

GOLDEN RULE
MEDITATIONS



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GOLDEN RULE MEDITATIONS

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AMOS R. WELLS



United Society of Christian Endeavor
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I

ON SABBATHS

HOW beautiful is this Sabbath day! Spirits of rest brood in the heavens and walk about the earth. Something is missing from my shoulders; it is the burden of yesterday. My mind, yesterday so oppressed with cares, forgets even what load has been lifted. I have not planned for this peace. God, far back in the creation, and through all the wise ordering of the ages, has been preparing it for me. God has thrust it upon me, though yesterday I should have rejected it to continue my tasks. Ah! why has he not forced upon me a continual Sabbath? Indeed, may I not have it? These bird-songs are the same as Saturday. Saturday's sunshine was as holy, air as clear, and trees as gracious. The Sabbath has come within

me, for God and his world keep Sabbath all the time. Yield me the secret, O Father, by which thou dost carry on works so mighty with such abiding peacefulness. Let me teach my tasks to sing a Sabbath anthem with me. Let me teach my heart to cease from fretting on thy Sabbath days. Here on earth let me begin the Sabbath of eternity, whose toil is fruitful because it is untroubled, whose rest is perfect because it sings with labor. Draw me, Father of Sabbaths, close to thee and to thy peace.

II

ON UNDESERVED LOVE

MY loved ones love me as if I deserved their love. It is poured out unearned, slighted, and even rebuked. It is so great that a little kindness satisfies it, and it goes on. It is so foolish that it even transforms my faults into virtues, and sees something to love in all my ugliness. What angers others only pains my loved ones ; and the evil in me that others do not try to forget, they do not even remember. Or do they hide their pain when I slight them, as I afterwards hide my remorse and shame ? and is their contentment with me partly feigned, like my carelessness ? Let me cease to brood over such thoughts, that I may the more manfully make them impossible. O thou who dost see in all true disciples thy mother and sister and

brother, I cast upon thee all my burden of sin against my loved ones. Thy great love will fill up the great lack in mine. Thou wilt unburden me of the past, and thou wilt direct me into worthier ways. O thou who didst never cause a heart-ache, teach thy servant to love. O thou from whom affection never shrank abashed, teach thy servant to love. O thou who wert never too busy to be kind, teach thy servant to love. I will be taught of thee, and win myself from shame.

III

ON PALTRY SUCCESSES

I DID the best God then gave me to do, and felt depressed because God gave me no better. When shall I gain the healthy mind, the cheery spirit, that is triumphant when God works his will with me? Is not that to be illustrious enough? What matters it whether his will deals with my failures or my successes, with great deeds or petty deeds, so that it deals with me? It is more blessed to be used of God in small deeds than in great, because then I shall be sure that God honors me for myself and not for my works. It is better that the applause of men should be hushed, that in the silence I may hear God's approval. Would I have my patent of nobility signed by the scullion as well as by the king? Father, grant me the power to

leave my work, after it is done, with thee and not with men. Father, I would have no rival to thy "Well done!" Help me to such love for thee that I can spare men's praise. Nay, help me, Father, to such love for men that I can spare men's praise. What are we, that we should judge each other scornfully? Ah, what are we, that we should judge each other praisefully? Thou art the Judge, whether to exalt or depress. To thee alone we rise; from thee alone we fall; and not from men. Be thou so near me that, with all faithfulness to the world's work and all love for men, whether they love me or slight me, I may yet live to none but thee.

IV

ON A CROWDED LIFE

I AM troubled about my living. So much to do with power so slight, so many things with so little time, so sacred duties with so feeble inspiration. Requirement presses on requirement half accomplished, and the good keeps me so busy that I have no time to seek the better. Here and there, everywhere in my life, are loose ends, fragments of accomplishment. Nothing is beautifully finished. Nothing is rounded into solid usefulness. Some day will there not come a crash in all this ill-formed life of mine, tumbling it into fitting chaos? Creator, Father, shall I ever make myself what thou didst intend me? O forgive me, Father, that I forgot thou didst create me! O forgive me, Creator, that I forgot thy fatherhood! Thy creatures

crowd space beyond space, but thy love reaches farther. The time whose limits oppress me, thou didst create. The small strength which thou didst give me is akin to thy great strength, and may summon it. Thou didst create me and thou dost love me. So firmly by those two strands is my life knit to thine that if, while I am doing my best, my life should tumble into ruin, it must draw thine infinite being with it. O, that what I thus know with my mind I may know with my heart! Assure me of thy presence with me in my work. Teach me to form my life by letting thee form it. Tenderly draw me out of my fretfulness into thy peace.

V

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH

WHY do I fear death for myself? It is not because I dread the pain of dissolution, for the pain of a toothache is often worse. It is not a shrinking from the darkness beyond, because Christ has made it all light to me, proving that God is good. It is not doubt of a happy heaven; I have not so known my Saviour. Nor is it always, though it often is, unwillingness to leave the fair expanse of earth, its joys but little tried, my work in it so poorly done; for I know that death can mean no narrowing of enjoyment, no break in any true undertaking. More often my fear of death is born of others' fear. My dear ones, how they grieve when loved ones die! What pitiful, white faces, and choking sighs, and black garb, true em-

blem of darkened lives! And I know that, unworthy as I am of such love, their sorrow would be long and deep for me. So I fear death for myself because I pity others; yes, and I fear death for others because I pity myself. Their endless gain I count less than my few years of loss. Their emancipation, their exaltation, their enlargement, their riches of life with the Lord, — a selfish tear dissolves it all from my memory. Why cannot we be more brave, my loved ones and I? We are to live forever; why should we love like ephemerals? Why should the short separation to come embitter with salt tears our dwelling together here? To them and to me, O Lord of death and of life, gracious Lord of life and of death, grant the wisdom that sees things truly, grant the courage that knows but one Master, grant the love that is serene forever, resting on the arm of the undying One.

VI

ON MEN'S APPROVAL

YESTERDAY I was successful. I did my work swiftly and well, and won men's hearty praise. And then I worked the harder, and became still more successful, to win greater praise; but the praise did not come. Thereupon I became gloomy and discontented, and the lack of men's praise embittered all my work; so that I cried in anger, "What is the use of toiling for ungrateful men?" Thus I turned all my successes into failure, because I forgot that thou, O God, art my only success. And thus I turned all my accomplishment into ashes, because I forgot that thou, O Christ, art my only accomplishment — to win thy smile and thine indwelling. Will it be wrong if, in this coming day, I remember with joy as I work that men

will praise me for it? Is it wrong to be pleased with any applause but thine? Thou wouldst not say so, for thou didst teach us to care for human love ; and men's approval is sweet because their love is sweet. Yet forgive me, Lord, because I have set men's love above thy matchless love, and have been disconsolate at missing this lesser love, as if the owner of a diamond mine should fret for a gravel bank. And as long as this praise of my brothers and sisters dulls my ears to thy whisper of warning or of blessing, grant that all human tongues may be chained from commendation, and all human hands held from applause.

VII

ON GOODS

POSSIBLY it was the roaring of the flame up the chimney ; or possibly it was the fire alarm which just sounded. For some cause, at any rate, my thoughts have turned to my dearest material possessions, my books. I doubt not others have goods as dear, — books likewise, or silks, or pictures, or gems, — but I wonder if they are so fearful for their treasures as I for mine. Here my books are, ranked before me in their kindly covers, old friends and trusty, every leaf heavy with golden memories. But a match in a luckless corner, or a faulty flue in my neighbor's house, and they would be gone, nor could all the world replace them. What should I do without them? Ah, what shall I do without them, when I have done with material things, when

I go to the land of spirit? Yet how do I know that I must learn to do without them? Eye hath not seen, nor mind conceived the joys the Father hath in store. But ah! those joys are for those who love him, and with the whole heart. Take, then, from my heart, O Giver of all good, whatever love of thy good things prevents supreme love of thee. Make me willing for the loss of all things, books, friends, home, all things, that I may find thee. Then, I know, I shall truly find all my possessions for the first time.

VIII

ON WORKING WITH OTHERS

IF one could only work alone! How annoying to have my plans pushed awry by the plans of others, my work left incomplete through the failure of their work, my zeal checked by their opposition! How difficult to have patience with the slow, to restrain the over-eager, to correct mistakes, to repeat careful instructions! Not only my time is lost, but my energy and spirit for work. There is discipline won in dealing with men, but might it not be won in easier ways? I may do them good, but how unkind in them to need my good offices! If I could work alone, every hindrance would be removed but my own faults, and every annoyance would cease but my own peevishness. Truly, these would be enough, without the peevishness and

faults of others. O my Master, when thou wert on the earth, how didst thou endure to work with men? Thou who art perfect, with their imperfections; and thou who art all-gracious, with their gracelessness? When I remember how thou didst say, "Father, forgive them," and how patient thou wert when thy disciples all forsook thee, I am ashamed of my complaining. Do my friends, I wonder, thus complain at my being with them? Would they, too, prefer to work alone? Grant me such gracious helpfulness, my Father, that they may never have that thought of me; and such humility, that I may cease to have that thought of them.

IX

ON PRAISE

O THAT my words were choirs,
each choir of a thousand songs!
Thanksgiving itself is graceless, and
shamed by the truth. My days have
been all ungrateful, and so must they be
forever. Yet it is meet, my Father, to
offer thee unmeet praise. Praise for the
knowledge of thee, and for the assur-
ance that it will grow constantly clearer.
Praise that thou hast given me the secret
of infinite years, hast taught me immor-
tality. Praise for the hope of heaven.
Praise for the translation of earth, its
commonplace become marvels, its wor-
ries become calmness, its aches become
promises. Praise for my tasks where-
with thou dost let me help thee in thy
mighty labors. Praise for the dear de-
lights of home and loved ones. Praise

for the every-day blessings of sun and air and sky and soil, of warmth and shelter. Praise for books and a mind that can feed upon them. Praise for the Book that dwarfs all books. Praise for friends, for helpers, for lovers. And praise, praise, praise, for the friendship, the help, the mighty and wonderful love of Christ Jesus my Lord.

X

ON MANY BURDENS

HOW much I have to do to-day!
And not only how much, but what a variety of things! Involved with my work, too, is the work of others, who may be lazy or incompetent, and whose fault may spoil my labor. And I must meet many people, the ill-natured, the mean, the debasing; and before all these men, and in all these trials, I must be calm and strong and cheery, illustrating the doctrine of my Lord. Surely my cares are many, and my tasks beyond my power to accomplish. Ah, foolish being that I am, I have nothing to do! Nothing to do, O Christ the toiler, because thou dost do it all; and no care to fret about, because thou carest for me. Forgive me because I go all thy sweet day through with phantoms of

burdens weighing me down, fancying that I am bearing the load, when I bear only the semblance of it! Forgive me because I fret so many of thy sweet hours away, cowering before ghosts of cares whose real selves thou hast long ago put to flight! Forgive me, and pity me, because these unrealities seem often very real to me; and teach my eyes to see the truth. Keep me from conjuring up, with my pride of self, with my weak distrust of heaven, these brain-born worries and empty fears. In this calm morning meditation I am sure of thine upholding. Maintain, O Lord, that trust throughout the day.

XI

ON LONELINESS

NOW I go forth into the day alone. My dear ones are far away, and none but strangers about me. What do they know of my needs, my hopes, my fears? Yes, and what do I know of theirs? Kind people they may be, but how may I know of their kindness? Their wisdom and strength and beauty of soul are all, to a stranger, as if they were not. It is a sad thing to be alone in God's crowded world. In God's world! O Father, forgive me. Forgive me, thou Elder Brother, who wert deserted by all thy disciples! I remember now that thou wert lonely in order that no man henceforth need know loneliness; "that where thou art we may be also." I had forgotten that thou art with me. And I had not thought what

thongs thou bringest with thee; for in this great city how many thousands dwell in thee, and with them I shall dwell daily when I live in thee. Why can I not feel this, O my Father? Why do I ever deem myself alone? Why do I not exult daily and hourly in my riches of friends in thee? Something in my heart tells me the reason, — tells me that I lack the unselfish love which is thy passport into thy kingdom of friends, where is no solitude. Help me to this love, my loving Father, for I am tired of being alone.

XII

ON DEBTS

HOW much that is in my life for strength and joy is not my own, but the gift of others! Here I take daily credit for the exercise of abilities which others have chiefly developed, in ways of usefulness which others have opened to me. Subtract from my life what teachers and friends and books have put there, and surely the remnant would permit no pride. Touches of love, inspiration of example, the promptings of confidence reposed in me, prayers of God's saints, kindly counsel of my elders, — by a thousand daily happenings such as these, I am upheld and moved without my knowledge. Yes, and without my gratitude. For this, forgive me, revered teachers, loved friends, and friendly books. Forgive me, thou God

of all upholding. When, in all thine eternal years, shall I have paid my debts, I who have not yet understood them? Must I be bankrupt through ages of ages? If it be thy will, O Lord. Thou didst make me weak, needing a world of helpers, that so I might learn the hill whence cometh the help of the world. I shall not be ashamed in thy great day though the good I have done to others be dwarfed by the good they have done to me, if this has been thy will for all. Perhaps the love even of a debtor may help to save mankind.

XIII

ON STUMBLINGS

DAILY and hourly, when I would be strong, I am weak. Falling into traps I have spread for myself, stumbling against obstacles I myself have reared, vainglorious yet despising myself, confident and headstrong under a dismal burden of failures that no one sees but God and his angels, — how dare I walk in these familiar paths? What assurance have I that where I have so often sinned I shall not sin again? My pride is the same, and my fall will be the same. And if I flee from the temptations that daily vanquish me, the very flight will bring me more completely under their sway. God will not be there more than here; nor will evil be less at another place or another time. A morning of good deeds will not save me from

an afternoon of sin. My eyes fill with tears at the thought of my Saviour, and yet I pass from the story of his perfect years to a life all foul with selfishness. O Christ, thou knowest my frame, thou knowest why I fall ; I know not. I am not strong enough even to get from thee the help I need. Do thou press it on me. Take a tempted life that yields to sin, and force it to yield to thee. Lead me not into temptation ; deliver me from evil.

XIV

ON CONFESSING FAULTS

WHY do I always increase and perpetuate my faults by my unwillingness to confess them? I cover my shame and let it smoulder, instead of bidding it consume openly before men's eyes the dross that is in me. My rare petitions for forgiveness have melted my soul, have left me at peace; yet still I shrink from the winning of this rest. It is not hard to abase myself before God; when no eye sees, save his, to throw ashes on my head, and beat my breast in despair and remorse. Why should it be hard, then, to ask the pardon of God's creatures? Ah, I fear that I think more of my offence toward men than of my offence toward God; otherwise, it would be easy to confess to men, but I should tremble to draw near the

throne of the Just One. Take from me, O merciful Judge, my shamefaced fear of the brother whom I have offended, and cause me to fear in shame the God whom I have much more offended. Thus I may more often ask my brother's forgiveness; thus I may less often need to seek in despondency the blessed forgiveness of my Lord.

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XV

ON COMMONPLACE PEOPLE

MY conscience accuses me that I treated my acquaintance ill. Whatever the outward appearance, there was no heart of kindness. And that was all because I thought the man commonplace. Are there, then, men in whom I dare be uninterested? Men upon whom God has set his image, though it is marred and blurred, men of hopes and joys and fears, men who will live forever, — who am I, to call these commonplace? What but one of the very common places of God's universe do I fill? When my Lord was upon the earth, he did not attach himself to poets and deep thinkers, but to men of humdrum, ordinary lives. In that marvellous way he proved his divinity, by discerning God's image under man's commonplace. Why cannot

I do the same? There it is, beneath the slouching gait, the dull eyes, the boorish tongue, the uncouth manner, there lies God's image, asleep, yet ready to be wakened into beauty. Why cannot I awaken it, as Christ did, with the kiss of love? Ah! it is because I have not the heart of love. It is because my eyes are veiled with pride, and my lips frozen with egotism. Forgive me, forgive me, thou royal Jesus! Forgive me, and help me to climb up into thy kingly humility, that sees, and understands, and loves the most commonplace things, because itself is not commonplace.

XVI

ON HARDSHIPS

I LOOK back over the years thou hast given me, my Father, and though the happy days are sweet and many, it is the days of hardship that I remember, and remember to bless. In them thou didst teach me thy waiting strength. In them I drew close to thy love. Through them I came to rise above the frets of time and to know the joy of immortality. They interpreted the world to me, and myself to the world. Thou hast fed me with rich hardships, and I have grown. And how patient thou hast been with my petulance, as I flung out my arms against thee in the night, and buffeted thy wise designs in the daytime! Thy corrections have been few for such a peevish child. And what shall I think of the worries that now harass me?

Shall I learn nothing from the past, but continue to fight God's leading? O thou Shepherd of men, well do I know these sharp grievances to be but the brambles thou hast set to keep my feet from straying, and the disappointments and failures that vex me are the pressure of thy restraining hand. Knowing it, may I live that knowledge! May joy sing on my lips, and peace shine in my eyes, and the faith that never fails dwell in my heart. So may I walk with thee through the lights and shadows of the world, and know no darkness.

XVII

ON JUDGING OTHERS

MY words were true, and the rebuke was needed; and yet I am ashamed that I gave it. I gave it in humility, conscious that I might sin in the same way; yet I repent as if for pride. Why am I afraid to deal frankly with my brothers? It is not fear of them, but of myself. For, though I invite criticism, my heart fights against it; and though I am sometimes brave enough to give it, I am never brave enough to receive it. And what right have I to impose on others a burden I shrink from? Yet it should not be a burden. How much I might help my friend by telling him of that one fault of his! How greatly I need to know my own! I should not be unkindly silent simply because he may misjudge my

motives. Judge? Ah, who was it said, "Judge not"? I have been judging my friend; in humility and lovingly, yet I have judged him. And I myself would not be judged with that judgment, save by the all-seeing One. Help me, thou pitying Judge, to help my brother and be helped by him, humbly leaving with thee all decision on our lives.

XVIII

ON LONG GRIEF

THE old grief again, the same as yesterday, bitter as when it burst upon me months ago. My prayers have not lessened its anguish, and the consolations of religion have not softened the hardness of it. The very cares and perplexities of this world are kinder to me, for they make me forget it, until it rushes back upon me in some quiet hour when I have time to think. O God, is it thy will that I should be pursued by this grief through all the years of eternity? In man is no help; is there none in thee? The peace that in all things else thy Son's religion gives me, in dealings with men, in turmoil of business, in studies and in friendships, — is this peace to fail where I need it most? Or at least where I wish it most.

For thou, O God, dost know my need. In all things else I can see that thou hast known my need. Shall I not trust thy hand at this one point of darkness? From thine own Son thou didst not remove the bitter cup. Thou didst press it to his lips when his soul cried out in anguish. Shall I ask thee to spare me? I will bless thy name that my grief is but one. Though it is heavy, I will bless thee that it is no heavier. If it be thy will that through all eternity this grief shall be my comrade, grant me grace to say, Father, thy will be done. There is no lack of love with thee, and thy love has no lack of wisdom. Thy loving will be done.

XIX

ON THE BIBLE

HOW shall I read aright in the book of the law? My brothers speak of unfailling joy in it, but I cannot say that. My sisters seek it with a hunger and a thirst that I do not feel. I remember hours when its strong words have borne me up to God's throne, to the city of peace, to the river of life; but I remember, also, many an hour of level reading that lifted me no fraction from my worries. Why art thou not always with thy book, O God, or with thy servant when he reads it? Yet, hold! What am I to chide God, or chafe at his withdrawal, or set the hour of his coming and the length of his stay? Mine it is to seek him ever in the ways of his appointing; and his it is to make me conscious of his nearness when he will.

Mine it is to be grateful for the visions God has shown me, to count one hour of grace from his book enough, and honor it forever for that hour; his it is to crown my gratitude with higher revelations, and bless the obedient eyes with sweeter visions. Make me willing, my Father, for one pearl of great truth to sell my days and nights. Teach me to prize the Bible I know, that I may come to know a holier one.

XX

ON TRIFLES

WHY can I not separate the essentials of my life from the non-essentials? Here I am as gloomy over the peevishness of a subordinate as I would be on the death of a friend; and yesterday the failure to have my own way about a trifle made my whole life-work seem darkly ruined. What avails my heirship of eternity if I shuffle along, the slave of time? What avails it that the King is my Father, if every worldly worry is my master? What avails it that my mind can look before and after, if its clownish, timorous gaze is fettered to the clay I walk on? Men have gone about their duller tasks more faithfully than I, have met with more compelling vigor the prosaic foes of humdrum toil, and yet have kept calm spirits through

it all, and never have ceased to hear the songs of angels. Instead of disagreements with well-meaning friends, others have borne the bitter rush of foes. Instead of backward eddies in a swiftly prosperous stream, others have had to breast opposing waves, and never have known success. They were more blest in their woes than I in my blessings. Ah, my God, I deserve the lightning of thine anger! Well might it turn my fortune into curses, my friends into foes, and my peevish fuming into sorrow with cause! But spare me in thy mercy as thou hast spared me. Grant me the wisdom to know my happiness, wherein it lies. Help me to the strength that holds on to thee. Help me to the sanity that sees things in their right proportions, and to the peace that all earth's turmoils cannot shake. For thou, O God my Father, art health and peace, and the help that never fails.

XXI

ON THE LOSS OF CREDIT

THAT was a good piece of work, and he got the credit for it. How often this happens to me, that others are praised for things I have done, or at least made possible for them to do! Why should I continue to labor, while others reap my reward? An unjust and unwise world, so blind to men's deserving! Could not God render to every one his reward according to his deeds? — Ah, faithless wretch that I am, he has promised to do that very thing! What reward do I profess to seek, other than his approval? What reward do I really seek, other than men's approval and my own? O thou who didst say of such as I, "They have their reward," save me from self-deceit. I deserve the misunderstanding of others, I who am so in-

sincere with myself. O Christ, who didst seek recognition for thy work only that thy Father might be recognized in it, teach me the like zealous humility. Show me how much credit I, too, am getting for things I owe to others. Help me to prefer my brother's honor to my own. Teach me rather to dread undeserved praise than to seek the praise I deserve. Grant me wisdom to lose all thought of what I have done in shame at the pettiness of it, when measured against thy plans, and thy mighty, ever-ready help.

XXII

ON ENVY

WHY must I envy all excellency in others? What should it be to me that this one makes beautiful music, that this one is a strong orator, that this one, again, is shrewd in handicraft? It is well to admire others; but this is more than admiration, because it makes me miserable. It is well to be ambitious; but this is less than ambition, because it makes me weak. This orator — is he skilled in music? This painter — is he a good mechanic? These all have their one gift, and I have mine: why should I long for theirs? What should theirs be to me but an added joy and pride? Is not the Lord of all talents with theirs as he is with mine? But ah! is he with mine? He cannot be with discontent, half-hearted zeal, and

glances cast aslant. He cannot remain with gifts so gracelessly received. O God of my talent! teach me how to use it. I would be so filled with the joy of it that I have no wish for other gifts; so firm in loyalty to it that other allegiance would be impossible. Then I shall praise thee for the talents of other men, when I have learned to praise thee for my own.

XXIII

ON PITY

I ENDURE too complaisantly the sorrows of others. The pitying word is ready, but not always the pitying heart; and when my condolences do not cheat me, I wonder if they ever deceive another. Is not sorrow too sad a thing to be saddened still more by hypocrisy? If my heart is not tender, is it well to soften my voice? And then, the wretched selfishness of it: when a petty worry of mine dulls my ears to a neighbor's calamity, and a pain in my finger occupies me more than his loss of his child. Is this loving my neighbor as myself? O Christ, thy way is hard, thy precepts are high, I cannot attain to them! I grovel in my mean and petty self-love, which is hateful to me, yet I am ever slipping back into it. Have

pity upon me, with that pity which I grudge to others. Strengthen this weak sorrow of mine, that it may spend itself away from itself. Thy woe upon earth was greater than all earth's pain, and it was woe that men bore so lightly the pains of their brothers. Forgive me, O Christ, that I thus grieve thy heart. Forgive me, that I thus mar thy image in myself. And teach me, that serving others after thine own blessed way, I may lose, in the divine sorrow of sympathy, the sorrow and shame of my unfeeling heart.

XXIV

ON GLOOM

THE God of joy bids me be happy, yet I let my heart be troubled. My mind tells me that gloom is sin, and straightway cheerlessness condemns me. Friends, a host of them, will be encamped around me ; above me will float the banner of love ; the work of my hands will be prospered ; yet my life will be so sadly poised withal, and inclined away from what is sane and peaceful, that the lightest touch of the finger of failure will overturn it into the Slough of Despond. O Christ of Cana, how may my life be a feast ? O thou who dost flood the universe with the light of thy sun, shine in my life, not now and then, but forever. I am weary of joy's uncertainty, of the peace that is fickle as a desert stream. Grant me thy peace

that floweth as a river, thy peace that reckes not of its peacefulness, thy joy whose essence is the joy of others. Make me so busy with useful work that I shall not feel the touch of the finger of failure. So breathe into me the energy of thy strong purposes that I shall not need to sit at a feast. Help me to such pity for the trouble of others that I shall be careless whether my own heart is troubled or not. Let thy joy be in me, that my joy may be fulfilled.

XXV

ON WORSHIP

I PROFESS with my lips a love for the courts of the Lord, but that love is very languid, and easy to be refused. This half-willing church-going cheats men and cheats me, but it does not cheat God. He knows when the heart stays at home. And yet I would not wait to be willing to go to the house of the Lord. Yesterday I went with slow feet, but they bore me to the gates of heaven. Many and many a time God has thus shamed with a blessing my wandering desires. Surely his sanctuary has light even for half-shut eyes, and God's music reaches even to listless ears. Surely God will be pleased if even by grudging attendance I say, "Lord, I am willing that thou shouldest help my unwillingness." But will he be pleased

if, as for so many years, I remain satisfied with my unwillingness? How can I come to love God constantly, with such fickle love for God's sanctuary? Nay, is it not, rather, that I will love God's house more when I have come to love God more? Forgive me, Father, that I have so often dishonored the Holy Spirit by regarding the eloquence of men, the harmony of human choirs, the imposing throng below and rich roof above, rather than thy eloquence and beauty, and the singing of thy peace. Teach me to know with the life what I now know with the mind, that the secret of joy in worship is love of God and service of men.

XXVI

ON UNSELFISHNESS

WHEN I drive out thoughts of self with thoughts of others, my joy comes in with their joy. When I go about doing good, my sorrows stay at home, and all gladness runs to find me. On such days my worries hide away, my failures and disappointments are forgotten, my eye looks brightly upon the future, what time it is not entranced with the present. Such seasons have been mine, my Father ; and yet, O what a stupid scholar I am ! I turn from what I have found so pleasant, and seek the old, sad ways of selfishness. Is it a dis-temper in my blood, a madness in my veins ? Is it in punishment for my sins, that though I know happiness I flee from it ? O God, I am wrong at heart ; my instincts are not pure, they are not safe

guides ; leave me not alone with them. I need thee every hour, my judgment is so weak before the spirit of evil with which I contend ; my conscience is so easily entreated, and my will led captive by misery. Lord, I will be glad that my instincts are untrue, for their treachery shall lead me to trust in thee.

XXVII

ON COWARDICE

A CRAVEN disciple, a faint-hearted follower, a cowardly Christian! What will my Lord say to me in that day when he speaks his praise and utters his terrible blame? I have heard Christ reviled, and my silence condemned myself more than it abashed the blasphemers. I have listened to skeptics parading their wilful doubts, and my faith has been as mute as unfaith. When testimony to God's love and power has been wanted, my lips have been dumb. When others have been tearing down the idols of error, my hands have hung by my side. Where witness-bearing was easy and to be applauded, I have lifted up my voice. Into places where men scorn the name of Christ, into drunkards' dens, the

hovels of outcasts, prisons, and haunts of vice, I have not gone. What sacrifice have I made for thee, O Christ? What hardship have I borne for thee, O Christ? What indignity have I suffered for thee, O Christ? And thou hast loved me. And thou hast heaped thy kindnesses upon me. I am rich in all things, except in service. I quiet myself with the thought that no chance for heroism has come; but it has. I quiet myself with the thought that thou hast called others to these tasks; but thou hast called me. I persuade myself that at some future time I will do thy will; but I will not, because I am not about it now. As thy apostles of old prayed to thee for boldness, so do I, out of my craven fear and indecision, O Lord, Christ of Gethsemane! Grant that I may speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest forth thy hand. And as thou didst shake their meeting place, in testimony of fulfilment, shake thou my very life from its foundations, if thou wilt. Lift my spirit, O Lord, into thy places of power.

XXVIII

ON AN ERRING FRIEND

WHY does the discovery of that fault in my honored friend chill my faith in man and God alike? I have been seeking perfection in the sinful, and wisdom in the fallible. I have made an idol of the creature, and God has mercifully overthrown my idol. Shall I be angry with my friend, whose fault has sent me back to God? Shall I be angry with my God, who has made friends but little lower than the angels? Shall I not rather be angry with myself for my foolish estimates both of God and man? I thank thee, Father, for the nobility of my brothers, who with me are toiling at the tasks of the world, fighting against the evil within them and without. Even for their failings I thank thee, so far as in them I see my own heart mirrored,

and am led to the only purity, strength, and perfect love of the universe. Grant me a knowledge of thee far higher than comes from thy marred image. Teach me to look upon thy countenance unveiled in its glory. From that sight I shall learn how to look upon my friends.

XXIX

ON THE COMING DAY

TO-DAY, if things go wrong, let me consider whether the wrong is within me or without ; and if it is within me, I shall not be disconsolate, because then I can remedy it ; and if it is without, I shall surely not be disconsolate, because that would do no good. To-day, if I am reproached with any mistake, let me first decide whether I am in error ; for if I am not, then I shall be glad, because the reproach cannot harm me ; and if I am justly reproached, then I shall thank God for so faithful friends. To-day, if I become depressed, let me examine carefully the cause of my depression ; then, if there is no just cause, I shall feel ashamed, but relieved ; and if I have any genuine grief, then I shall know that God will come especially near

to me to help me bear it. Through this day, O my Father, Satan will press upon me in many forms, but chiefly in the disguise of my own feelings. Protect me from them, I pray thee. Grant my reason such shrewdness and my heart such force of cheer that I shall pierce through Satan's black mists to the secret joy of things. Be with my eyes to-day, that they may see how all is good, in earth and in heaven.

XXX

ON SATISFACTION

THERE was I again, urging others to a life of content, while my own is poisoned with frequent dissatisfaction ; arguing the Christian's duty of happiness, though my sadness gave the lie to my plea ; even preaching courage out of cowardly lips. I am not like the Pharisees, that lay on others burdens they will not touch ; for I am heavily burdened, yet counsel others to throw aside their weights. And this is an added burden, that I must choose between a faithless silence and a confession so poorly lived. This, with all troubles beside, I bring to thee, thou Burden-bearer. Thou wilt be displeased as I am with my life, and thou wilt bid me continue my lip professions of thee, and so thou wilt not lessen my shame, but rather increase it ; and yet

thou wilt give me peace. Peace in the assurance of thy power, which grows as my weakness grows. Peace in the remembrance that thou knowest in all points what temptation means, and rememberest that I am dust. Peace in the promise of the eternal years, wherein I shall see thee and be like thee, and thus even put to shame my present mocking ideals. I pray thee for grace to see what I lack of the best, and to be courageously dissatisfied. I pray thee for grace to know what my small best is, that I may be satisfied bravely.

XXXI

ON NEEDLESS WORRY

THERE are few dark days in my life that do not shine out brightly against the years that have settled about them. Soon, doubtless, these few also will be tenderly interpreted by time. O the long hours, the strength and happiness lost by my feeble faith! O the wasting worries over joys disguised as griefs, and over curses that I have come to bless thee for, my Father! In the growing greatness of thy favor,—no greater now than before, but more clearly seen,—how paltry appear my fretting and my frowning, my needless tears, and my faultfinding convicted of blindness! I have been so impatient with this good world and the good heaven above it. Scornful of others whose minds were skeptical of truth,

my own faltering, moody heart has been more skeptical than they. Henceforth I will make the best of life. Nay, I will not; for thou hast already made the best of it for me! I will not wait for thy years to disclose the proof of it; my heart shall know it now. Send what thou wilt, but send with it strength to keep this resolve. My reasoning will not suffice; I need thy help to be happy.

XXXII

ON INGRATITUDE

MY prayers are long wails of petition ; they should be anthems of praise. Is my life so meagre that my converse with the giver of it should emphasize its lack, rather than its fulness ? Verily, I am needy enough, but my need springs from my lack of contentment, from my poverty of peace and of praise. The crudest catalogue of my blessings should shame me into happiness. I will force myself to the instinct of thanksgiving. I will magnify my goods ; nay, they need no magnifying. Rather, my own heart needs enlarging. Who can widen its reaches, out beyond petty worries and mean complaints, into the sunlight of God's love ? Who, but God himself ? If God be with me, petition need be but a breath, and all the air will

be praise. Blessed Spirit of peace, interpret thyself to me ; thy love, and my blessedness. Help me, that in unwonted joy I may even forget the sin of my ingratitude. Thou art in the world, drawing it to thyself. Thou dost plead with me through lips of cloud and flower, with the eloquence of friendship and opportunity. Thy gates of happiness stand open on the right hand and on the left. Thou thyself, O Christ, didst pass outside them into my cheerless walks, to invite me in. Praise to thee for thy love and thy cheer ; praise for thy manly strength and thy wisdom thou art ready to give ; praise for the power of praise.

XXXIII

ON STUDY

THE other day I was downcast at thought of how little I can learn. The sight of textbooks annoys me, and a library catalogue invites despondency ; for there is so much to learn, and I am so ignorant. Things that need to be done, and that I am eager to do, I cannot do, because I do not know enough. The busy years speed mockingly by, and crowd fresh learning into libraries, even while they crowd from my memory what once I knew. Will there not come some happy years, toward the close of life, when I can withdraw from the bustle of affairs, and live in libraries? What joy to revel in the beauties of old languages, to tread the corridors of the past, and walk through the present world with leisure to see its wonders and come to

understand its perfection ! What joy to become a scholar, before I die ! Yet the world into which I shall die will have slight use for my scholarship. The wisest books will be child's primers there ; we shall be turned with gladness from the archives of the past to the archives of the future ; the mysteries and splendors of the universe will be our playthings ; and all the tongues of earth will seem but savage babble. O Father, if the work thou dost give me to do requires study, I will study, helped by thee ; but if thou dost set me tasks that can be done without the lore of libraries, I will not count myself unhappy. Help me to be a student of the things that will not perish, a scholar of the eternities.

XXXIV

ON A DISMAL DAY

TO-DAY, while all things are gloomy without, be all things bright within. Let me oppose the peace of my soul to the storm in the sky. Why should these dull clouds of matter, moved here and there almost by the breath of chance, affect my fickle spirit? Is this a nature meet for eternity, when the pettiest things of time can disconcert it? I am serving poor apprenticeship to those constant years. I am preparing little save fret and fume to carry into their smiling serenity. If my temper is at the mercy of a lowering sky, yet more is it speedily soured by a lowering fortune. Nay, so prone am I to this degenerate darkness, so tied to the gloomy elements of this world, that when all the heavens are kind, I make from nothing a shadow

for myself to dwell in. Forgive me, Father of all joy. Forgive me, Christ of Cana. Make me ashamed for my childishness, and lift me into manhood. Make me ashamed for the lives my fretfulness has embittered. Make me ashamed for every spot whereon my shadow has fallen. O dwell thou in me, and every shadow will be sunshine. O dwell thou in me, and all my sad fickleness will pass away. Come to me this day, thou joyous Comforter, and thy joy will be in me, and my joy be fulfilled.

XXXV

ON REST

HOW hard it is to rest! Into what should be hours of calm thought, of joyful converse, of prayerful retrospect or prospect, creep reminders of present worries, or fears of coming ill. I know their sinfulness and the shame of it, and long for a happier temper that might give me rest. But no rest comes from within, for there is intrenched the spirit of unrest. A thousand longings are satisfied, and I grieve at the failure of one. A single vacant place means more than a hundred God has filled. The beauty and love that I have, I mourn because I am not worthy to own them; and the beauty and love that I lack, I mourn because they are not mine. I fret in seasons of activity because my work is burdensome, and in seasons of

rest because my work is at a standstill. Where, in what school or with what teacher or by what lonely study, can I learn how to rest? O thou who didst promise rest to the souls of the world, come to me in healing quiet. O thou who on thy seventh day didst create rest, thou alone canst give it, and I cannot earn it. Spirit of peace, grant me grace to rest in thee.

XXXVI

ON COVETOUSNESS

THOU hast made this world a beautiful world, Creator, Father. Forbid that I should distil temptation from its beauty. Why can I not see green lawns, rare flowers, generous dwelling-places, without poisoning by covetousness the delight of my eyes? Why can I not look upon the river and the wooded hills with gratitude for the glance that should bring peace into my fevered day, rather than complain that it is only a glance? Why do the splendid piles that skill and energy have raised crush with weakening envy my energy and skill? For me the elm has queenly form, for me the pansies have color, though I do not own them. To me the passing glimpse of the forest and the mountain may give a blessing they withhold from

the dweller in their midst. I bless thee that thou hast given to so many leisure and a quiet life. I bless thee that such throngs may live in wealth and ease. I bless thee that the woods are there, and the flowers and the ocean, waiting for my coming. I bless thee that thou dost sweeten my life with labor; and give zest by hours of toil to my moments of rest and delight. Let my delight be also in my work, and my rest there, too, O my God. Let it be my coveted luxury to do thy will.

XXXVII

ON THE JOYS OF NATURE

THAT was a gloomy week — the last one. The skies were bright, but I saw only a cloud of black worries. I walked through the sunshine proof against its winsomeness, and moped by myself or snarled among my friends. But this week I have let God have his way with me. I have filled myself full of his beauty and his strong peace. The sweet, silent growing of the flowers has shamed me ; the fresh air has lashed my will to action ; the trees have taught me, as they serve God by standing still ; the army of modest grass-blades has sung me a battle-song. My work has taken to itself something of the energy of nature, and much of its ardent peace. Thy world, O Creator, has myriad messages for me. I need thy help to receive

them. I need thy spirit of unselfishness, that I may leave the cold cell wherein I have shut myself with my frets and my more difficult sorrows, and abandon myself to the majesty and loveliness whereby thou wouldst instruct me. These delights of the natural world, O God, — sunsets, morning splendors, colors and scents and sounds, — are thy ministers, to do thy pleasure. Thou art ready, I well know, to serve me with them. O make me ready and zealous to be served.

XXXVIII

ON PEACEFULNESS

THE cares of the world throng thick about me. No time for thoughtfulness, no time for quietness, no time for the winning of peace. Longings for heaven are drowned in the clamor of earth, and I am too busy with living to get ready to live. How can one be in the world yet not of it, push through its noisy streets as if he were treading the celestial pavements, hear over its babel the chant of angel voices? How can I win the calmness that passes unmoved amid dangers and walks quietly through all the world's confusion? Ah, possibly I should not have this calmness. Who has told me that God meant it for me? It may be his will that I should have no time for the winning of peace until the rest of death steals upon me; yes, and

not even then. If so, then unrest for me, Lord Jesus! Then conflict is my peace, and toil is my quietness, and hour hurried on to hour is the best preparation for the eternal years. In the life thou dost send me I shall best get ready to live. If the angel voices cannot pierce through its noises, they will sound with a sweeter surprise some day. If throughout this life my feet must be hot upon earth's pavements, the shores of the crystal sea will be the more delightful. Thy will be done in me on earth, O Lord, that I may do thy will in heaven.

XXXIX

ON MAJORITIES

DO I think that it will not be safe for me to take God at his word until the majority also take him at his word? Am I afraid that "the other things" will not be "added unto" me, who seek first the kingdom of heaven, if my competitors are seeking first the kingdoms of the earth? From this time forth, then, let me cease to compete with my competitors. Let me make trial to-day of the divine partnership. I will forget that I live in a state whose governor is gold, and in a city whose mayor is selfishness. God shall be my state and my city. Dwelling in him, even if it should be alone, I must pity the loneliness of all other men. And if, as I go about my work, I am tempted out into boastings and bargainings, ad-

vertisement and the counting of heads, what shall I do? Pray; as even now I pray to thee, thou lonely Christ, who art drawing all men to thy loneliness, not that I may be kept from the world, but that I may be kept from the evil in it. Save me, out of a timorous regard for other men, into care for two beings only: thee, and my brother whom I may help to thy joy.

XL

ON INSIGNIFICANCE

WHAT a pygmy am I among these immense buildings! How I am lost among these hurrying throngs! Who of these thousands knows my name or cares about my purposes? What will avail the conduct of my life, be it brave and strenuous or weak and ignoble? What matters it whether the raindrop swallowed up of the ocean be a pure raindrop or a tainted one? Doubtless here is need enough, unrest, and ignorance, and misery enough; but so there are diseases among the forest trees: shall the petty ant that crawls over their roots play the physician to the oaks? Doubtless, lost also somewhere among the busy swarms, are other men who, in the love of Christ, are willing to give themselves for Christ's needy; but how to find them, and by what sign to

know them? Here are vast enterprises dwarfing the largest designs of the church. Here is power, power in money, in machinery, in men, mightier a thousandfold than all of these powers the church has on her side. Here is a babel of noises, the tradesman, the laborer, the newsboy, the vagrant, the politician, the steam-whistle; and the church-bells are drowned in the clamor. How can the strongest will, the purest mind, the widest love, make an impression on this tumult? Silly egotist, who placed you in this world to make an impression? Who ordained your voice to still earth's babel? Is it not by the many God works upon the many? What can save the world but the obedience of the insignificant? Are not the greatest things, love and duty, possible for the smallest men, in the most hidden places? Do your duty, then, cheerily, humbly, because you are so little; cheerily, proudly, because Christ will work in you, O my soul. And do thou, my Saviour, save me from thoughts of self.

XLI

ON RESULTS

ON what am I to work to-day? On wood, cloth, and iron, on paper and canvas? No; on myself, and on my neighbor. And these visible materials, this wood and iron, together with the tools I use, are themselves the tools of my invisible tasks. This much is sure; only it is all so vague. If I could handle the results of the day! If I could count the coin it brings! If I could reckon up my gains as I add my deposits at the bank! Save me, O thou who workest hitherto, from the sluggishness of blinded eyes! Over my ledger, hammer, or needle, I have bent so long that I cannot straighten to see thee above them. But thou canst see me, and canst show thyself to me in them. That presence will dignify them where they were

trivial, beautify them where they were coarse, fill with romance the most commonplace of them. And when thou hast revealed to me the relation of my tasks to thee, then I shall see clearly how they affect my neighbor and myself. If my work does not shrink at thine indwelling, but endures it, I shall know that my work is true to men and safe for me. Teach me, O Christ the Laborer, truly to know and do my own true toil.

XLII

ON TIME FOR WORK

WHY didst thou send me so large purposes, O my Father, with so little time to work them out? Thou hast so touched my heart and crowded my days that as I see more and more that needs to be done, I have less and less time for the doing. O lengthen my days, prolong my years, or else blind me to the need of the world. Grant me an eternity to work in. Indeed, what have I, then? Less than eternity? And what matters it that my eternity will not be on earth? Rather, it would be a dreadful thing to live here forever, since man will not live here forever. And it would be a dreadful thing to have petty purposes, with the eternal years before me. Forbid that the whirl of this earth's eddy of time should confuse me into forgetful-

ness of the eternal years. Teach thy hot-headed apprentice an enthusiasm for thy patient processes. Remind me ever by promptings to more than this life can give me, or I can give to this life, that my being is to soar beyond these hurried years and beginnings of tasks, into ages of satisfying accomplishment. Thus may my common days be mated with eternity.

XLIII

ON HEROISM

WHEN I read of the heroes of old,
I bow my head in shame. Was
it for such as I that they sang in the fire,
preached joyously in prison, faced lions
with a smile? What gain to me from
all their heroism if I am to go through
life shrinking before human disapproval,
covetous at sight of others' good, and
weak with disappointment and discontent?
What boots it that I know the
way of heroism if I do not walk in it, or
that I admire the brave if I do not imitate
their bravery? I count men's words
of praise as a miser counts his coin. I
lose the good I have in longing for other
goods. My desire to help men falls
down dead at shock of a discourtesy.
And so falsely do I train my inclinations
and my feelings that those circumstances

seem most material to me which my reason tells me are most immaterial, and the essentials of happy usefulness are tossed aside. O thou who didst create men and their world, and who with all thy loving nearness to us art so independent of us, grant to me, thy creature, something of thine independence. Be thou my satisfaction, my sufficient praise, my ease, my goods, my world. Teach me that if I regard thee, I need not regard men, save with the brave love wherewith thou dost regard them, — the love that gives, but does not require. Help me to be so much thy creature, my Father, that I may not be the creature of thy world.

XLIV

ON HIDING SORROW

IT was only a moment's trouble, soon to be chased away by work and pleasure ; but I named it as I left my dear ones, and darkened the day for them. Why do I thoughtlessly force others to share my sorrows when they cannot share their transformation into joy? Nay ; why not give others my joys, and keep my sorrows to myself? I want sympathy, and my dear ones want to give it, that is true ; but their sympathy will find calls enough from griefs and pains I cannot hide ; let me not weight it overmuch. It does not lighten these petty worries to thrust them on others' shoulders ; I merely add to my own the burden of shame and remorse. Let me, rather, hide bravely my troubles when I can, and lighten them by lightening the

load of some dear one. Does not the Bible hint to me that I may best bear my own burdens by bearing the burdens of others? Dear Lord, how often my querulousness magnifies a cloud no larger, to my own life, than a man's hand, into a blackness that covers all the heavens for those who love me! Dear Lord, could they know, as thou dost know, how lightly rest upon me these troubles of mine they take so seriously! O Christ, who on earth didst never parade thy sorrow, but even at its deadliest withdrew it under the dark olive-trees in the Garden, teach my tongue fit silence from its little frets, that thus my heart may come to disregard them. Teach me to exhibit my life to others in its just proportions, not sadder than it is to my loved ones, and sunnier than it is to all beside. So, when great sorrows come, I shall have gained strength to bear them, and shall have laid up in my loved ones a reservoir of cheer.

XLV

ON THANKSGIVING

HOW grateful I should be to God that his kindness does not cease with my gratitude! Each day that adds to God's unfailing mercies heaps higher the shame of my discontent. The dull earth carries in its heart the stored-up memory of past sunshine and fruitful showers, and shows on its daily face the tokens of them all; but from my duller soul a moment's annoyance wipes away all remembrance of joy. I am ashamed before the blithe stanchness of the trees. The fresh and smiling air upbraids me. The glowing sentences of the Book point fingers at me. I am rebuked by a myriad of bright faces, shining with the beauty of thanksgiving. Thou knowest my life, O God. Thou hast seen me choose darkness rather than light. Thou hast

heard my complaining lips snarl at the songs of thy saints. Day after day thy angels of cheer have knocked at my gloomy doors. Thou dost know all my perversity. But my heart is bold, for thou knowest also my sorrow. My shame is no less, but my hope is strong because thou dost see my shame. I can bar thy joy from my life, but I cannot shut out thy pity. In thy great mercy, pitying Father, lift from my life its load of discontent. Win for thyself an entrance into my gloom, and lead me forth. All the wisdom of the world cannot teach me joy. All the power of the world cannot force it upon me. All the happiness of the world cannot shame me to it. Grant me, strong and loving Father, out of thine abundant grace, the grace of thanksgiving.

XLVI

ON SINGLENESS OF MIND

I AM so careworn about many things that it is plain I am not seeking the one great thing. Or, if I seek it, it is with the carelessness that lets itself be vexed with other cares. When I hold the overmastering thought of God, I am not held of my worries. When I am directed of thee, O my Father, my perplexing tasks find swift direction, and march in ordered submission. When I have placed thy will first, it gives my will power to control and to accomplish. If my life is troubled, it is only for lack of thy peace. If calls to diverse duties harass me, it is because I have not listened to thy single call. How much time I have lost, blunderingly striving to use thy time! How much energy I have wasted, wrongly choosing my work!

Thou doest myriad deeds where I do one. All the countless intricacies of the universe move in harmony to nicely adjusted ends. There is no fret, no friction, in thy workshops. And thou wilt send to my workshop all this power and skill. O Lord, forgive thy foolish servant, who, like a headstrong apprentice, thought he had learned to direct. Work thy will with me, since not otherwise can I work my will for myself.

XLVII

ON OPPOSITION

WHEN my words, meant for right, are turned from their meaning, why am I discomfited? When my plans are opposed, plans that I think God's plans, too, why should I be downcast? When men range themselves against me, me who have God on my side, what is more foolish than anger? O my Father, is it only when I complain of thy providences that I really hold thee all-powerful to work righteousness? I have been dreading what the evil may do, as if thou wert weaker than they. Their words have provoked me, for I have forgotten the thunders of thy judgment. I have feared their designs, for I have forgotten thy counsels. Their harsh glances have embittered me, for I have lost sight of thy countenance. Their anger has

filled me with wrath, for I have not set before me thy love. Thou whose honor man's dishonor cannot mar, teach me that it cannot mar mine. Thou whose cause is its own great defence, teach me rather to find safety in it than seek safety for it. Thou who dost not mar with passion or trembling the majestic progress of thy plans, teach me that thy plans need still less either my anger or my fears. Make it my one wish for my work, not that it may not fail, but that it may be espoused by the unfailing One.

XLVIII

ON UNSEEN THINGS

I AM living in my body as if I were to live in it forever, and I may be done with it to-morrow. What I shall eat, wherewithal I shall be clothed, how I shall be housed, — such are not fit broodings for one who soon, at longest, will need no food or clothes or shelter, save the full delights of the many mansions. Walls light as a whisper part me from an existence wherein no pain is, no tears, no failure, wherein loved ones know how we love, wherein scholars see swift visions of all truth, and the pleasures we have made for ourselves are forgotten in the joys thou dost make for us, O God of all happiness. The life that now is, rich portal to thy blessed home, I look upon as an abode, and find it cold and cheerless. Teach me, O God,

the sane and heavenward look. Why should I fret at any failure here — failure of love or knowledge, power or skill, while the life of full fruition touches my uneasy life at every point, and offers perfect comfort? Only a swing of the great pendulum of eternity, only an instant, as I shall look back on time, and all my heaviest troubles will seem more foolish than my childhood's griefs seem now. Help me, Ancient of days, to live in that happy time, while I work in the present. I am tired of serving the earth; teach me immortality.

XLIX

ON REMEMBERING

IT is easy to draw doubt and depression from my past; it is hard to draw from it inspiration and hope. Yet I should win as much cheer from the times when God has upheld me, as despair from the times when I, in my own power, have failed. I cherish in memory my defeats rather than God's victories. A thousand times God has empowered me to do this thing, and still I shrink from it as if God and his tasks had not been tried. Not thus am I to become a veteran of the Lord. Not thus will the fulness of almighty strength, vouchsafed to daily need and weak-winged prayers, be builded into my eternal character. O feeble heart and foolish memory, how many trials and proofs do you need for assurance? When will you trust the

Lord, if not now? Had earthly friend been half as faithful, had mortal father been half as constant and kind, your confidence would rest unmovable on the rock of that experience. Because God is unseen, will you distrust his love, which is seen? Because God does not speak with human voice, will you scorn his eloquent providences? And will you dare to expect continued help from the God whose unfailing power your cowardice denies? O my soul, be strong in the Lord! In sweet remembrance of his comforting presence, in brave remembrance of his upholding, in bold reliance on his forgiveness of your weakness, be strong in the Lord!

L

ON CHRISTMAS

THERE will come, some glad day,
a new Christmas, when Christ will
be with men in visible form once more,
to stand by our side, his loving hand
holding ours, his strong voice moving
the rejoicing air, his kind eye piercing
to the hearts of men. I shall have no
more worries, when he comes, for in
him is fulness of joy. I shall have no
griefs, when he comes, for he will bear
all my burdens. When he comes, I
shall be no more perplexed, for his
wisdom is unfailing. All these things,
together with sins and follies and vex-
ations innumerable, will threaten my
Christmas peace, unless he come. Oh,
our Lord Christ, come this Christmas!
Thy weary world is waiting eagerly, and
every Christmas more eagerly, for the

glory and the health of thy coming. But art thou not here — or why am I talking with thee? What should matter the sight of the eye, the touch of the hand, to one whose eye is soon to fail and hand to crumble into dust? Art thou not here, in this room, blessed Master, as really as ever in the upper chamber at Jerusalem? Do I not see thee, with the sight of heaven, and hear thee, somewhat as seraphs hear? Thou hast come into my life in clouds of glory, with thy holy angels. Every day, when I receive thee, thou dost make a merry Christmas. So let it be with this gracious season. Open my faithless eyes and my infidel ears, and teach me to know thee. Be present in my life as really as my sister, my mother. One day with thee, O Christ, as one day with thee might be, and I think I could never be alone, and never lack a Christmas.

LI

ON FEAR FOR OTHERS

SO many perils are round about my loved ones, — perils of sudden sickness, or of slow ailments concealed from me ; perils of accidents, from the forces of nature, or the forces of man ; perils of long grief, wasting desire, and lost hope ; so much of evil that may be coming to them, unseen by me, unseen by them, and inevitable. What can I do to assure the joy of my loved ones, their health of body and better health of mind ? What can I do to guard them from malady and myself from loneliness and sorrow ? For what should I do without my loved ones ? Ah, thou that knowest hearts, how much of this burden of fear is for myself ! Yet thou wilt regard the purity of my prayer, and sift its imperfections. Better to my loved

ones is danger guarded by thee than safety preserved by myself. Better for them is thy sickness and grief and despair than my perfectings of joy. Yes ; and better for them is my abandonment of them than my fretfulness for them, if I yield them up to thee. Why should I, who perform so poorly the lower care for my dear ones, think of the higher ? Until I can make the one day brighter, let me leave their years to thee. Until I have fed more faithfully the common sources of their healthful cheer, let me cease to worry about their long sorrows or long joys. So shall I trustfully carry out the trust thou hast committed to me, and not imperil it by presumption. Teach me, loving Father, to love as knowing thee.

LII

ON THE COMING YEAR

WHAT is before me in the coming year? God has hidden it from me because I could not bear its sorrows. There are failures as wretched as any in the past, griefs as bitter, longings unsatisfied, ideals unattained. Or if in any way I may grow stronger and happier, a year's improvement will be almost unnoticed. And there are old sorrows that time will not soften, because it has not. I see them lying dark along the way before me, reaching into the black cloud, where they meet who knows what coming dangers and changes and pains? God promises me no better years than he has given me. Indeed, what am I that I should ask for better years? God is greater than my prayers have ever been. God is more eager

than my complaints. If nothing else in the universe were sure, this would be, that God has given me all the good I could bear. Uplifts from many a failure prove it, fierce griefs assuaged, desires crowned with fulfilment, and years led through crooked paths of self-will, yet ever, by God's grace, to a wider life. Forgive my weak forebodings, loving Father. Truly I know that thou hast hidden the coming year from me, not because its sorrows are so great, but because I am not strong enough for its joys. What wonderful things await me, back of the sweetly mysterious cloud! There must be deeper knowledge, for thou wilt continue to teach me; and fuller love, for the years bloom ever the richer with it; and wider friendships, for my old friends continually bring me new ones; blessed changes that mean no loss or sorrow, but only the keenness of joy. I will go forth into the year with thee, O thou who never withholdest!



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