Bright and Fair! A Book for Young Ladies

By George Everard, 1882

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1. Bright and Fair!

The glorious angels are bright and fair. They stand in God's own light, and reflect His glory. They are as bright as a flame of fire in His service — and fair, very fair, in the beauty of perfect holiness.

But, thank God, even here on earth are angels too. In a world where many dark shadows cast gloom and sorrow, on every side there are "angels bright and fair" — men and women illumined by the glorious beams of the Sun of Righteousness, perfect in the loveliness which the Lord has put upon them, ministering spirits too, carrying messages of mercy, doing deeds of unselfish kindness, leaving behind something of Heaven's own joy and light wherever they go.

Many a young lady, who has given herself to this Christ-like work of nursing the sick, and who does it in a kindly, loving spirit, does prove, by her tender, careful handling, as a very angel from Heaven to hundreds of poor sufferers in hospitals and elsewhere.

But not only in hospitals, but in the homes of the poor, among kindred and friends, and everywhere, may there be the same spirit. I well remember one such. The freshness, the early bloom of the "teens" had long passed, but the youth renewed like the eagle's was ever seen in her. As I have watched the sparkling light of Christian joy gleaming in her eye, as I have heard her sing so heartily the songs of Zion, as I have marked her cheerful readiness to do the King's business, or run on the King's errands, my inmost thought has often been that I could better conceive the brightness of the angels before God's throne, doing His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His Word.

Truly her life was an answer to her own question and wish —

"What would you be?"
A blessing to each one surrounding me,
A chalice of dew to the weary heart,
A sunbeam of joy bidding sorrow depart,
To the storm-tossed vessel, a beacon-light,
A nightingale song in the darkest night,
A beckoning hand to a far-off goal,
An angel of love to each friendless soul.

Such would I be;
Oh that such happiness were for me!

"What would you be?"
With these alone were no rest for me.
I would be my Savior's loving child,
With a heart set free from its passions wild,
Rejoicing in Him and His own sweet ways;
An echo of Heaven's unceasing praise,
A mirror here of His light and love,
And a polished gem in His crown above.

Such would I be,
Your, O Savior, and one with Thee!
  Francis Havergal

And if the rose has still the dew of the morning upon it, if it is still the bud which is "no vain sacrifice," if you have the spring and elasticity of youth — will there not be a double glory and a double beauty, if there be this likewise, the light of Divine grace, the gladsome joy of a heart which has found its true portion beyond the skies, and its work below like that of the holy ones who are sent forth to minister to the children of men?

Would you indeed be "bright and fair?" Remember the angels are such in the sunshine of God's perpetual favor. They know no sin, and they fear no separation. Through ages past and for ages yet to come, the love of God is their endless theme, their spring of constant joy.

But how can it be thus with you? You have led no sinless life. Though perhaps shielded from evil in the bosom of a Christian home, nurtured with tender care in the pastures of truth, committed in your infancy to the Good Shepherd infrequent prayer — yet is there not much that is wrong laid up in the chamber of memory? Is there not many a fault, many an evil thought, many a dark stain, known at least to yourself and your God?

Ah, sister, you may be "bright and fair" in the eyes of those who love you. You may be attractive, you may be courted and flattered by companions, but there may be hidden sins cherished in the heart. There may be dark, gloomy caverns of envy, jealousy, unbelief, spiritual blindness and indifference. There may be a secret worm at work, which may in the end prove the death of all solid peace. There may be the natural evil and corruption of your nature, which you have never yet discovered.

A short time ago, a young man had a very dangerous attack of small-pox. For a time it seemed likely to be fatal, but by care and medical skill he was brought through it. When recovering he wished to see himself, but his friends endeavored to dissuade him. At length he was so persistent that they were obliged to meet his wish. So a small mirror was brought to his bedside. When he looked at himself, he burst into a flood of tears, saying, "I did not think I could be like that!"

My young friend, have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror of God's Holy Word?

Have you ever looked at your heart and life in the light of God's holy law, of the precepts of His Word, and of the example of the Holy Savior? Have you ever learned to see that, in spite of outward attractions, it may be, your whole being is marred and defiled by sin?

A simple poem by the Rev. Dr. Macleod, puts this thought in a striking way:

At the brook, a maiden glancing,
Saw a form divine;
Said she, all her heart exulting,
"That fair form is mine!"

As she spoke an angel whispered:
"Maiden, Heaven is fair."
Said the maiden to the angel:
"Angel, take me there."

"Maiden," said the angel sadly,
"Heaven is for the fair."
"Therefore," said the maiden proudly,
"Angel, take me there."

At the gates the glory burning,
Smote her soul with dread.
"Angel, from that awful glory,
Hide me!" said the maid.

Then the angel, gently soothing,
Drew his robe aside,
"Maiden, in this wounded bosom,
Wounded souls may hide."

"O my Savior, pierced and wounded,
Heaven is for the fair:
I have sinned, but You are Holy;
Cleanse me, bring me there."

And the gentle Savior, gently
Drew her to His breast,
Made her fair, and at the gateway
Through the glory pressed.

Here is the secret of true beauty. It must come from Christ Himself. You may be sinful, very sinful, far more than you think or imagine — but close at hand there is mercy, grace, and help. There is One who can remove all guilt. There is an open fountain where you can be cleansed from all defilement. There is a robe of "virgin white" that can cover all defects. There is a free justification by faith in Christ, in which you can stand before God as clear from all condemnation as if you had never sinned!

A wondrous contrast in myself I see —
As black as sin can make me by the Fall,
As fair as Jesus is in God's account.
For, God be praised, it is not what I know,
But what the Father thinks, and sees, and knows
Of the exceeding beauties of His Son;
That's my exceeding comfort, joy, and rest,
In spite of all!

But there is more than this. In Christ there is grace, and help, and power. The renewing Spirit can altogether change and elevate your whole life and character. Through the Holy Spirit you may become a new creature. Old things may pass away, and all things may become new.

Only come to the Savior in sincerity and truth. Hide nothing of your sin. Desire to know the uttermost of the evil that is in you. Confess at His mercy-seat whatever weighs upon your conscience. Then trust Him at once and for all. Take the lost sinner's place — and claim the lost sinner's Savior. Glory in Christ alone. So shall you have peace. You shall rejoice, even as the angels, that a Father's smile is ever upon you. His eternal love shall henceforth be the comfort of your brightest and your darkest days.

Would you, like the angels, be "bright and fair?" Especially be mindful to copy their holiness, their fervent love, their burning zeal. They are ever spoken of as the "holy angels." Their zeal and love know no bounds. Ever on the wing, they go forth to fulfill all God's behests. And you must be content with no lower standard. Be this your petition, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

Seek to be ever looking unto Jesus, that you may put on more and more of His image. An artist, in taking a portrait, will be turning every moment to look at the one who is sitting for a likeness. So must your face be turned continually to look at the glory of Jesus. So shall you be able to copy His spirit and character. Through His grace, abhor the least shadow of evil. Aim at perfect conformity to God's will. Crave intensely the uplifting power and inward working of the Holy Spirit.

Would you be "bright and fair?" Be clothed with love. It is the most beautiful of all graces. It comes down from above, for love is one of the first-fruits of the Spirit. It is a plant of Paradise. It is a breath of celestial air. It is a beam from the countenance of a God of love. It is the golden belt, the bond of peace, that knits in one all heavenly virtues. "Follow after love." It is full of humility, forbearance, long-suffering. It is slow to anger, but quick to support and comfort those in trouble. It is full of tender consideration for the sorrows, trials, weaknesses, infirmities, feelings, of those around.

Here and there you find a young friend who is sadly inconsiderate. With no ill purpose, but through lack of thought, she will crush and bruise under her feet those who need all the help and consolation we can give them.

I have thought of the scythe-bearing chariots of olden time, the scythes protruding on either hand and driven into the hosts of the enemy, cutting, wounding, slaying whatever may come across their path. But there are those whose unbridled temper and self-will does this very same thing among those who love them best. A tender mother, an affectionate sister, a faithful servant, a school companion and friend — any one of these must bear the brunt of your angry and bitter words, if SELF is crossed or something has put you out.

Nay, sister, let it not be so. You are little like an angel at such a moment. You are rather catching the tone of him who delights in envy, strife, malice, and hatred. You must put away all this, and put on "meek and lowly, pure and holy, heaven-born charity." You must think of others and crucify

 self. You must mortify selfishness and self-will in every form. You must put on the spirit of self-sacrifice, and be always ready to bear another's burden, and lighten another's woe. Instead of causing others grief or pain — you must learn of Christ, and then, wherever you go, you shall bring with you peace and blessing.

Would you be "bright and fair "as an angel? Then let your feet be swift and beautiful in ministries of loving service. Angels came morn and eventide with provisions for the prophet Elijah by the brook. Angels ministered to Christ in the wilderness and in Gethsemane. An angel brought the good news of a Savior's birth, and the heavenly choir sang the glad anthem of redeeming love.

And to the eye of many a child of sorrow, you may seem "bright and fair" as they — when you catch their spirit and do their work. Go and help that faithful servant of Christ who is laboring for souls, but is persecuted and tempted, and tried by the opposition of the world. Go and minister to your Savior in the person of that widow, or orphan, or suffering saint. Go and carry a sweet message of love and salvation to the lost and perishing. Go and sing, yes, sing the new song of Jesus and His love by the bedside of the sick and dying, in the cottage, the mission Hall, or by the wayside — when by it you may draw a soul into the kingdom of Christ. And thus living and working for Jesus, you shall still be "bright and fair" even in the last struggle.

Twenty-three years have passed since I watched by the dying bed of a lady who had been to many a messenger of good tidings. She had taken many a one under "her care," and had "speeded their flight to courts" above. But in the midst of her work, she was called home. She had but one regret. She scarcely desired to have done more in the vineyard, but she desired, if spared, to have done it better. But the sun shone brightly into her room, and the Sun of Righteousness shone still more brightly on her soul, and, like Stephen of old, with her "face as it were the face of an angel," she joyfully entered into everlasting life!

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you — so you must love one another." [John 13:34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2013.34)

2. "My Sister!"

Here is one drop out of the ocean of Christ's love. It is a gem of purest water. It is a tiny seed of Divine truth that may fill a life with gladness.

It is one of the kindest words that ever fell from the lips of the Son of Man. I would that every young friend who may read these pages might appropriate it to herself, and treasure it up in her heart to her own exceeding comfort. But when was it, and how was it, that the Savior uttered these words?

In Mark 3, you may find a great contrast in two of Christ's looks. Early in the chapter you see Him surrounded by His bitterest foes, full of envy and malice, and only finding in His merciful works some cause for blame. They watch Him whether "He will heal on the Sabbath-day." Then comes the first look of which I speak. It was a look of sorrow and distress, of grief and holy indignation, against their perverseness and unbelief. "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (verse 5).

Never could that look be forgotten. Those eyes, which are as a flame of fire, flashed forth righteous displeasure against their strange and willful perversion of His ways and doings. It may remind us of the look that, as the Judge, He will one day cast upon those on the left hand, when He shall say, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire!"

But later on in the chapter, you read of a very different look. A little company of disciples are sitting around the Savior, and are eagerly drinking in His loving instructions. But there comes an interruption. We know not the reason, but His mother and brethren come to Him and wish to speak with Him. But this momentary pause shall not be in vain. It shall leave blessed fruit behind. It shall bring sweetest consolation to His Church, even to the end of the world. "You tell me," He would say, "that my mother and my brethren would speak with me. But who are they? Whom do I reckon such? Whom do I regard as my true kinsfolk?"

Then came, the second look of the chapter. Stretching forth His hand toward the little flock, He looked round about on them with a tender love that no words could describe, and added an assurance of His favor toward them. "Behold," said He, "My mother and brothers!"

Then followed a few other words carrying the assurance of His love still further. That His look of love might be a precious heritage for all true disciples in all parts of the globe, and in all ages of the world's history, He gave it with a "whoever." And it is one of the most glorious "whoevers" in the whole book of revelation.

"Whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (verse 35).

"My sister" goes side by side with the look. So that if the one is your portion — so also is the other. Very comforting, very helpful shall it be to you all through life if you know that His favorable countenance is ever toward you, and that you are the dear sister of Him who is Lord of all.

"My sister!" Can you claim this word of love as your own? Can you say "my" indeed and in truth? Can you look up to Heaven, and say of the King of Zion, "He is my brother!" Can you rejoice in the assurance that He regards you as a beloved sister?

But how can you tell? Let us see.

First, let me ask, are you in the same position as those who were then around Christ? Are you humbly sitting at His feet? Are you a learner in His school? Are you hearkening day by day to His voice, waiting at the posts of His gates? Are the words of love which He spoke your daily meditation? Are you ever looking up to Him for light and teaching, depending upon His Spirit to guide you into all truth?

But Christ gives another test. The condition annexed to His promise is very plain, "Whoever shall do the will of God — the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

It is instructive to consider this side by side with the great "whoever" ([John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%203.16)) "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life!"

But how shall we explain them? How shall we reconcile them? Shall we exalt one above the other? Shall we lay all the stress on "believing" and neglect the "doing?" Or shall we think much of the "doing" and care little for the "believing?"

Not so. We will value both, and honor both, and use both for the object for which they were given.

Ever remember this. Believing and doing, faith and obedience — are never opposed one to the other. They are in perfect harmony, and ought ever to be thus considered.

Faith is the foundation — obedience the superstructure.

Faith is the root — obedience is the fruit.

Faith is the motive — obedience is the task it fulfills.

Faith accepts the balm which heals the deadly wound — obedience is the labor and the service which the soldier of the cross renders after his recovery.

Would you rejoice in Christ as your Elder Brother, the Brother whose love will never grow cold, the Brother who will sympathize with you all through your pilgrimage?

Then go to Him in faith, and trust Him as your all-sufficient Savior. Take the benefit offered to you in His name — nay, more, receive Him as the Father's gift — as your Atoning sacrifice, your Righteousness, your All!

A thought lately brought exceeding comfort to one who was full of anxiety and doubt. He was seeking the Savior but could not find peace, when a suggestion with reference to the promise removed every difficulty. "Whoever believes" is the warrant for our hope — but what is it to believe? I suggested that in place of "believe" he should read "receive," the parallel expression given in [John 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.12). How clear, then, is the path of life to every humble soul!

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever receives Him should not perish but have eternal life."

God gives — man has but to receive. It is no hard condition. But welcome this blessing of Divine love, but accept the Son of God as your full salvation, but open the door of your heart to Him — and let Him take possession, and dwell and abide there — and life everlasting shall be your sure inheritance.

To help you still further, take another view of faith. It has many aspects, and where you fail to find help in one you may be able to do so in another. Look at the rest which faith brings. You have a burden of guilt — but by faith you transfer it to the shoulder of Jesus. You have infirmities, and temptations, and sorrows — but by faith you may leave them all with Jesus. You are weary and tired, and need repose — and you come to the Savior and find rest in Him.

A native Christian in India put it very forcibly. In the part of the country where he dwelt, here are there are stone pillars on which men can easily place the burden they carry on the head. Then beneath this pillar is a seat sheltered from the heat where the traveler can rest. "Christ is my sumatanga," said the man, using the name by which these rests are called.

Let Him be your sumatanga, my young friend. On Him by faith roll your sin; or rather, believe that God Himself has laid it upon Him. On Him rest your weary, trembling, troubled spirit. Leave with Him all that concerns you. Present and future, soul and body, time and eternity — leave all in His loving care, and be assured that He will undertake for you.

But do not forget the other side. There is a need for doing as well as believing. All in vain is the profession of faith in Christ — unless it leads you to love Him and keep His commandments.

"Not every one that says unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven — but he who does the will of my Father which is in Heaven."

No greater stumbling-block is to be found in Christ's Church, than one who glories in the doctrines of grace and yet walks carelessly and inconsistently with such a profession. Not such is the faith of God's elect. Not such the faith that honors the Master, or brings true peace to the soul.

Who has not known one or another young friend, accustomed to the Gospel from childhood, perhaps professing to trust in Christ, even engaging in Sunday-school or other work — and yet all the week through the life, the talk, the temper are all utterly contrary to the precepts of Christ. There is nothing of His likeness, no earnest aim to please Him — but the whole heart is given to the world! Be your spirit very far from this. Be ever about your Father's business. Leaning only on the Savior's grace, praying for the filling of Spirit — go forward to do the will of God more perfectly.

Now be honest about this point. What is your religion worth? Is it a sham and a pretense — or a reality? Are you daily waging war against these three deadly sins — sloth, self-will, and selfishness? Are you shining as a bright lamp in your own home? Are you careful about common, every-day duties? Are you mindful to curb the tongue, to watch against vain and evil thoughts, to be considerate of the feelings and needs of those around you? Are you ever ready to seize an opportunity for doing good, to lighten the burden of another, or to help a fellow-pilgrim on the way to Zion?

I lately met with a few simple lines which have a precious thought in them:

Would you be happy? Take an easy way;
Think of those round you, live for them all day;
Think of their pain, their grief, their loss, their care,
All that they have to do, or feel, or bear;
Think of their pleasure, of their good, their gain,
Think of those round you, it will not be vain.

In this path of faith, obedience, and loving service you will find the comfort and privilege which Christ promises. Place not one grain of confidence in yourself, your works, your prayers, or feelings — but rely wholly on the work and sure word of the Savior.

Then manifest your faith by a life of holy, devoted, and zealous regard to all His commandments. Live for Christ, spend and be spent for others, and take up your cross day by day. So shall you know assuredly, by the inward teaching of the Spirit, that Christ's look of love rests on you. He says of you, even of you, however unworthy you may be, she is "my sister!"

"My sister!" Sound if you can the depths of this loving word of the Master. It is but short, nevertheless it is rich in heavenly consolation.

It is one of those cords of tender love by which He draws you near to Himself. He does not keep you at arm's length. He does not treat you as a servant or a stranger. He does not speak of you as my "follower," my "disciple," or even my "friend." To be any one of these is a sweet privilege, but Christ goes beyond these, and says she is "my sister."

Thus Christ feels and acts towards you. He will be a true Brother, a Brother in heart as well as in name — kinder far than any earthly brother toward the sister he most dearly loves; one who will be faithful in all extremities, and to whom you can never appeal in vain.

And be it remembered that He is the Brother to whom is committed the key of Heaven's Treasury. Whatever provision may be needful for any one of the household of faith, is at His disposal, and can come only through Him. So that you may lay all your needs upon Him. He cannot fail to supply you. Come to Him continually, and look to His hand to bestow each gift that may be for your profit. He will grant . . .
daily mercy for daily sins and shortcomings,
well-timed support for each temptation,
grace upon grace,
food for the hungry soul,
medicine for the sick soul,
water from the wellspring for the thirsty soul,
covering for the naked soul, and
eye salve for dim and defective sight.

Whatever you lack, whatever you desire, the Elder Brother can fully, abundantly supply, and He will do so in so far as it ministers to your highest good. "My God shall fully supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" ([Philippians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.19))

"My sister!" Then in Him you are made a daughter of the Lord God Almighty! Christ is the well-beloved Son of the Father, and when you are thus brought near to Him, as a sister of the Lord Jesus, in the highest and fullest sense you are a dear child in the family of God.

What a spring of joy and consolation is this! You may be the member of a very happy home. You may know the love of very affectionate parents. You may have means in abundance. You may be a child of affluence, perhaps of one in high position — but the family circle must one day be broken up, and you can little forecast what your future position may be. But in the household of God, you have a portion and a fixed abode, which can never part from you. You have resources which cannot fail. You have love which time can never change or exhaust.

Whatever Your sovereign will ordains,
O give me strength to bear!
Still let me know my Father reigns,
And trust a Father's care!

"My sister!" This relationship brings you at once into closest fellowship with all the people of God. They, too, are brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus — and therefore your brothers and sisters too. You may know what it is to be sometimes lonely and desolate. You may stand like a pillar in the desert, and alone have to bear the storm and the whirlwind — but there is a communion of saints, there is a true oneness between all God's people. There is a link that binds you to them, and them to you. Their prayers ascend to God on your behalf. And though as yet you are strangers in the flesh — yet a day will come when you shall be one in knowledge of each other, as you are now in the knowledge and love of Christ. Their struggles, their sorrows, their joys — are in many respects like your own. The day hastens on when the Church on earth and the Church above shall be forever one in the coming kingdom of our Lord!

We expect a bright tomorrow,
All will be well!
Faith can sing through days of sorrow,
All, all is well!
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying,
Or in living or in dying,
All must be well!

3. "Give Your Hand to Fortune."

I don't know why it is, but it is a curious fact that the clergy receive innumerable circulars, inviting them to invest money in every conceivable project, and to risk it in all sorts of ways. A little while ago I received one from Hamburg, setting forth the advantages of a grand lottery under government control. Six marks were to be paid for a share, and this would give a chance of a splendid prize. I thought I would read over the circular, though I have a perfect horror of lotteries, whether put forth in this way, or taking something of a charity form, such as in bazaars. I believe this and every form of gambling to be an unmitigated evil, and that to indulge in it, as a habit, is one of the surest means of ruining a young person. In fact, in my judgment, it is only a refined way of putting your hand in other people's pockets — or allowing them, if clever enough, to put their hands into yours.

I wish I could get every young friend who reads these pages to side with me in this matter. You may save many a one from a broken heart, perhaps from suicide, by using your influence against this terrible vice of gambling. It has been computed by those who have carefully studied the matter that there is about one suicide a week through the whole year in consequence of the public gambling-tables still allowed in one place in the South of Europe, Monaco, one of the fairest and yet the most fatal spot on the whole Continent. Set your face, my young friend, against this evil. Whether in a rubber of whist, billiards, betting on horses, speculation, or in any other way, use the power you possess to discourage it. It has been truly said that if man is the head, woman is the neck that turns it; and I am sure a young lady might do a vast amount of good, if she tried, in checking this fruitful cause of untold misery.

In this particular circular I was struck with one phrase, "Give your hand to fortune." A very poor way, thought I, of giving your hand to fortune, but perhaps a better way might be found. So I noted it down for future use, and perhaps it may serve a turn in suggesting something for the help of those for whom this book is intended.

"Give your hand to fortune." How is this to be done? When I was a boy I remember rather a curious valentine being sent to a young lady who lived near us. She was wealthy, attractive, and accomplished, so that it was not to be wondered at if a good many young men liked to visit at the house, if they had the chance. The valentine was something of a satire upon this. It gave a picture of the house where she lived, and represented not a few young men on the doorsteps leading up to the front door. Some were just going up and knocking. Others were coming away, and they seemed to be returning in sore disappointment at the failure of their suit.

Now it seems to me that young ladies, whether rich and attractive or not, have many suitors for their hand.

Or I might put it in another way. I might refer to the old story of Rowland Hill and the lady in her carriage. She had stopped the carriage to listen, as she passed the place where he was preaching. The moment he saw her, he thought how he might win her soul. So he directed his words to her, and said that a lady's soul was to be put to auction, and there were three bidders. Then he put it that the devil came and offered such and such things, and the world came and offered its delights and varied pleasures — but then Christ came and offered far more, even peace, salvation, and eternal life — and so carried off the prize. Take which illustration you will, whether as bidders or suitors — there are those who lay siege to a young lady's heart and endeavor to carry it off as their prize.

Here comes Fashion, and, in its train, dress, and show, and jewelry, and whatever ministers to vanity and pride.

Here comes Mammon, with its presents of gold and silver, and perhaps a home where there is every luxury and comfort — but where there is no room for God.

Here comes Music, with its enchanting strains, taking the

 first place, becoming a ruling passion, perhaps bearing sway even in the House of God, occupying the whole attention, robbing God of the heart, shutting out all true, spiritual worship, and any earnest heed to the Word of life.

Here comes Pleasure, assuming a thousand forms, the dance, the drama, the theater, and I know not what else beside — alluring with its siren voice, deadening religious impressions — leading the soul far away from Olivet, Calvary, and Mount Zion.

Here comes Ambition, perhaps making use of intellectual gifts, perhaps of other means, to rise high in the scale of society — but with no thought of using such a position for the glory of God.

Here comes even Vice, clad in some fair disguise, fed by ideas taken from the light reading of the day, and beguiling the restless and unwary into paths of unspeakable peril.

No doubt each and all of these have much to say for themselves, and will not resign without a struggle the effort to make you their prey.

Have you given your heart or hand to one or another of these? Or, if not this, have you permitted any one of them to exercise such influence over you, that you have been hindered in serving and following Christ? I am sure you will find disappointment in either course. In the first, the present gratification may seem to be worth something — but what about the dregs of the cup? What will they leave behind when health or circumstances prevent your further enjoyment?

In the second case, they will surely rob you of the true peace which Christ is willing to give you.

I have read of a lady in America who could not get the water to spring up in her garden. There was moisture and evidence of water, but no well-spring to refresh it. At length, in digging, she came upon an old under-drain, a hollow tree placed some distance beneath the surface which carried all the water away into the valley beneath. Ah, there is often the under-drain, the yielding to some earthly pursuit or amusement, that the soul is robbed of the real joy and gladness which would otherwise rise up and fill a young life with its overflow of peace and usefulness.

Some few years ago a young lady came to the Savior full of deep sorrow for sin, and asked Him to wash her in His precious blood. He did not cast her out, and she could rejoice that for her sins, He died upon the tree. But she made a great mistake. She trusted Christ as her Savior — but she did not take Him for her portion. She did not look to Him as the source of all her comfort and joy. It may be, she looked to Him for a few crumbs of happiness, but she tried to get most of it from the world. She took one draught of the living water, and then went back to the broken cistern. She wanted to be Christ's — but she loved the world, and was reluctant to give it up. She tried all the while to think she was right, but down in the bottom of her heart she knew she was not.

But the Lord chastened and humbled her, and led her to see where she had gone astray. She learned that what the world calls pleasure scarcely deserves the name, and very soon dries up like a brook in summer, but that Jesus is a fountain always near and overflowing with joy that never fails. So her heart was satisfied, and she could tell others of the comfort and help she had found.

"Give your hand to fortune!" I know of but one way in which you can really do this. I know of but one worthy suitor who may well claim your hand, your heart, your life, your all. Only yield yourself to Him in genuine sincerity, only give yourself to Him without the very least reserve, and you can never be disappointed, nor fail to secure the very best that your heart can desire.

Give your hand to the Heavenly Bridegroom! Take Him as your one chosen portion.

Marriage is a frequent type of the spiritual union which exists between Christ and His Church. In the Old Testament we have frequent reference to this, as in Psalm 45: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty" (verse 10, 11). He betrothes to Himself His Church in righteousness, in judgment, in loving-kindness, in mercy, in faithfulness (Hosea 2.)

He nourishes and cherishes His redeemed Church. He gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

And that which is true of the whole Church, is true also of each believer. In this spiritual union, he gives Himself to each and to all. So that the humblest member of His body may say, "My beloved is mine — and I am His!"

Give your hand to Jesus! Think of the honor and exalted privilege which this union brings with it.

Who is Jesus?
The Son of the Most High God,
the Lord of life and glory,
the Ruler of all worlds,
the Almighty King,
yes, the Creator and Preserver of the whole universe!

And who are you?
A child of dust, the creature of a day, a thing of nothing. Yes, worse than this, you are a sinner, sinful by nature, sinful in practice, and unable of yourself to remove a single stain!

Yet this merciful and gracious Redeemer stoops even to you. He comes to take you into closest union with Himself. He makes you His very own, and calls you by His own name.

In this union of Christ and the believer, it is a spring of exceeding consolation that both are regarded as one in the eye of the Law.

Among ourselves we know that the husband becomes responsible for the debts of his wife, and the wife shares the property that belongs to the husband. And with Christ and the Christian, there is the exact parallel to this. When you come to the Savior and trust your soul to Him, then both are one. Your debts are Christ's debts. Your sin is reckoned to His account. And he says, "All your debt — all your sin I bore on the cross! The terrible score was settled once and forever. No more can the Law ever require either of me or of you." Henceforth "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

But more than this. All that belongs to Christ, belongs to you!

His righteousness,
His white robe,
His Spirit,
His kingdom,
His glory,
all things that the Father has given to Him
— all are yours, for you are His!

What a storehouse of eternal treasure is here! Who can tell the riches of Him who is Head of all things, and into whose hand all things are committed? Nor can this union ever be broken. God hates divorce. When people are joined together in marriage, the hand of one is placed in that of the other, and the words of Christ are repeated, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

If you are Christ's indeed, not by outward profession only, but by inward faith — you will consecrate yourself entirely to His service, and He will surely keep you even to the end.

You may remember the story of the old Christian who bade his daughter fetch the family Bible, and find the words, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" ([Romans 8:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.35).) Then putting his finger upon them, he said, "I have breakfasted with you here on earth — but I shall sup with Christ in glory," and so entered into rest.

"Give your hand to the Heavenly Bridegroom." But you ask, How can I do this? How is the marriage tie cemented? How is it that people, once perhaps altogether strangers to each other, are knit together in a life-long union?

Is it not by mutual consent, founded on mutual knowledge? When the two parties have learned to know and trust in each other, when this knowledge leads to affection, then there is the mutual "I will." The "I will" on the part of the bridegroom is met by the "I will" on the part of the bride. On both sides there must be willingness. If either refuses, there can be no marriage. Here, then, is the very hinge of life and salvation. Christ knows you, all your sin and unworthiness — and yet, out of His own deep tender compassion and love, offers you . . .
Himself,
His free forgiving mercy,
His righteousness,
His grace,
His heart,
His home in glory!

Every sin, all the evil in you and about you, is known perfectly — and yet He stretches out His pierced hands — hands full of precious gifts of grace.

He says to you, "Give me your heart, your life, your all. I will save you, I will bless you, I will be to you your all-sufficient and everlasting Portion!" What is your reply? Have you learned so much the goodness and love of Christ, that you truly, heartily, accept His gracious offer?

It was said by Dr. Chalmers, "I never have so clear and satisfactory a view of the Gospel salvation, as when I look at it in the light of an offer on the one side, and the acceptance of that offer on the other." Be assured that upon the acceptance or rejection of this kindness on the part of Christ — everything depends for time and eternity. Which is it? Is there a voice within which responds to the appeal of Christ? Do you say, "Gladly, joyfully, O Lord, do I take your offered mercy. I am poor and needy, I have nothing but poverty, misery, and sin — yet just as I am — Your promise and Your call is for me. I take You at Your word. I look for all from You. I trust myself wholly to Your care and keeping. Henceforth I am no longer my own, but Yours — Yours to do Your work below, Yours to dwell with You forever above."

Just as I am, Your love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Yours, yes, Yours alone,
O Lamb of God! I come.

If this is so, if you thus by faith accept Christ and yield yourself to Him — then you must not question that all the privileges of this union are yours. In Christ's death you have died — and no more can guilt be charged against you. In Christ's life you live, and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit you have life-giving power and all the grace the Spirit brings. You are risen in Christ to newness and holiness of life. In Christ you are even now exalted to heavenly places. He has sat down in His kingdom, and in Him you are to reckon yourself as already dwelling in Mount Zion (Hebrews 12).

Moreover, you are to rely upon His tender sympathy in all your cares, trials, and difficulties. You are never to look upon yourself as left alone to bear the very least of them, but to remember you are one with Him, and He knows and provides, and will order all for good.

Nor are you to forget that there is one very special duty linked to these privileges. You are separated unto Him. The worm at the root of half the religion of the present day is, that Christians come down to mingle too much with the children of the world. You ought to be courteous and considerate to all. You ought to be congenial and kind and bright and pleasant wherever you go. But mind that you do not step out of Christ's pavilion, to sit down among His enemies, or among those who turn their back on Him. That word of Christ, thrice repeated at the most solemn hour of His life, ought to be often pondered by His own loved ones, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" ([John 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2015.19), [17:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.14),[16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.16)).

Whatever others may say, be faithful to your Lord. Cleave only to Him. As many a young lady has been willing to go far from former acquaintances in company with one to whom she has been united; and if the object of her choice is really worthy of her, she is happier far than ever before — so must the duty of the Christian to Christ be paramount above every other consideration. He never bids you immure yourself in a nunnery, or take vows of celibacy, but He does bid you be separate from evil, and whatever tends to evil or to hinders your service to Him.

A few lines of a recent Christian hymn point out the deep, the abiding joy which is found in Christ alone:

O Christ! in You my soul has found,
And found in You alone,
The peace, the joy, I sought so long,
The bliss until now unknown.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
No other name for me;
There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

There is a matter of great practical importance to young Christians very closely connected with this subject. Union with Christ is the very hinge of life and salvation — and both in cementing this union and maintaining it, much precious help may be found in the use of various means of grace.

Holy Communion, received in faith, is a blessed means of maintaining unbroken your fellowship with Him. It brings you nearer to His cross. It reminds you of His matchless love. It tells you that He is always near. It points you to His glorious appearing. When you come to His table from time to time, He meets with you, and breathes upon your heart His gentle Spirit. He strengthens your faith, and feeds you with the heavenly manna. He recalls to your recollection His faithful promises, and you renew your covenant with Him.

I do not forget that, by prayer and meditation in His Word, He likewise mightily works in the hearts of His people, and of these means I have spoken elsewhere. But you can afford to lose no help, and therefore never neglect His dying command, never be ashamed to confess Christ at His table. Never turn away with those who refuse His grace and mercy.

See, the feast of love is spread,
Drink the wine and break the bread,
Sweet memorials, until the Lord
Call us round His heavenly board;
Some from earth, from glory some
Severed only until He comes!

4. Locked Gates, and the Key to Open Them

Around a bright and pleasant home in the Lake District, there are many acres of wooded parks intersected by walks from which you can gain many a fair prospect of the surrounding scenery. To preserve the privacy of the estate, there are several gates along the walks, and these are usually kept locked. But in the hall hangs the key, which the visitor at the house can always take, and thus at his pleasure range through the whole property.

It seems to me that there are many locked gates in life, and sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly, the key is often found to open them. For instance, occasionally a silver or a golden key is used to obtain a position of trust and influence. Money is given to purchase a preferment in politics, unlimited and systematic bribery is resorted to in the hope of gaining a seat in Parliament, and in many other directions unfair practices of the kind are not infrequent.

In another way, I fear, a golden key is often used in a way that does great harm. It is used sometimes to open a young lady's heart; at least, it apparently does so. It may be true that the bridegroom is twenty or thirty years older than the bride; it may be true that there is very little congeniality of disposition, and perhaps even the barrier of moral unfitness; but there are plenty of means and everything which wealth and position can give; so the young lady hopes for the best, and the gate flies open, and friends smile and congratulate, though perchance it is the blighting of a young life, and a weary heart carries its secret burden even to the grave.

Another thought may be added here on the same matter. If you have the love of Christ in your heart, I trust you will follow His will as to any marital engagement. He has set a limit for His followers. "Only in the Lord" is a plain precept that ought never to be transgressed. If you are Christ's, never marry any one with whom you cannot have real fellowship in Him. If you do, you will be drawn back into the world, or will have constant cause for sorrow in the barrier that separates you. Do not deceive yourself with the idea that the one you care for will one day become a Christian. If you grieve the Savior by your disregard of His will — then how can you expect that He will afterwards fulfill your desire and turn the heart of the one you marry? But if you are faithful to Him, and refuse to link your life to one who is a stranger to His grace, you will never regret it. He knows how to recompense your fidelity in some way.

Nearly forty years ago a Christian girl engaged herself rather hastily to a young man to whom she was deeply attached. But the thought came to her that she had not consulted God's will in the matter. She knelt down and prayed most earnestly that if it were not His will, He would put a hindrance in the way. Soon after this, her father desired to break off the engagement — circumstances occurred which made him feel it was best. The young lady saw in it the hand of God. She took off the pearl ring and enclosed it in a paper with these words, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Thirty-five years after she discovered this paper in an old pocket-book of her father's, and could thank God with all her heart for the grace that had enabled her to make the decision.

There is another key of a different kind, though I fear the evil it brings is no less extensive and widespread than that to which I have just referred.

The key of an assumed priestly authority is exercised to draw out the secrets that ought never to be laid bare except to the great High Priest. In the confessional a young lady tells in the ear of a priest that which she would not divulge even to a mother. And very great is the evil that results. It leads to far too much dependence upon man. It hinders the penitent going straight to the throne of grace. It makes a veil and a barrier between the soul and the Savior. It puts the minister of Christ in a wrong position, and fetters the conscience of Christ's disciple. It utterly destroys the liberty which is our most precious heritage, and sadly misinterprets the royal invitation of the King, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Never was I so far from my Lord," said a young lady who had escaped from this snare, "as when I tried to come to Him through another."

But while I trust you will never yield to either of these temptations, there are three keys I should like you to use. I will name them in the order of their relative value.

The first key is Patience. In many ways, this is found to open locked gates. For instance, take some difficulty in Scripture. There is no doubt that if men wish to find them, they may find many knots they cannot untie, many apparent discords and contradictions, things which at first sight may seem contrary to God's love or justice or truth. Science, too, has its objections, and the great truths of atonement, divine renewal, and eternal judgment have many adversaries. But let patience have its perfect work. Go deeper in the study of the Word. Lay firmer hold on the great foundation evidences, such as the existence of the Christian Church, the manifold proofs of Christ's resurrection, the moral fitness and marvelous effects of Christian truth; and as to the rest, wait patiently for light and it will surely arise. The difficulties and objections of past ages have in most cases utterly vanished — and those of the present day will do so likewise. Only be patient, and God will reward you by stronger faith, and by making you helpful to others also in saving them from the dark pit of unbelief.

But with this key of patience we must also use another, that of Prayer. Faithful, humble prayer will prevail, both as to doubts with respect to Scripture and also in the ordinary difficulties of daily life which often cross the Christian's path.

You have given yourself to Christ, and wish to follow Him, but there is a "locked gate." There is a something in the way. Perhaps you are in a house of business, and practices are carried on which are not thoroughly honest. You are expected to say that which is not true, or at least that which has a spice of deceit about it. Or in your own home the trouble comes. You feel unjustly treated. You are put into the shade, and duties thrust upon you which others ought to do. You have to stop at home while others go out and have a pleasant evening. All this frets and disturbs you, and hinders you from acting as a Christian ought.

Or perhaps the difficulty assumes quite a different form. Parents, brothers, and sisters do not look at amusements as you do. The theater and the ball-room seem to them perfectly harmless, though to you they are a hindrance and a stumbling-block. They . . .
make spiritual things less real,
dampen your love to the Savior, and
are a waste of time and money which ought to be better employed.

Under such circumstances, you need much wisdom and grace. Be courteous and considerate, but hold fast that which you know is right. And take the

 key! Make it a matter of constant prayer. Go and tell Jesus. Ask for plain guidance and direction, and it will not be withheld.

A few years ago an incident occurred which bears on this point. A ticket had been given to a young lady by a favorite brother that she might go with him to a public ball, and she was quite willing to go. But, meanwhile, a mission was held in the town, and she threw herself very heartily into the good work, and both received profit herself and persuaded others to go with her. She gained quite a new view of life and its responsibilities. She gave her heart to the Savior, and much that she before cared for, had now no attraction for her. But what was to be done? She had the ticket, but she neither wished to go nor to wound her brother's feelings. But she prayed about it, and left the matter in the Lord's hands. For some days, "that ticket" was her constant burden, but it was soon rolled away. Her brother saw she was in trouble about something and soon found out the cause. He only joked her about the Evangelistic fever, and then gave the ticket to a cousin who had no scruples in the matter.

I am sure this is the best way to get rid of a burden, whatever kind it may be. Roll it on the Lord. Commit it to Him. Ask Him to undertake for you. And in the end He will make all plain. For a time, the gate may resist all attempts to open it, but some day it will fly open, and the long trouble or anxiety pass away.

I cannot see the path
Which I must take,
But You can see, and You
Will not forsake.

So when the path is rough,
I will be still;
And feel content to know
It is Your will.

Until in the Father's Home,
Where all is light,
I shall confess with joy
Your ways were right!

But there is another key still more precious. You remember the story of Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle. On Saturday night they began to pray, and a little before daybreak Christian remembered that he had the Key of Promise in his pocket, and he was persuaded that it would open any lock in the way of their escape. So Christian pulled it out of his bosom and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt gave back and the door flew open with ease. Then he went to the Castle Yard, and the iron gate, and though the lock of the latter went hard, the key did open it. But, though the creaking of the gate waked up Giant Despair — yet he could not follow them, and they reached the King's highway in safety and went on their way rejoicing.

Well, we have the key of Promise still, and there is no lock it cannot open. Take the whole range of human needs, reckon up every need of things temporal, or whatever you lack of faith, or love, or any other grace — why should you question the goodness of our God? Have you not the key, "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Add together every accusation which conscience and the memory of past days can bring against you. Think of the sins of your childhood, and the faults and failures of the last few months or years. Sins of omission and of commission, sins in secret and such as have been seen by others, sins against God or against your fellow-creatures — acknowledge them all and hide nothing. But have you not the key? Is it not written, "Who is a God like unto You, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy" ([Micah 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah%207.18)). And again, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin!" ([1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%201.7)).

Or look at life's troubles and all the sorrows that may befall you. Fears and cares may harass and distress you, and the clouds may gather thick over your head. But what of that? Have you not the key? Hearken to the word of promise, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who trust in Him" ([Nehemiah 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Neh%201.7)). "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you" ([John 14:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2014.18)). "As your days — so shall your strength be" ([Deuteronomy 33:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2033.25)).

I thank You for this promise, Lord;
I praise You for Your gracious word,
It falls like music on the ear,
Dispelling doubt and stilling fear;
And soothing pain and calming grief.
Giving true solace and relief.

No sweeter voice from Heaven for me
Than, "As your days — your strength shall be."
For as I think how coming years
May bring sharp troubles, bitter tears;
How strong temptations may assail,
And faith and hope alike may fail.
While duty seems beyond our power,
And grace is needed hour by hour;
This from dark bondage sets me free,
"E'en as your days your strength shall be."
Each cloud shall have its line of light,
Each storm be arched with rainbow bright.
Fresh wells of comfort at our feet
Shall send forth streams as pure as sweet.
And in our very darkest time,
Like silver bells, will sound this chime,
Sweeter than earthly minstrelsy,
"E'en as your days — your strength shall be."
And when upon the brink I stand
Of the unknown and silent land,
And the last dreaded hour draws near,
From which the heart recoils with fear,
Along the spirit's trembling chords
With melody shall ring the words,
Causing all doubt and dread to flee,
"E'en as your days — your strength shall be."

5. Behind the Partition

It is an old saying that "he who observes providences will never lack a providence to observe," and I think it applies equally to illustrations of Divine truth. If you are ready to mark them — they are sure to come. By giving one that lately struck me, I may possibly be helping some young friend in two or three matters of real importance.

I was rather late, so instead of going straight into our Mission room, where a service was being held for the poor, I turned into a side room, and sat down quietly close to the thin wooden partition that usually separates it from the larger Mission hall.

To tell the truth, that evening I had also another reason for not going into the midst of the congregation. A young friend was making his first address, and I know by experience how easily a beginner may get a fit of nervousness, and so be embarrassed and hindered in his address. So I remained out of sight in the smaller room — and yet heard distinctly every word as if I had been sitting in the midst of those gathered together.

While listening to very useful practical words on the Prodigal Son, a thought flashed across my mind which has never left me since.

It came to me somewhat in this shape: "I am carefully listening to my young friend. Just so, there is One too who hearkens to me when I speak or preach in His name. Truly I cannot see Him, but He is very near, only a very thin partition, the veil of sense and sight, separates me from Him, and He marks every word I utter. And more than this, He hears all, not only the words I speak, but the thoughts and motives which breathe within. If I speak amiss; if, through neglect of prayer or preparation, I withhold instruction I ought to give, or fail in the boldness, earnestness, reality, and love I ought to manifest; if I shrink from reproving sin, or do not exalt the Savior, or plead for holiness as I ought — then He is grieved and dishonored. If on the other hand, I am faithful in pointing sinners to Him, if I warn and exhort in faith and power, if I build up His people in the truth, He is near to hear, and He accepts and approves my words."

And may not this be a calming, quickening, strengthening remembrance to some who may read these pages? You may be a governess, and have charge of a little flock of three or four children, and out of love to the Master, you wish to do all you can for them. You teach them day by day out of the Holy Scriptures, and to the best of your ability you guide the little ones to the Master's footstool. You endeavor to impart the secular instruction which is needful for them, and in every way you wish to make them useful in their future life.

Take in the thought and dwell upon it, that Christ is with you in your toil. Whatever you teach — teach for Him and believe that He is near, close by to assist and reward your efforts. Parents may not always sympathize with you. They may not be always wise, nor may they appreciate your desire to win your pupils for Christ — but He sees and knows and rejoices in your work. Let this be your consolation. Whatever you may have to put up with, there is a Friend who understands and cares for you, and will never leave you comfortless if you trust in Him.

You may be a teacher in a Sunday school, and your scholars may be at times unruly, and you may lack the gifts you would desire for the work. But remember the One behind the partition. Carefully prepare your lesson. Ask of the Lord both for yourself and your children the prepared heart. Go forth with your seed-bag well stored with the precious grain of God's truth. Then believe that the Lord Himself stands by to hearken, to strengthen, to accept and prosper each word you speak for Him, and to make your words living words in the hearts of your pupils.

Or you may be a worker in some other division of the Great Vineyard. You may be a nurse in a hospital, or from time to time in a private home, and you desire to be as useful to the souls as well as the bodies of those whom you tenderly watch over. You may be a visitor among the poor of town or country, earnestly striving to help and comfort the suffering and careworn, and to guide stray ones back to the fold; you may have a special vocation to our navies, or our bargemen, the waifs and strays of our streets, or the friendless girls who need so much care. You may have a work in a far-off land, among strange faces and heathen customs, for the Master's sake, and trying to raise your black sisters out of their ignorance and degradation.

But wherever you are, and whatever your work, there is the same cheering thought. The great Friend, the Almighty Worker is close at hand, and though unseen, most surely by your side, sending His Spirit, upholding you by His presence, making your least utterance powerful for the purpose for which He sends it. Within sight it may be, are those who oppose, misjudge, and sorely hinder you — but beyond your sight,

 behind the partition is another form — One greater and stronger than all — and He says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Help me, O Lord,
To give Your work the foremost place of all;
To keep my post, whatever may befall;
And never to hold back, when You do call
To work for You.

But another thought came to me in close connection with the one on which I have been dwelling: If the Master is behind the partition to hear the words I speak for Him — no less is He there to hear the words I speak to Him or to the Father in His name. If He marks each word I speak in the pulpit, in the school, by the wayside, in feeding His flock — may I not be sure that He hears likewise every word uttered in prayer, whether in the secret chamber, in the family, or in the church?

The thought seemed to give a new reality and power to prayer. Would that I could fully realize it! Whenever I kneel down or lift up my heart in silent petition, there is One very near whose ear is open to receive it. Every desire, every sigh of a trembling, sorrowful spirit, every note of grateful praise — is heard, and is pleasant and acceptable to Him.

Do you, my young friend, esteem as you should this privilege of prayer? Do you reckon it a real joy that you are allowed to pray? Do you resort to the mercy-seat as a little child runs to a most loving parent? Do you delight to bring your troubles and your fears — that you may find relief and comfort? Do you seek rest from a burdened conscience, when you have done amiss, by bringing your sins and failures to Jesus? How many times have you prayed during the last seven days? And was it real prayer — prayer that meant just what you said? Or was it only empty words?

In a letter from a friend who had not written to me for a long time, I was struck with the heading, "The heart's neglected duty." My friend excused himself by telling me how long he had been waiting for time to send me a long, full letter of all he had been doing, and so delayed until he could wait no longer.

But is not prayer too frequently "the heart's neglected duty?" And what can be our excuse for so often failing in it? Is not our Great High Priest ready to accept a few moments' prayer, if only it be sincere? May we not set apart a few minutes for quiet retirement morning and evening? May we not despatch, again and again, through the day, in our walking or in our resting, a message by this heavenly telegraph?

Never, never neglect prayer. Countless blessings you will lose if you do. Temptation and sin will come upon you unawares, and, having laid aside your armor, you will be powerless to resist. Pray often. Pray humbly. Pray with a real desire for whatever you ask. Pray in dependence upon the aid of the Spirit. Pray in full assurance that your prayer will be heard. The blood is sprinkled around the mercy seat, and answers every charge of guilt. The merciful and faithful High Priest is ever interceding on your behalf. At the same time, by virtue of His Divine nature, He is near to you. Utter but His name, and in a whisper, and He hears you. Only lift up a longing eye to Him, and your petition is accepted.

O tarry and be strong,
Tell God in prayer,
What is your secret grief,
Your hidden care.

Yet if no answer come,
Pray on and wait;
God's time is always best,
Never too late.

O tarry and be strong,
Faint not, nor fear —
God's blessed leisure time
Will soon be here.

Your prayer has not been lost,
Your God has heard,
And carefully stored up
Each whispered word.

O tarry and be strong,
Through sorrow's night;
Soon will the sun arise,
And all be bright.

O weary, waiting heart,
Longing for rest;
Look up, and trust in God,
His time is best.

There is another thing that I would leave with you. The subject is a wide one, but it seems to come distinctly within the range of the illustration I have employed. There is One behind the partition who hears every word, good or bad, which our lips utter.

I suppose if one were a little mouse in the sitting-room, or somehow were able to overhear the talk of young ladies where they were able to speak freely and without fear or restraint — we would now and then catch up curious bits of conversation. It might not always be very profitable. It might not be such as they would always wish a mother to hear. Bits of scandal now and then, the plot of a novel whose moral tone was not very high, thoughts and plans about the future which were not in the line of a consistent Christian walk — well, we all know that the human heart has its folly and vanity and evil ever bubbling up like a fountain, and as are our thoughts and feelings, so will be the talk of the lips.

But it may help you, to remember the Father's ear from which nothing can be kept. It grieves His love when you speak amiss. Half-untruths, envious or suspicious remarks about others, jokes and jesting which have a touch of evil which you would not openly put into words, harsh judgments about parents or teachers, irreverent talk about Church or Bible, or this clergyman or that, speaking behind another's back what you would never say before their face, speeches, more or less tainted with falsehood, spite, jealousy, unchastity, ungodliness — these, my young friend, are not spoken into the air, but are heard and recorded by One who loves you with the tenderest love, and for this very reason cannot bear that you should defile your tongue with anything contrary to His holiness and truth.

But remember other words are heard also. I can imagine two Christian girls having quiet talks about better things. Both have found out the great secret of happiness. Both have discovered the pearl of great price, and love the Savior and His Word. And where their treasure is, there their heart is also. So their talking is of His great salvation. Many a hidden jewel of the Word is passed on from one to another. Many a word is spoken by the one more advanced to help the other in temptation or doubt. Many a suggestion is made about Christian work, or about reaching one who is yet away from the fold.

Such words as these are not forgotten by the Master. Spoken "in the ear secretly in closets," they shall be "proclaimed upon the housetops." They shall be recognized one day as blessed evidences of true grace, and as having been a precious means of advancing the kingdom of Christ. There is One behind the partition, and He hears and rejoices in your faith and love. "Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession!" ([Malachi 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal%203.16), [17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Malachi%203.17)).

There is one other thought that arises in connection with this subject that may cheer and comfort some of my readers. You may have lost Christian friends, or near relations, perhaps a father, or mother, or sister, whose love made the brightness of your home. Through their absence, you may often be lonely or sorrowful. But to those who love the Savior, this world and the next are very close together. It was the saying of an African woman, "Heaven is far, very far from the wicked — but it is near, very near to the righteous." The Good Shepherd has but one fold, though there is at present a partition between those here below and those who have entered within the veil.

Let the remembrance of this abide with you. You may not hear the voice of the one you have loved — but such a one is not far off, only behind the partition. The one so dear to you is under the care of the, same Almighty guardian, beneath the same Almighty wing, as yourself. And such separation as there is, is only for a little while. There is a glad meeting in store for you. Therefore be of good courage. Dry your tears and hope for the coming kingdom. The Lord will appear, and all his saints with Him, and both you and those you mourn, will be forever with the Lord.

The saints that enter Heaven,
Only appear to die,
Like stars that shining bright at even
Fade in the morning sky.

Their conflicts are all o'er,
Their sorrows past and gone,
They sigh not, weep not, any more;
The fight is fought and won.

They now see face to face,
In God's own perfect light,
And scan the wondrous depths of grace,
Faith turned to open sight.

Could we but glance within
The world where is "no night,"
How should we long to pass from sin,
And end this weary fight!

O happy saints and true,
That are forever blessed,
Would we could pass the veil with You,
And enter into rest!

6. The Field of Sundew

I have a friend in Australia, and not very far from his house at Melbourne he lately saw a field covered with a small plant called "Sundew." Every morning hundreds of very small dew-drops are seen glistening in the eye of the plant; and as the sun shines out upon them, you might almost imagine the field scattered over with diamonds. But there is something very treacherous about this little plant. The flies are often enticed by the brightness of these dew-drops, and light upon the plant for the purpose of tasting the sweet little bait thus presented. No sooner, however, does the fly light upon the tiny stem, than the legs become entangled with the gluey matter which the plant gives forth. Instead of pleasantly sipping a drop of early dew, and then flying off to light upon some other flower, the trespasser becomes a prisoner, and is embraced with a firm and tenacious grasp by the tiny but innumerable arms which the plant throws out.

The fly soon finds it impossible to escape from his cage. Gradually but surely it is drawn in, sometimes remaining a living prisoner for days, but seldom if ever free again to fly abroad in the world. Almost every flower of the plant which you pluck contains a fly living or dead; and though you may try to release one from its captivity, it will almost certainly cause the death of the little prisoner.

I trust, my young friends, you will not be angry with me if I draw a comparison. It may not be very flattering, but it is a true one. I cannot but think that young folks are too like the flies caught in the trap which this plant seems to set for them. The field covered with sundew, and the dewdrops glistening in the sunshine, is just like

 the world and its numberless enticements. It invites you, perhaps, young and inexperienced, to sip the sweet drop of pleasure from its flowers, and promises you all sorts of delight and enjoyment, beguiling you with an expectation of months and years in which no ill shall happen to you — and that tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

But there is treachery beneath this flattering voice. It promises far more than it gives. It may hold out the cup in one hand — but there is a chain or a knife in the other hand! Too soon the pleasure is turned into pain, or if not, the soul is tied and bound with a fetter which enslaves it. Go your own way, gratify yourself, and do just as you like. Indulge yourself in whatever form your own inclination leads you — drink in the sweet bait of the world's praise, throw yourself into the excitement of the ball-room, and withhold no joy from your heart. But what does it all come to? What strength does it give for duty? What support does it minister in life's inevitable sorrows? What does it leave behind when the present is passed?

You remember perhaps the despairing cry of Micah in the Book of Judges, when the Danites had taken away the young Levite, and the gods he had made. "You have taken away the gods that I made — and what have I more?" (18:24). That is just the cry of numberless hearts who have found their comfort and pleasure only in the world. You have taken away my wealth, my opportunities for self-indulgence, my companions, my prospects, my days of health — and what have I more? Oh, what a bitter experience is this!

What a contrast to the child of God! Take from him every earthly thing, and then let him ask — what have I more? What is the answer?

"I have a good conscience, sprinkled with the atoning blood.
I have all the promises, and every one faithful and true, and sure to be fulfilled.
I have God's favor and His changeless loving-kindness.
I have a Savior's grace and presence ever with me.
I have the help of the Comforter.
I have fellowship with all God's people.
I have a right of citizenship in the Heavenly Zion.
I have an eternity of joy and felicity awaiting me."

Especially does the illustration I am using teach us the thraldom and bondage which the world brings with it. In many ways this is felt, and the soul is often powerless to break the chain. The gluey matter on the Sundew is so like the attractive, adhesive power which the things of the world exercise over us. They lay hold of the human heart, and forbid it to rise above them.

Oftentimes there is a secret consciousness of something higher and better, of a deep and holy peace which you have seen some child of God possess. Yet these aspirations are crushed and kept down, and while all alive to the busy scenes of the mirthful circle in which you move — you perchance remain dead to the true life which alone is worthy of the name.

A wealthy Russian lady of high position at St. Petersburgh had an English maid who knew her Bible, and loved the Savior. Sometimes she dropped a word in the hope that it might lead her mistress to think. One day the lady was dressed for a ball, and called her in before leaving her room, and asked her if everything was right about her dress.

Everything was in its place, and her maid said so. But the lady noticed that she heaved a sigh. She asked her whether anything was the matter. She said nothing for a time, but, on being pressed, she remarked that she was thinking on the words, "She who lives for pleasure, is dead while she lives."

The word went right home to her conscience. She permitted the maid to explain its meaning. She saw that a heart wrapped up in life's vanities and amusements, was dead to a Father's love and all the blessedness of His kingdom. Years afterward, when the nurse had settled in England, her old mistress, while over for a visit, found her and told her that the message spoken long before had drawn her to the Savior's footstool.

But the description of this plant reminds us of the enormous power of little things. The plant itself is small — yet no less does it slay its victim. The arms which it throws out are very tiny, almost invisible to the naked eye — yet no less do they perform their deadly work and hold their captive in their firm embrace! Is it not thus with little sins, little temptations, a thousand little matters which seem almost too small to do much mischief, and which yet practically lead on to the most painful consequences?

Men are apt to excuse themselves for yielding to some snare of the tempter, because it seems but a very trifling offence — but it may prove the ruin of a precious soul! An hour or two spent in an atmosphere of evil, a sensational and worldly novel, a single word of flattery eagerly drunk in, a few minutes' conversation with one who may be attractive in appearance and affable in manner — but who does not bear a spotless character; a moment's irresolution in rejecting a proposal of secret correspondence, a little nonsense or flirtation that you mean nothing by, a wrong thought cherished in the heart — any one of these may be the cause of fatal mischief — just the lighting down on the flower — just the first step in a lifelong bondage to your enemy, and which may end in final apostasy from Christ.

Oh! beware of little things! "He who despises little things, shall fall little by little." One stray footstep, one misspent moment, one inconsiderate word or heedless act — may bring you a world of misery and regret.

Will you remember this, young friend, when danger is near, when the heart is light and giddy, and you may be entrapped before you think?

Will you strive to keep as far as possible from the region of danger?

Will you shrink from the very shadow of sin?

Will you reject at once and forever, whatever a tender conscience whispers to be wrong?

Will you often lift up your heart in prayer, "Lord, deliver me from evil!"

Perhaps some young friend has found out the truth of these words by personal experience. You have tried the world, and the world has not satisfied you — and yet you cannot get free from its spell. It has caused you many an hour's pain and disappointment, but it has never given you a moment of true peace — and yet the chain is not easily broken.

But remember there is a Deliverer. There is One who came to "deliver us from this present evil world." He can set the captive free, and bring you out into the glorious liberty of God's children. Though the world has been too strong for you, and its sweet little baits and morsels have drawn you into its power — yet Christ has overcome the world, and He will enable you to do the same.

"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Christ?"

Then cry in faith to Him who can support and help you. Look to Him, pray earnestly to Him, and He will teach you the secret of victory. When you know and love Him, when you have tasted the streams of His forgiving mercy — then you will learn that there is something better than earth can afford. You will learn, too, how real and deep and satisfying are those pure joys which He provides for His people.

There are flowers which have upon them the dew of Heaven, and which have no snare or peril lurking beneath. There are Divine promises, heavenly hopes, bright encouragements to a Christian life; there are revelations of a Father's love, of a Savior's grace, of the fellowship of the Spirit, of a kingdom not of this world, which may well cheer those who turn to them and taste them by meditation and prayer and praise.

More than this: there are Christian books, Christian friends, means of grace of various kinds, the sanctified joys of a happy Christian home — sweet flowers from which you may sip the dew and drink the honey — and, instead of being injured or enslaved, you shall be refreshed, revived, and comforted in running the heavenly race, and pressing forward to the Father's kingdom.

Which shall it be — the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment — or the joy and peace of true religion, which lead to the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore?

God calling yet! — and shall I never hearken,
But still earth's witcheries my spirit darken?
This passing life, these passing joys, all flying,
And still my soul in dreamy slumbers lying!

God calling yet! — and I not yet arising,
So long His loving, faithful voice despising,
So falsely His unwearied care repaying,
He calls me still, and still I am delaying!

Ah, yield Him all! — all to His care confiding,
Where but with Him are rest and peace abiding?
Unloose, unloose, break earthly bonds asunder,
And let this spirit rise in soaring wonder.

God calling yet! — I can no longer tarry,
Nor to my God, a heart divided carry;
Now, vain and giddy world, your spells are broken,
Sweeter than all, the voice of God has spoken!

7. "Polished Corners of the Temple"

"May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. May our daughters be like polished corner-stones of the Temple." [Psalm 144:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%20144.12)

There is something very beautiful in this prayer of King David. He is longing for the happiness and prosperity of his people. And here is one blessing which he seeks: "May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. May our daughters be like polished corner-stones of the Temple."

The vigorous activity of the sons is here combined with the quiet beauty of the daughters. The former are like robust plants, shooting upwards with powerful energy. The latter are like fair, sculptured cornerstones, or decorated columns, perhaps garnished with many a precious jewel, remaining peacefully in their own places, adorning the temple with beauty and symmetry; and, moreover, adding to the strength and stability of the whole structure.

May you be such a corner-stone or pillar in the Great Temple which the Lord is even now building for His own eternal praise and glory!

But how may this be? How may you be a polished corner-stone in the Spiritual House which is the habitation of the Holy Jehovah?

First of all, you must be fixed in the building, firmly placed on the foundation, and knit to the Chief Corner-stone. This is all-important. There are many who are only as the scaffolding, or as stones loosely lying around the ground. They are only as the wood, hay, and stubble, which may be used in some way as the building is being erected, but that will never stand the fire which is to try every man's work. Alas! is not this too true of thousands who worship with us in our churches week by week, but as yet have no saving part or lot with Christ?

You may be a Christian in name, but not in deed and in truth. You may be in the roll of the church on earth, and baptized — but yet your name may never have been written in the Lamb's book of life. You may be often in the sanctuary, joining with Christ's people in prayer and praise — and yet never be one of the true worshipers whom the Father delights to accept.

Let there be no mistake about this. Man looks at the outward appearance — but the Lord looks on the heart. Judge your own self. Are you in the Temple, or near it? Through the Holy Spirit's teaching have you been brought out of the quarry, seeing your own natural corruption, and trusting only in the Savior's grace? Have you been laid on the sure foundation, so that now every hope rests on Christ alone?

Remember the words of Peter. Many speak of him as the Rock, but what is his own testimony? Does he not point men away from himself, and from all beside, to the Great Rock, the Chief Corner-stone, laid in Zion by God, and bid us come to Him, and come to Him continually?

"To whom coming (that is, to Christ) as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious — you also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ([1 Peter 2:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%202.4-8)).

If you have never known the secret of peace before, come straight to Christ now. Let your youth be yielded to Him.

You may seem to yourself to lack everything that is good;
you may be troubled with strange doubts about God or His Word;
you may be conscious of much willful evil;
you may be oppressed with your own utter inability to walk in the right path
— yet let nothing of all this hinder your coming to Him.

A young lady was desirous of becoming a Christian, but was unable for a time to see her way. However, on one occasion Miss Elliot's beautiful Hymn — Just as I Am — was sung in the church which she attended. She felt she dare not let her lips utter the words without her heart going with them. So she prayed then as in the very presence of Christ:

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Her humble desire was accepted. She came to the Savior and He received her, and gave her the peace she sought.

But when you have come to Christ, you must rest in Him and on Him. As every part of a building rests continually on the foundation — so must each Christian on Christ. Amidst all fears, temptations, sorrows — stay your soul on Him. Let your inner spirit repose on His faithful promise and never-failing loving-kindness. Let the thought of Him as being always "able to save" and "able to support" you, keep you from sinking into despondency or unbelief:
Trust in Jesus all the day,
Trust in Jesus all the way;
Trust in Him whatever befall,
Trust in Jesus Christ for all.

But I would like you to be "a polished corner-stone." To be in the building at all is an unspeakable privilege, and gives you a sure hope for eternity. But there are rough diamonds and rough corner-stones, with many sharp, jutting points, which were far better gone, for they greatly hinder a young lady's usefulness, and mar the work she might do for the Master. If I had the power with some young friends, I should greatly like to use the chisel now and then, and perhaps the blow might not always be a gentle one!

Well, suppose I do try my chisel, and see what I can do. I am sure you will thank me in the end, though possibly one or another might be angry with me for the moment. What do I mean? I will tell you. Let me just question you a little about your faults. Let me just point out as plainly as I can a few things that very often stand in the way of a young girl, and spoil the true beauty and attractiveness which ought to be manifest in her.

And first, if I could, I would like to take my chisel and touch that neglect of home duties, which is such a serious matter in many cases. If you are a Christian, it is in the home that you are called first to shine. The very essence of a life of discipleship is the taking up, moment by moment, the duty the Lord puts before you — however small or trivial or uncongenial it may be — and doing it as well as possible and as brightly, because you are His, and He gives it you to do.

This bright, sunny, satisfied spirit greatly adorns the doctrine of Christ, and sheds a marvelous light and gladness over the home. When a daughter is ever on the tiptoe to do some little office of kindness for the mother, "Oh, do let me help you in this, mother!" When the sister is ever looking out for means of making the home more attractive to brothers or younger sisters, when self is put aside to watch over a sick or aged member of the family, when little duties are taken up pleasantly and done with a smile — then such a one will reap no small reward in the real good she will be able to effect.

But there is very often the neglect of all this. A young lady goes on writing her letter, or doing some fancy needlework, when she knows a few notes on the piano or a quiet song would soothe the brain of a father or brother who is tired with the day's work. It is not asked of her, because it might be done grudgingly, and thus fail to give any gratification — but nevertheless, it would have been gladly welcomed if cheerfully offered. Or perhaps a mother or sister is left to toil on with things that must be done at home, and another sister will not give five minutes help, but is consulting her own pleasure, perhaps by going to an early celebration, or perhaps trifling over a painting, or drawing, which might just as well be done some other time.

Whatever you do, my young friend, don't slight your home fireside duties. A candle "gives light to all that are in the house," so ought you to let your religion benefit every one who lives with you. It is very easy to do a certain amount of work in a church — but let home stand first. Then whatever you do outside, will have double value, because backed up by your own home example.

Then I might take my chisel and touch those sharp points and excrescences which come from some failure in temper, or at least the appearance of it in your manner. Since we are none of us angels, but sinful men and women, compassed by infirmity — there must ever be need to exercise much forbearance with those who are around us. We are not perfect — nor must we expect perfection in others. Besides, we are frequently liable to mistakes, and our own self-love too often hides the fault which is in ourselves. So we need to guard both tongue and temper with constant vigilance.

How is it with yourself in this point? Do you ever utter hasty, angry words, which are like sharp spears or knives, and wound and cut the hearts of those who love you? Do you ever yield to a sullen, dreary sort of frame, or such a hard, rocky, stony one, that nothing will move you, or lead you to relent, or to speak a kind word, or break through the reserve in which you have wrapped yourself? Do you ever sit side by side with a sister or class-fellow at school, and any one can see the scowls and black looks which tell a tale of ill-will and bad temper only too plainly?

Do not conceal from yourself that all this is downright, positive sin before God! It is a breach of the sixth commandment, for it is the very spirit of murder cherished in the heart. Give no quarter to such terrible enemies to your soul's peace. Look well at them and see their hatefulness and deformity. Then through the power of the Spirit, cast them out, and let the love of Christ and the peace of Christ rule within. Instead of these sharp excrescences on the corner-stone — let there be the very reverse. Let it be set with the fair gems of meekness, gentleness, tender thoughtfulness for others, a fixed resolution never to give pain by the least look or expression of ill-temper. And where you fail, let there be deep humiliation and earnest prayer for the upholding of the divine arm.

Closely allied with the evils of temper is the depreciation of others, and the evil speaking which is often heard in the school or the family. A clever girl will make unkind remarks about the dull, plodding girl, who may be far more diligent than herself, and guided by a far higher motive. The girl who has something of personal attractions, whose means enable her to dress more expensively, or whose parents are in higher position of life — will show by a haughty look or word how far she thinks she excels the companion walking by her side. In a thousand ways, vanity and pride, envy and jealousy come in and put many a stumbling-block in the way. If young folks only knew the beauty of a lowly, humble, loving spirit! If they only knew how this clothing of humility, this ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is infinitely more precious than any amount of natural ability, rank, money, or good looks! If only they would judge themselves by the standard of Christ — the only measure which will stand in the great day! If this were the case, there would be more consciousness of personal failings, and far more kindliness and charity towards others.

There is another fault which is not uncommon, and which is very injurious both to yourself and others. Lack of punctuality is an evil which is treated very lightly by those who are guilty of it — but which is very destructive of your own peace and that of those whom it affects. Late in the morning, so that private prayer is omitted or hurried over — or your chair is vacant at family prayer. Late in meeting a friend, so that half an hour is wasted. Late at church or Sunday-school, so that you fail to get benefit yourself or to do much good to those under your care. Late for dinner, late for tea, late, late, always late, is the story of some lives, to the infinite annoyance of those about them! Give yourself a bad mark, or put yourself to some severe penance, when you find this becoming

 your habit more or less.

When traveling in the Lake District on one occasion I saw on the splash-board of the coach a brass case, and within it a large turnip-shaped watch. I soon found out the purpose of it. The coach must be punctual. It must be at each station at the appointed time. So it was. Never once was it late. I wish I could impress on the heart of each young lady the message that watch seemed to sound in my ears, "Keep good time. Never keep others waiting. Minutes and moments are gold dust, and ought not to be wasted. In everything you do be punctual."

There is only one other matter on which I would touch. There is a lack of thorough truthfulness and sincerity, which perhaps is the worst fault of any I have named. I am not speaking so much of positive lying, which is one of the most deadly sins that any one can commit. If any reader is given to this, be assured that you are as yet in the power of him who is "the father of lies," and that you have no part or lot in Christ. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone!" But I am rather speaking of those habits of deceit and double-mindedness, of those lesser perversions of truth which some practice, and yet try to imagine that they are followers of Christ. There is a very wide field for self-examination as to this.

One tries to shake off her own share of wrongdoing by laying it at the door of another. A second pretends to study and do good work — when in reality she has used others' brains, or has looked at the answers. A third is always exaggerating, or telling what is not true, but something like it. A figure is altered — a quarter of an hour is added to the clock — a turn is given to a conversation which was never intended. Again and again you have noticed something of this kind in a young person, until it is plain as noonday that there is a lack of sincerity, which destroys all your confidence in her.

If you have the least suspicion that this traitor of insincerity lurks in your breast, let there be no truce with it. Search it out from its hiding-place and bring it into the light of Heaven. Be true as steel. Be genuine and sincere as before the great Heart-searcher. Possibly, through bad example, or through training under a governess who drew you into it — you may have been wrapped in the coils of this sin for many a day — nevertheless by grace you may conquer. You may become thoroughly open and honorable in the smallest things and in the greatest. You may be known to be so truthful that no one would ever doubt a word you said. You may put to shame everything that is dishonest and dishonorable, and raise the standard of all who live with you.

If you would be a polished corner-stone in the Temple of the Great King, allow none of these sins and failings to abide. Be watchful over your own heart and life. Place yourself often in the presence of Christ and study His perfect character. Give no quarter to sins, small or great — but fight against them day by day. And remember the promise of the Comforter. The Holy Spirit alone can effectually mortify in you all evil, and fashion you in the likeness of the Savior. Every good thought, every holy desire, every right motive, every righteous and loving word or deed — is the fruit of His indwelling and transforming power. Therefore look up to the exalted and glorified Savior, to allow His Spirit to fill in you more and more. Study the declarations of His willingness to bestow this all-needful gift ([Luke 11:9-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2011.9-13); [John 7:37-39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%207.37-39); [14:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2014.16), [17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2014.17), [26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2014.26); [15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2015.26); [16:7-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2016.7-15)). If thus you act, watching against sin, looking to Jesus, depending on the Spirit — then faults and blemishes will be subdued, and in the Eternal Temple you will shine forth to the praise and glory of God.

Gracious Spirit! dwell with me;
I myself would gracious be,
And with words that help and heal
Would Your Life in mine reveal:
And with action bold and meek,
Would for Christ my Savior speak.

Truthful Spirit! dwell with me:
I myself would truthful be,
And with wisdom, kind and clear,
Let Your life in mine appear;
And with actions brotherly
Speak my Lord's sincerity.

Tender Spirit! dwell with me:
I myself would tender be;
Shut my heart up like a flower;
At temptation's darkest hour;
Open it when shines the sun,
And His love by fragrance own.

Holy Spirit! dwell with me;
I myself would holy be:
Separate from sin, I would
Choose and cherish all things good.
And whatever I can be,
Give to Him, who gave me Thee!

8. Intellectual Culture

In speaking of your being a polished corner-stone, there is one needful point on which I have not yet touched. It does not rise to the level of the moral and spiritual growth which is beyond all things essential. But at the present day it cannot be neglected without great loss to yourself and others. "Knowledge is power," and the careful study which will furnish you with it in its various branches, will make you far more useful than you could be otherwise. It is not wise or right for any Christian girl to neglect those fields of knowledge which are spread out before her.

Unless by force of circumstances, your time is so much engaged that it becomes impossible — endeavor in some measure to cultivate carefully some or other of them. Language, poetry, history, recent discoveries in distant lands, natural science, works which tend to elucidate the meaning of Holy Scripture, or to confirm the evidences of revelation — all these become most valuable in self-improvement, and in giving you that treasury of information which will be of real help to you wherever your lot may be cast.

Some of us have had few opportunities for this in our earlier days, and we never cease to regret the loss it has been to us. We can never make up for it; we can never overtake the years that are gone. Hence we press it the more earnestly on those who have youth and opportunity on their side.

Remember such culture is a precious gift you may lay at the feet of the Divine Master. God's chosen servant in the Old Dispensation was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." And in the kingdom of Christ, the Apostle of the Gentiles, who carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth, was the one far above the rest in his acquaintance with the literature of the day in which he lived.

Such servants, Christ needs both among men and women. In possession of this gift of secular knowledge you may often catch up a thread in conversation and leave a good impression as to some point that is being discussed. The wife may guard the husband, and the mother the son, from being carried away by some popular fallacy. You may use the facts of science, history, and the like to illustrate Christian truth in the Sunday school, the Bible class, or among a few pupils committed to your care. Besides this, posts of vast importance in society are open to those who are fitted to enter upon them, and if you can fill such a position you may have immense influence in upholding Christian truth.

Especially is this the case in the education of young ladies. As a principal or teacher in a College or High School, or as taking charge of pupils in the higher circles of society — who can tell how far your words may go, and whether you may not lead to the Savior those whose position may enable them to do noble service for our King?

There is another reason for earnest diligence in this matter which ought not to be overlooked. It may at any time become almost essential for your subsistence or your comfort. By a single turn of the wheel, by a failure in business, by the breaking of a bank, by some neglect or unfaithfulness in the care of trust money, or by some other casualty — many are suddenly reduced from wealth to the barest pittance or to absolute poverty!

I could tell of a near and dear relation of my own who was brought down from an income of some four hundred a year, and left with only about fifty to bring up a family of six young children. But she had the gifts she needed, and she buckled to hard work, gathered a school of little boys, and for many a long year drilled them well in the elements of Latin, and in a good English education, and so fulfilled nobly the task to which God in His providence called her.

I can only in this chapter give a few brief hints as to the best way of gaining the knowledge and culture which is so helpful.

I need scarcely say many words to any young friends who may yet be at school, or in the schoolroom. To you the path is very plain. Go heart and soul into whatever you do. Be thorough in every lesson and in every branch of study. Do your very best. Strive to grasp very firmly the underlying principle in arithmetic or any branch of mathematics, so that you can easily apply it to practice. Never be content with merely using the memory, without understanding the "why" and the "wherefore."

Throw yourself into your work, and it will become a real pleasure and delight to you. Never give up in despair, because your work may be more difficult to you than to another. You are not responsible for the measure of ability you possess, but only for the good use of what you have. Remember too that what is dearly won, will be dearly prized. In most cases the knowledge acquired with most effort, will become a more enduring treasure to you than if it came more easily.

Neither relax your efforts because you can easily complete your task and keep up with those in the same class with you. When I was at the University I noticed in many cases, that through trusting in their natural ability and neglecting hard, patient study — the first became last, and often took a very poor degree indeed.

The path of those who have finished their school days is far more difficult. To carry on the work you have begun, and to make constant progress when very much left to your own resources, is by no means easy. But it is worth any effort and any self-denial.

Settle it in your mind when you leave school, that while you may have the foundation, you need — to build upon it day by day. Whatever you know already, whatever interest you have found in any part of study, only take as vantage-ground for new work.

It is well to choose out some particular branch of study, and give time steadily to pursue it. It may be some language, of which you have learned the elements — but determine to know thoroughly. It may be geology, or botany, or history — but, in any case, give your strength to some one thing, though, for the sake of variety, you may turn for a time to something else. You might find help in joining some such society as the "Christian Women's Education Union," which has been formed to help young ladies whose schoolroom days are over. By means of correspondence, and a certain amount of time for reading, promised by themselves, at least six hours a week, there is considerable encouragement afforded. Once a quarter accounts of studies and lists of books read are to be sent in, and in return members receive comments upon work done and suggestions for continuing it. The following subjects are specially suggested: English language, English literature, Greek, Latin, French, German, history, physical geography, mathematics, logic, political economy.

Another suggestion I would make. I believe nothing would be more useful than carefully prepared essays on Christian or general subjects. The evidences of Christianity afford a wide and most useful field for such work — especially the internal proofs of its Divine origin — from the character of Christ and the power of Scripture to meet the various needs of the human heart. If a few young friends who have known one another at school or college could agree on something of this kind, and then send their essays one to the other, it might be still more useful.

In every way the frequent use of the pen is most valuable in taking a firm hold of whatever you learn. Have your note-book and make extracts of choice passages. Take down the outline of able sermons, or lectures, or addresses, or illustrations, and thoughts from them. Endeavor also to gather out gems from any book you read, and especially be on the look-out to glean illustrations from science, from the events of daily life, from the lives of those you meet with. Noted down carefully for future reference, these will aid you very materially in any Christian work you may hereafter undertake; and possibly may enable you to write the article or book which may be of real service in Christ's Church.

There are two cautions with which I will close this chapter.

Beware of the mania for novel-reading, which is the most real hindrance to many young ladies. It is an enemy to all self-improvement, and it is a terrible stumbling block in the way of a true Christian life. It robs you of your greatest treasure — precious days and hours which can never be recalled. It unfits the mind for anything requiring deep thought and attention. It not seldom lodges deadly poison, the venom of the old serpent, within the soul. It puts evil for good — and bitter for sweet. It suggests wrong trains of thought, though with such subtlety, that sin looks fair and lovely.

Even when grace has come and given a new taste and a new desire, many a dark stain abides on the memory, which cannot be erased.

Besides, the time wasted might have been so spent as to have brought in great or lasting profit. An elderly lady, who had learned to love the Master, found her sight growing dim, so that she could no longer read the Scriptures. It was her delight to speak of the Savior and to hear of Him, but she had one constant source of regret. It stung her to the quick to remember, when her sight was good in early life, how she had used it in constant novel reading. It seemed as if her dim sight were a direct chastisement from God for sight misused previously. How thankful would she have been if only she had well-stored her mind with the truths of Holy Scripture. How great the comfort and help they would have been to her afterward!

And many others, too, have regretted the same evil. Through this one fault, through this habit being formed, many a life has become a blank. As to any real peace or usefulness in the home or out of it — all has been sacrificed to this pernicious form of self-indulgence. Let it not be so with you. Whatever it may cost you, take the novel back to the library, or put the book in the fire — rather than waste time that is given for a far higher and nobler purpose.

I am not condemning all works of fiction. An occasional hour given to a really wholesome tale can do no harm. But this is very different from the hours and days given to the novels usually taken from the circulating library. It would be very injurious to your health to live upon pastry and sweets, especially if large measures of arsenic were among the ingredients. The moral from this is not far to seek. It will be a lifelong blessing, if you are willing to learn it.

There is a second caution I should like to add.

Do not let intellectual culture take the highest place. The heart needs culture as well as the intellect, and I know nothing more painful than to meet a young lady who is far ahead of most others in secular knowledge — yet with little home affection, with little kindly interest in others, and still less care for spiritual things. Ah, it is a sad exchange to have a keen and polished intellect, but a heart shriveled up and withered, and scarcely to be discovered at all!

A most sorrowful feature of the day is to find not a few young ladies so occupied with their studies, that they turn away from Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." If but Jesus of Nazareth is named, if some portion of Scripture is referred to — the young friend who the moment before was full of life and animation in discussing a new book or magazine article — looks over her shoulder, begins to yawn, or thinks that other duties call her away.

There are others too who take up one or more of the broad skeptical theories of the day. They sail further and further from the shore of plain scriptural teaching, and in a light, frivolous way take up current views without an idea of the tremendous outcomes at stake. I for one would not gag conscience. I do not wish you to live or act a lie. If you are troubled with real, earnest doubts — then honestly face them, and seriously consider what they are worth, and what answer can be given to them.

But beware of accepting new views, because their novelty makes them attractive. The spirit of unbelief is abroad, and pervades very much of the literature of the day. There is danger both to morals and to faith in almost every novel and magazine that is published. I quote the words of Miss C.L. Maynard in an excellent paper on the Cultivation of the Intellect, and to which I am indebted for several thoughts in this chapter: "Think of the novel where the keen edge of right and wrong is blunted, and a false estimate of the value of life is the rule in story after story. Think of the poem, where amid a crowd of beauteous images, we are taught to think more leniently of sin, and to excuse it in many of its forms as natural. Think of the brilliant article on the forms of society in our day, with carelessness expressed in every sentence, and delight in defying old landmarks. Think of the semi-religious essay, where the Savior's words are praised, and His mission denied, and the Son of Man is betrayed by a kiss — and say if we are not indeed in danger."

If these pages should perchance fall into the hands of any young friend who has hastily taken up loose views on Scripture and revelation, may I ask you at least to pause and consider before you plunge deeper into the gulf. Have you ever taken the trouble carefully to see what may be said on the other side? Have you ever thought whence these views came, and where they lead? Have you ever read and studied the New Testament with the earnest heed it demands? Suppose you cast aside your early faith — have you anything to take its place? Have you considered the awful void, the fearful desolation of a sick-bed, or a death-bed, without a hand to uphold you, without a ray of hope as to the future? Ought you not to think twice and thrice before you take up any view which shuts out a living, Personal Savior? Is it possible that there can be no truth in the cheering words of the Son of Man, which have been a staff of strength to ten thousand times ten thousand children of sorrow, and which have lighted so many a pilgrim through the dark valley?

For my part, as years roll on, I am more and more firmly persuaded of the truth of our most holy faith. There are objections against prayer, against atonement, against the eternal judgment threatened against sinners. There are difficulties in reconciling certain statements of Holy Scripture with facts or theories which we may believe. But these cannot shake my faith. They are not to be weighed in the scale with the positive evidences which assure me of the truth of the Gospel.

Take but one fact. The Resurrection of Christ has a historical basis which can never be overthrown. The strange and marvelous unbelief of the disciples, the rising of the Christian Church in Jerusalem, the courage and steadfastness of the apostles in their testimony, the Apostolic Epistles which bear the stamp of truth in every line, the way in which the resurrection of Christ underlies almost every doctrine — exhortation and precept in the epistles of Peter and Paul. All this and much more make it to me as plain as noonday, that this fact is no "cunningly devised fable," nor any mere vision of a few enthusiasts. It is truth — truth standing as firm as a rock, and attested by unnumbered witnesses who had nothing to gain by their testimony — but stripes, imprisonment, exile, or death. And if this is so, I am at rest. Christ is true, He is the very Son of God, His promised Spirit was given to His Church, and His Words stand fast for evermore.

The waves of unbelief and doubt may beat against this Rock — but they will never overthrow it. Men may launch their puny weapons at this miracle or that, at this doctrine or that — but no weapon shall prosper. Christ has risen, Christ has conquered, Christ lives as our glorious King, and He shall reign for evermore! By and by He shall come, and the whole universe shall confess that He is Lord.

May God keep you steadfast in this faith, that you may at that day receive a crown of glory that never fades away!

If this be your desire, may I entreat you to act wisely and cautiously as to the evil which is abroad. You pray, "Lead us not into temptation." And is it not to rush headlong into the very sorest temptation, to read books and periodicals which are saturated with doubt or error? There may be those who are bound to read such, that they may more wisely speak or write on the topics discussed. But unless you do it as a duty, unless you are well grounded in the truth, and have opportunities of reading on the other side of the question — is it not better to let such works alone? But the best defense against all enemies of the truth — is the thoughtful, prayerful study of the Word. It has a mighty power. It speaks to the heart, and often with irresistible force, bears witness to its own perfect veracity. Do not let the unbelief that is abroad, lead you to cast aside the Scriptures, but to search more deeply into the mine of wealth which they contain. Do this and you will rejoice in fresh certainty of their truth, and in richer possession of the precious lessons which they unfold.

9. "Able to Support"

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." [Hebrews 4:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%204.15-16)

In early days I remember at one time being very much cast down. In various ways I was hedged in by trial, and seemed scarcely able to rise above it. But I went for a few days' mission work to a friend in the north. On entering my bedroom, above the bow of the large window, I noticed a few words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "He is able to support those who are being tempted." So I took it as a message from God. And in the work of that happy week, I found fresh strength and comfort on my way.

There may be a thought here to cheer and strengthen some who read these pages. You have great need of this support. It must be a heart of stone indeed — that cannot feel for the painful difficulties, sore trials, and bitter sorrows that many young people have to pass through.

In many lives, they are a great and terrible reality. It is not all spring and summertime between fifteen and twenty-five. There are sunless days and cheerless nights. There are hours when life seems more than a blank — a desert, and a wilderness, which bleak winds and driving hail make almost intolerable. Moreover there are miry wastes and deep pitfalls, where the young traveler may sink, or stumble and never arise again. The infinite variety of the forms in which the Tempter comes makes the temptation still greater. As from time to time, the wind blows from every conceivable point of the compass — so too does temptation change from day to day and from year to year.

Today it may come in the shape of a craving, half-mad desire for some comfort or enjoyment for the present denied to us. Tomorrow in the darkness of a bereaved and sorrow-stricken heart. Today it may come in the form of self-display, as to voice, personal appearance, dress, or natural gifts. Tomorrow may come other some shaft of the wicked One — a doubt about God, His existence, His mercy, or His faithfulness.

Today it may be the distraction of some great anxiety about the future which fills up every niche and cranny of the soul. Tomorrow it may be the gloomy, chilly shadow of the fear of death.

Very often temptation comes in a form so new, so peculiar, so tangled, that the tempted one seems utterly alone in it — as if no one, since the world began, had ever passed through the same experience. There is something within that hinders our peace in God — and then with this comes a burden here, and a trouble there, and no human sympathy at hand — and what remains but to yield to utter despair? I know nothing more painful and perplexing than this interlacing of one temptation with another, and the absence of all relief; and it may be, worst of all, conscience whispering in an undertone of sin unforgiven, and God far away.

You remember, when the disciples were on the lake, there was something of this multiplied trouble. The wind was contrary, three long night-watches had been spent almost in vain, they were toiling in rowing, strength almost exhausted; it was dark, and Jesus had not come to them. But help came at last. A form appeared on the water. A well-known voice was heard, "It is I, be not afraid."

So shall it be with you, if only you are true to the Master, and in every temptation wait on Him and for Him.

"He is able to support." The word employed in the original is very suggestive. It is to "run to the cry" of another. It is this which Jesus delights to do. He sees your peril. He knows your fears. He comes quickly in answer to your cry!

Why should I fear the darkest hour,
Or tremble at the tempter's power?
Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.
Though hot the fight, why quit the field?
Why must I either fly or yield,
Since Jesus is my mighty shield?

Here is our refuge, our hope, our rock of defense. In ourselves we are powerless. We are no match for the Adversary. We cannot battle with one who is a subtle spirit, who has the experience of long ages, who is as a roaring lion, who has myriads of agents to forward his designs. Especially is it our weakness, that there is evil within as well as without, a traitor in the camp who is ever ready to correspond with the enemy — indwelling sin, which will not easily be dispossessed of its power, and which will only die when we ourselves crumble into dust. But in Christ we have power and might which must prevail. He for our sakes withstood the tempter and gained a threefold victory. And He is still the same in us and for us. His strength is made perfect in weakness. He loves to support and uphold the weak.

It seems to me that Christ's power to support in temptation, rests upon six mighty pillars, six immovable grounds of confidence.

1. His Divine glory and dignity as the Son of God. "We have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God" ([Hebrews 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%204.14)). He shared in the glory of creation. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. He is far, far above the angelic throng, for they delight to worship at His footstool. He is exalted far above Moses, as the builder is greater than the house he builds. He is greater than any prophet, priest, or king that ever went before Him. Of one being and essence with the Father, as the Only-begotten Son, as the One to whom is committed all power both in Heaven and earth — He pleads with authority the cause of His people. What a strong rock of confidence is this! You have an Almighty Redeemer and Helper! As the very Son of God, He cannot fail in the support He gives.

2. His exceeding mercifulness and tender compassion. He beholds with pity and love, the soul that is bound and tied by the chain of sin. He is ever ready to forgive and save. He despises not the very worst — nor does He wait for any goodness or merit or rightness in any way, in those who turn to Him. His nature is ever to have mercy and forgive. As it is the nature of fire to burn, water to flow down from a higher level, a stone to fall to the earth — so it is His nature to rescue and save and bless sinners of every name who fly for refuge to Him.

3. His unchanging faithfulness. "He is a merciful and faithful High Priest." He is faithful in doing the Father's will, and this will is the eternal salvation of all who believe. He is faithful to every promise, so that Heaven and earth may pass away — but His Word shall not pass away. He is faithful to the least of His flock, and will never leave him nor forsake him.

4. His great Atoning sacrifice. He has made "reconciliation for the sins of the people." He has offered one sacrifice for sins forever. He has become the sinner's substitute; He has borne the sinner's load; He has finished the transgression, and made an end of sin. His work upon the cross, His all-sufficient offering is a sweet savor to the Father; and whoever by faith touches the sacrifice, is purged from all guilt, and the sweet savor of Christ's death and merit passes upon him, so that he too is fragrant and acceptable to the Father in Heaven.

Unspeakable is the comfort of this, in every temptation which concerns the conscience. Whatever sense of past guilt may arise, whatever consciousness of unworthiness or failure — go afresh to Calvary! Again touch the sacrifice there offered. Again draw near in humble reliance upon the Redeemer's finished work — and peace will be yours. You will be able to look up to God with grateful confidence, and the sense of pardoned sin will strengthen you to fight the good fight of faith.

5. His perpetual, unfailing intercession at the Father's right hand. "He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

"Able to support," "able to save to the uttermost" to all completeness, to the uttermost of sin, sorrow, temptation, time, through all possible circumstances — He is able to save, and He will save those who plead His name, who make Him their ground of access to the Father.

But why? Because He intercedes. Because evermore He appears in Heaven for us. Because He is the righteous Advocate whom the Father hears always.

O You, the contrite sinner's Friend,
Who, loving, lov'st them to the end,
On this alone my hopes depend,
That You will plead for me.

6. His own experience of ill. "In all things He was made like unto His brethren." "In all things He was tempted like as we are — yet without sin." There is no dark chamber in life you may pass through — but He went through it before you!

Are you in straits as to your means of subsistence? So was He. He was hungry, and waited patiently on His Father's will until angels came and ministered unto Him.

Are you often weary and tired? Have you toilsome journeys and busy days when you can scarcely bear the fatigue and labor? So was it with Jesus. Remember how He sat down wearied at the well. Remember how He "had no time so much as to eat." Remember how He fainted beneath the weight of His cross.

Have you to battle sore with temptations to evil? So had Jesus. The devil dogged His steps, and tried evermore to draw Him from His steadfast allegiance to a Father's will.

Have you to endure scorn, ridicule, reproach, false witness?

Do you know what it is to be forsaken and desolate?

Are you afflicted and tried by days of agonizing pain?

Is your cup full to the brim of life's woes and sorrows?

All this was true of Jesus, and He knows how hard it is for you to bear. Therefore will you not trust Him? Will you not go to Him and lean upon Him for the sympathy you need?

I remember once saying to a lady who was far from strong, and who was walking a few steps with me along the garden walk, "I do not feel your weight." I wished her to get more help from leaning on my arm. I had scarcely said it, but the thought occurred to me — Does not the Savior chide me thus? Do I "lean hard" upon Him as I ought? Do I let Him know that I am depending upon His aid in all my weakness and infirmity? And why should I not? Why should I doubt or question His mighty help?

He is "able to support." He can support — and He will. Therefore I will wait upon Him. I will remember that He is the Lord of providence as well as grace. All things are in His hand. He can put a limit to Satan's power. He can remove the burden or the snare. He can raise up friendly help or counsel. At the very nick of time, He can take away the greatest stumbling block I may ever have had, and make my path plain before me. I may be assured that He will not allow me to be tempted above that I am able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that I may be able to bear it ([1 Corinthians 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2010.13))

I will remember that He has the gift of the Spirit in His hand. If the enemy pours water on the fire to quench it — then He can pour in a supply of oil to maintain it. If He permits the thorn in the flesh to remain — He can make His grace sufficient, and make the trial profitable to myself and to others. By His Spirit, as the Spirit of remembrance, He can suggest helpful words of Holy Scripture, which will strengthen me in time of need.

Am I cast down because my repentance is not deep enough? He tells me that "He is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins."

Am I afraid that my prayers will not be heard? He tells me whatever I shall ask the Father in His name He will give me.

Am I more than ever conscious of the vast debt of sin, and can I scarcely see how it can be forgiven? He reminds me of Himself. He says, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Am I afraid of going astray, and do I feel that I need a guide continually? He speaks of His love and care. "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known by them."

Am I lonely, and long for someone to be with me? He brings back the glorious "Fear not" of Isaiah 41: "Fear not, for I am with you — be not dismayed, for I am your God."

Am I ready to fall into some sin? He suggests the petition: "Hold me up — and I shall be safe! Keep me as the apple of Your eye."

Is temper and irritability and sharpness my special bane? He gently whispers, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and gentle in heart."

Is it the fear of the last enemy that oppresses me? He still can comfort. "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus in many ways He can support. He can remove the temptation — or give strength to meet it. He can sustain the soul by the assurance of His sympathy and all-sufficient grace. He can guard you in the furnace, so that not a hair of your head perish. He can support in deep waters, so that you shall never sink. Only remember one thing. The hand of your Redeemer is mighty — but it is faith and prayer which lays hold of it, and clasps it tight!

The everlasting arms can surely support you — but you must repose within them by humbly waiting upon the Lord, and trusting in His faithful help. In temptation do not look around for help to this friend or that. Do not look to yourself, to your own resolutions or promises, or to anything you have been, or done, or can do. Do not look down on the earth, yielding yourself a prey to dark and gloomy thoughts, but look up. Look up, and see Jesus ever standing by you, and ready to assist you! Look to Him to increase your faith, to break through the meshes of the net which encompasses you, and to bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Look unto Him now. Look unto Him always. Look unto Him continually, even to the end. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will make you more than conqueror through His mighty aid.

10. Live Today!

Not next year, next week, or even tomorrow — but live today, and live to purpose! Put aside all anxiety about the work you may have to do in the future — and this very day do your best, do your utmost to please the Master — and leave the concerns of tomorrow in His hands.

Make a little fence of trust
Around today;
Fill the space with loving work,
And therein stay.
Look not through the sheltering bar
Upon tomorrow;
God will help you bear
What comes,
Of joy or sorrow.

Live today! For life is so little — and yet so great. It is marvelously little if you look at it in itself. "There is only one beat of my heart between me and death," said a man to me once. It is true in another sense of each one of us. Not only in a time of extreme illness but in full health — let but something come and cause the heart to cease to beat — and we are gone!

A young lady was sitting at the fireside working while her sister was reading. Her mother spoke to her, but had no reply. In a moment, while the needle and work were still in her hand, her spirit had suddenly departed!

The longest life is but short. Each year we live, more rapidly it seems to fly. And never can we be certain of its continuance even for an hour. We cannot stay here in this world forever. Those younger than ourselves are coming up after us and pushing us onward and forward, and soon we fall into the deep river of death, and leave room to others to take our place. How frail, how fickle, is our sojourn here!

Though they seem to us so real — yet how little are . . .
our busy toils,
our joys and sorrows,
our cares and fears,
our losses and gains,
our successes and our disappointments!

Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more!

But take the lamp of truth. It gives another view of life. If it tells of its frailty, its uncertainty — it tells also of its greatness. It reveals a glory, a grandeur, a reality about our present brief existence, which we should never have imagined.

Life is your one great opportunity. If the stability or welfare of a kingdom hung upon the outcome of a single battle, how anxious would be the king or general in command to put forth every possible effort to gain the victory! And the permanent glory and peace of a mighty kingdom, even of your soul, depend under God on your being able by divine grace to fight the battle of life well. Could we listen to the secret thought of many a one in a dying hour, could we tell what is passing within while the lip is no longer able to speak, would we not often hear the sorrowful lament, "I have lost my life and cannot recall it. Oh that I could give all I once possessed to have back but a year of my short life below."

Life is great and precious, for you are now molding and building up a character which will abide evermore. Every hour, every day you are forming habits which permanently affect your being in the future. Whatever you think, or say, or do — your commonest actions, your very looks, your cherished thoughts — are all the die, the stamp, the impression of which you will never lose. Your very neglects and omissions of duty, also leave their mark behind.

Live in prayer, holiness, watchfulness;
be humble, trustful, loving, unselfish;
walk with God, and do His will —
and you become more and more like the Savior, and thus fit for His presence.

On the other hand, yield yourself up to fleshly indulgence, be the slave of appetite, worldly sloth, selfishness, passion, or sin of any kind — and the character becomes more and more depraved and marred, until all its beauty is forever lost.

Life is great and noble, because of its marvelous powers for usefulness. A man in America had once a field which he valued but little, and was about to sell. But a friend gave him good advice, "Mind what you do," said he, "I believe there are oil-springs in your field if you only search for them; and, if so, your field will be worth a large sum." He found the words of his friend were true. Oil-springs were discovered, and the field became to him the source of immense wealth.

Young friend, do not waste life. Do not throw it away. Do not reckon it of small value. If only you search for them, you will find oil-springs in it. You will find it full of power for blessing to yourself and to others. You will find it, if well improved, a means of bringing spiritual light, and health, and comfort to those around you and to many beside. If only your life is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and spent for the glory of God — then think how much you may make of it. The influence of a holy example, the fruit of lips filled with divine truth, a purse closed to all extravagance and luxury — but open to the claims of sorrow and distress, a heart devoted to Christ's cause and the souls he died to save — each of these may be as an oil-spring, a fountain of temporal and spiritual good to many of your fellow-creatures.

Once more. Life is great beyond all expression, because eternity is inseparably linked to it. If upon the use of one day or one hour, the comfort and happiness of the rest of your life depended — you would be very careful to use it aright. But infinitely greater is the disproportion between our little day of life here — and the vast eternity that follows. Yet upon the one hangs the other.

How shall we think of eternity? How shall we measure it? How shall we grasp it? How shall we get at least some faint idea of that ever-abiding, unending existence, which stretches away into the far horizon, and whose boundary we can never reach?

Take it in this way. Suppose that for every flower that blooms in summer time you could count a thousand years — and add together the sum of all. Suppose that, for every leaf that trembles in the breeze you could also count a thousand years — and then could add together these two sums. In a similar manner, for every bird or insect that flies in the air, for every living creature that treads the earth, for every fish that is found in the mighty deep — count a thousand years. Then, if you can, add together these vast totals, and imagine the time they demand, and remember that, when these cycles of ages have rolled by, the great clock of eternity has only just begun to tick!

True, our highest thought is at fault; it is utterly beyond us. But God is true, and from everlasting to everlasting He abides, and the souls that He has made. And this great eternal future hangs on this short passing life! What a reality does this give to it! What a vast importance attaches to every moment of it!

But how may you use it aright? How may you redeem its precious hours? How may you make the best of every day as it comes around?

Remember that the only true life is that spent in union with Christ. Your life must be one with His, by the link of faith. By humble, hearty dependence on . . .
His promise,
His power to save,
His precious blood,
His perpetual intercession on your behalf
— you have that life, that eternal life, that indestructible life, which no disease, no accident, no decay of nature can ever affect.

Unless you begin here, life must be a failure. Without this, its noblest aims can never be accomplished. Would you have life truly blessed, let it be passed in close fellowship with the Son of God. Let Christ dwell in you by faith. Live in Christ, live for Christ, live like Christ, live with Christ — and Christ will show forth through you His joy, His love, His light, His grace — and thus both to yourself and to many about you, life shall abound in ten thousand blessings.

If you would use life well, let the seven days of the week he elevated and sanctified, by the careful observance of Sunday. Sunday is the market-day of the soul. On that day you may gain your richest treasure. Getting good and doing good, true worship, heart-felt praise, thoughtful hearing of the Word of life, glad service for the King among the lambs of the flock, in the Bible class, or in visits to those you can reach on Sunday better than other days, the best book well studied, and another book or two which you find helpful in the Divine life. All this will make your Sundays stepping-stones to the Father's house and sweet seasons of refreshment that will cheer you before the work of another week begins.

If you would use life well, trade well with "the pound," the talents which the Master commits to your charge. Beware of rust. Sloth is rust, and will destroy the greatest talent, if it be indulged. Whatever gifts you possess, trade with them diligently. Let no grass grow under your feet. Lose neither time nor opportunity. Abhor all trifling with the few precious years you may have to live.

Remember that many talents are forever lost through being left unused — while a single talent well employed may grow exceedingly. Strive to use all your talents, and not to neglect one. You may have five talents, and make good use of four, while perhaps the fifth is the most precious of all — and yet it is forgotten and despised.

To avoid this danger, carefully consider what talents and gifts you have. Often stop and ask yourself whether you are making the most of them.

What precious talents are these three, if God has preserved them to you — sight, hearing, and speech! What a power for self-improvement and for usefulness do they afford!

What a precious gift is money! Whether more or less, if liberally and freely given, if self-denial is exercised in the way in which you spend it — what burdened hearts may be relieved, what helpful books may be given on birthdays to friends, or scattered far and wide among those who need them! What open doors may be entered for preaching the gospel of Christ, and what untold good may be done both at home and abroad!

What a precious gift is influence! If you are consistent and in earnest, your daily life may tell for good on all about you! What you are, has often a far greater effect than what you directly aim at doing for others. Your being an abstainer, may save some young friend from the pit of strong drink. Your prayerfulness may awaken the conscience of someone who sleeps in the same room with you, and who never bends the knee. Your habit of plain dressing, may save another from the snare of vanity and display.

In the use of your talents, especially remember the enormous power of littles. There are tradesmen in our large towns who are driving a splendid trade, making thousands a year — and yet they very seldom take half a sovereign, but most of their trade is done in very small amounts. The multitude of customers makes up for the smallness of the sums received.

Here is a lesson for you who wish to trade well with that which is put into your charge. If you cannot do great things — do many little things. You may immensely increase your talents by continual use and diligence. Never disregard the least opening for good. Ever be on the look-out for quiet and humble ways of pleasing Christ and doing something for His glory.

A penny saved by an act of self-denial,
a kindly word, even a pressure of the hand,
some expression of your sympathy for one in trouble,
a book lent to a servant in the kitchen,
a suggestion that may guide a young Sunday-school teacher,
a note to cheer a sufferer on Sunday morning when shut out from the means of grace,
a soft answer to one who is nervous or irritable,
a quarter of an hour given to pass on to another a page or two in your reading that has stirred or encouraged you,
a hearty Christian letter to an old schoolfellow at Christmas or the New Year
— a thousand such ways of trading with your pound you may embrace where you could not find one for any greater or more showy effort.

"Live today!" But are you living? Are you alive to God? Are you cleansed in the atoning blood, and renewed by the quickening Spirit? Are you journeying with your face Zionward? Are you walking in faith, love, and obedience? Are you prepared for a sudden call to appear before God? If some unlooked-for danger arises, if there is an accident to the train or the steamer in which you are traveling — can you calmly face it, knowing that all is well with your soul? If some fever or disease should attack you, could you in peace commit yourself to the Keeper of Israel?

I am permitted to mention an incident in the life of a very dear and valued friend. As a young man he was laid low with an attack of cholera. Though surrounded by every comfort and assistance that kindness and medical skill could suggest, he rapidly grew worse. One evening he heard the medical man speaking in a whisper to the sister who was nursing him.

His quick ear caught the words, "He cannot live until the morning!" No words could express the distress and fear that filled his soul. Death so near — and he altogether unprepared to meet it! No ray of hope pierced the midnight darkness that brooded over his spirit. What could he do? Where could he turn? In the deepest agony, almost in despair, he had but one resource. "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" was his one cry and prayer. Many, many times all night long did he still plead this one petition, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" And the cry was heard. God is very pitiful and of tender mercy. So his prayer was not in vain. He who heard the prayer of the dying thief, heard his likewise. The disease abated. In the morning he was better. Life was given back almost from the grave.

Nor was the lesson lost. He never went back. He sought the Savior and yielded himself to His service. He never forgot the claims of young men, and never failed to do all in his power for their temporal and spiritual welfare.

But you would not wish to run such a terrible risk! You must never forget that if one thief was saved — the other continued in worldliness, impenitence and unbelief, even to the last. And might it not be your case too, if now you refuse the loving voice of Jesus?

And how much you lose! What peace, what faithful guidance, what power for usefulness, you forfeit even now — if you delay coming to Christ. Why should not your whole life, short or long, be bright and joyous in the Lord's service, and then end in the brightness of the celestial city?

Surely you will come. Surely you will kneel down and ask life of Him who gives abundantly. Surely you will trust Him utterly for all you need, and henceforth strive to please Him in all you do. May He dispose your heart to do it, and by His own blessed Spirit work in you to will and to work of His good pleasure!

Only a step
From life to death!
The leaves are falling, and the flowers fade,
The sun is setting, deeper grows the shade,
Shorter the breath!

Only a step
From death to Life!
The trees are budding, and the flowers spring,
The sun is rising, light and joy to bring —
Ended Earth's strife!

Only a step
Jesus, my light,
O take You step with me; O draw near,
Hold You my hand, for then I cannot fear.
All must be bright.