 That I am tired
 With this day of thine.

Breathe thy pure breath, watching Father,
 On this marred day of thine,
 This wandering day of mine;
Be patient with its blur and blot,
Wash it white of stain and spot,
Reproachful eyes! remember not
 That I have grieved thee,
 On this day of thine.”

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