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Rev. F. B. MEYER, B.A., D.D.

RELIGION IN HOMESPUN

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BY

F. B. MEYER B.A.

AUTHOR OF "ELIJAH" "THE DAILY HOMILY"
"THE SOUL'S ASCENT" ETC.



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PREFATORY WORDS

It is a relief, now and again, to turn away from themes which are directly doctrinal and theological to treat, from a Christian standpoint, matters of everyday experience and conversation. The results of some of these excursions are contained on the following pages.

Those who essay to be teachers and directors in the religious life must be careful never to stray far away from the practical or ordinary affairs of life; and I am thankful to be summoned to prepare pages like these, because they compel one to consider how far the principles of the religious life are capable of being reduced to daily practice.

The truest policy of life is that which has Christ for its centre and circumference; but when He is both, there is an abundant scope for

all that is natural, wholesome, attractive and delightful.

I have made use of the materials furnished by my commonplace Book for several of these articles ; but hope that I have not appropriated anything without due acknowledgment. If I have, may I be forgiven an altogether unintentional plagiarism !

It has always been my aim to show how compatible large views of life are with the most absolute surrender to the claims of the Divine Master, and that purpose threads together the successive chapters to which I invite the attention of my readers.

F. B. MEYER.

CHRIST CHURCH,
WESTMINSTER ROAD, S.E.

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CHAPTER I

WHAT HAVE THEY SEEN IN THY HOUSE?

SHORTLY after Hezekiah's illness, an embassy was announced as on its way from Babylon to bring the congratulations of Merodach-Baladan, king of that distant city, which was just emerging from the overshadowing supremacy of Nineveh, and beginning to meditate vast schemes of world-conquest. The mastery of the world of that time could not, however, be secured except by measuring swords with Egypt; and since Palestine lay on the high road between the valleys of the Euphrates and the Nile, her fields formed the natural battle-ground for the nations that found their home in either; and it was evidently a good stroke of policy on the part of the young and aspiring kingdom of Babylon to conciliate the monarch who might be occupying the grey old palace on Mount Zion.

On their arrival the ambassadors were warmly welcomed, and Hezekiah took them through his

palace, his armoury, the treasury, and the Temple, expatiating on all the goodly things which had escaped the wreck of time from the days of Solomon, or had been accumulated by his thrifty care. There was nothing worth seeing which they did not see, and they no doubt formed their own conceptions as to the character of Hezekiah on the one hand, and the value of an alliance with him, or otherwise, on the other.

We can imagine that the state report in which they embodied their observations would be couched in something of this strain: The king seemed very eager to conciliate us, and to make it clear that an alliance with him would be of the greatest importance, for he was excessively eager to impress us with the wealth of his empire. In no other way can we explain his extraordinary efforts to display to us the accumulated treasures of his palace and other buildings.

A Significant Question

As soon as they had departed, Isaiah was introduced. Information of what had taken place had been conveyed to him, and he felt that he must discharge the warning that lay on his soul as a burden of the Lord.

“Who were these men that came to thee?” was his first question; “What have they seen in thy house?” his second. The last was specially significant, and has a close connection with the subject of this paper.

We too are constantly receiving strangers and friends as visitors in our homes. Most of us have the spare-room, or guest-chamber, which is gladly at the service of any to whom we desire to show kindness. But what do such people see in our house? What is the principal impression that they will take away with them? We produce our best china, our silver tea and coffee service, uncover our drawing-room furniture, and cook our most exquisite dishes. All this is well if our one purpose is to do them honour; but how often is it for the gratification of our own vanity and self-display; and, when our friends leave us, what have they seen? Have they been impressed by the courtesy, the mutual forbearance, the holy habits of our household; or with the rich food, the expensive dresses, and the profuse expenditure? What have they seen in respect of Family Prayer?

It is universally admitted that there has been in recent years a marvellous alteration in the attitude of Christian households towards Family

Prayer. The practice used to be almost universal, especially among the large middle-class; but now the tide has entirely turned, and in as many Christian homes as not there is no family altar, and no apology for its discontinuance. If a Christian minister happens to be staying in the house, he is asked to take prayers, but the little hitches which occur in assembling and seating the servants prove that the service is an altogether strange and unwonted occasion.

There are many grounds on which we would urge for the revival of this blessed exercise, even if only once a day.

1. Family Prayer has Venerable Precedents

It was thus that Noah, after the flood, gathered his family around him. Abraham and the patriarchs, during their wanderings through the land of Canaan, were wont to assemble their households around the altar which they reared in every place where they pitched their tents. The altar and the tent were inseparable; and throughout the land of their pilgrimage there were memorable sites or sacred spots where holy men had stretched forth their hands in praise and prayer, whilst their slaves, like Eliezer of

Damascus, had learnt the art of prayer as they listened in mute and worshipful reverence. Surely a custom which can plead such venerable precedents may claim a little more consideration before it is swept ruthlessly away.

2. Family Prayer is an Acknowledgment and Symbol of Family Religion

There are the religious exercises of the individual when he enters into his closet, and shuts the door, and prayers to the Father Who is in secret; of the Church, when the great congregation joins in hymns, and prayers, and solemn Sacraments; of the nation, when it gathers in its metropolitan churches to give expression to a people's thanksgiving or intercession. But there is a special quality and grace when a family, comprising parents, children, and servants, gather around the open Bible, whilst the father acts as the officiating priest. Nothing can supply the place of this phase of religious life if it be discontinued, or practised at long and irregular intervals. The family mercies, constantly occurring, require constant and fresh acknowledgment; the family needs cry for utterance; and the family anxieties for dear ones far away demand expression.

3. Family Prayer Sweetens the Atmosphere in the Home Life

We have often looked up at the curious figures on the exterior of our cathedrals and churches, which stand out at right angle, and are known as *Gargoyles*. The old monastic legend ran that, wherever the worship of God was established in a building, all the evil spirits which had previously haunted the spot made haste to depart; and it is quite certain that the regular gathering of a family around the family altar tends, more than anything else, to reconcile warring dispositions, to smooth out irritations and annoyances, and to set up and maintain the standard of Christian unity and mutual love.

4. Family Prayer Recognises God's True Position in the Family Life

He is the God of the families of the whole earth. As the individual who does not keep certain hours and acts for the expression of his religious life will become irreligious and godless, so the family which fails to recognise God in common acts of devotion is apt to become proud, worldly, and

careless, absorbed in its pleasures and material gains, and indifferent to the heavenly horizons which are only visible when we ascend the eternal hills.

5. Family Prayer Leaves a Permanent Effect on the Children when they Become Scattered through the World

The impression of his father's religion lingered with Robert Burns, even when the restraints of his own life had become grievously relaxed ; and probably all who were brought up as the present writer was will have a more vivid recollection of the hours of Family Prayer, morning and evening, than of almost any other incident in those far-away and blessed days. The habit of Family Prayer thus becomes sporadic, and those who have been accustomed to it in their parents' homes cannot omit it in their own. Thus we take with us slips of the plant which twined around the trellis-work of our fathers' homes, and wherever we go, into whatever part of the world, we plant them that our children may enjoy the shadow and fragrance.

6. Family Prayer is a Wholesome Exercise for the Domestic Servants

Many of these may have come from irreligious homes, but what an effect is produced when they are asked to sit with the family as one of the circle, whilst the Word of God is read from cover to cover, and prayer is offered for them, as one with the children! The Books of Moses were specially careful to insist on the right of the stranger who might be within the gates of the Hebrew householder to participate in his religious festivities and sacrifices; and Christian families hardly realise the effect produced on some young man or girl by the first introduction to the daily family gathering, to set forth God's most worthy praise, to hear His most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul.

7. Family Worship is a Perpetual Anticipation of the Union of the Eternal World

The whole family in heaven and on earth is a vision of that blessed future when all the wanderers shall be at last welcomed home, and from every quarter the children gather, to go out no

more. And when the family gathers for prayer, the mother thinks of the boy in the great city, of the girl who has gone to a home of her own, and of the little babe which was called home to God after the briefest possible residence in an unkindly world. To her heart they are all present still, the circle is unbroken, and she anticipates the hour when she and they will sit down together in the kingdom of God. Sometimes it seems as though she has already come to Mount Zion, the City of the living God, and the many mansions of the Father's house. Is it not worth an effort to maintain Family Prayer when it is a daily accentuation of the family unity, and reminds all the members of the family circle that they must endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

8. Reasons for the Decline

Why is it that so good a practice has fallen into disuse in so many quarters? It is partly due to the slackening of parental authority, and partly to the great increase in the pace of life. There has been a vast change of late years in the habits of English homes. Not so very long ago the family would spend the evenings quietly

together, each of the members following some favourite pursuit within the circle of the home life ; but now the greater freedom with which sons and daughters may engage in outside interests has broken up those quiet home evenings. The increased demands and facilities for amusements, the demands of evening classes, the multiplied religious meetings of the churches, and the calls of philanthropic and charitable agencies, all have broken up the old-fashioned home life which used to be the pride and strength of our country ; and the irregularity and independence of the members of our families have played havoc with the quiet hour of evening worship.

Difficulties of the Day

Then as to the morning worship. The whole tendency of modern life is to remove farther away from the centre of the large towns in which most of us live. There is the necessity, therefore, of the sons getting off at a very early hour if they are to reach the office or warehouse at nine o'clock. The younger children, as likely as not, will have to catch some early train or tram for the high school or college. It is difficult to find some common hour when all can meet unless it be very

early, and this is barred by the late engagements of the preceding evening. The fact of one being absent, and of steps being heard going down the passage whilst the rest are gathered for prayer, seems to vitiate and spoil the whole spirit of the gathering. Yet to accommodate all is almost impossible. And it seems to me that the decision of the father to insist on the presence of all the children and servants, especially if the hour is not quite suitable, is no longer as unquestioned as it was in our home. The children, especially as they grow older, have something to say about it, and if they raise difficulties and make objections, too often for the sake of peace the father gives way. This relaxation of parental authority seems to me the most serious feature of the whole situation, and arises partly because parents endeavour to argue or coax into compliance with their wish, instead of taking their stand on the impregnable ground of what is right.

A Reminiscence

May I be forgiven if I revert to the sacred practice of our own home—then at Brighton? My father travelled every morning to London by the 8.45 train; so the bell rang for prayers at

7.15; we were all gathered, and he had begun to read from the old family Bible, with its overhanging leather flaps, by 7.20. The prayer, read most reverently from a Book of Devotion, followed, and the service was over by 7.25; but the fragrance lingered all day. Then came breakfast at 7.30, always preceded by the Grace, and a text of Scripture from each of the children. How it all comes back to me as I write! My mother, though delicate, always in her place on the sofa; we children following with our Bibles; and the servants sitting in the long row of chairs, led by the cook, down to the little maid who had come in to help in the kitchen. No hurry, no undue haste, nothing to break the reverent opening of the new day.

Prayers and Breakfast

This practice suggests itself as most feasible for families where the husband is the business man, and the children must get off to school. To leave Family Prayer till after breakfast is to imperil it, because one and another will want to hurry through the meal, to get to business or college, and it is almost impossible to re-assemble the whole family when once it has broken up from

the table. A short service before breakfast is generally best. In one case I remember the father contented himself with reading the verses of "Daily Light" at the breakfast table, and extended the Grace into a general Thanksgiving for the mercies of the night and prayer for the needs of the coming day. This was not perhaps the best, but it was very much better than nothing, and in that sense I recommend it to the consideration of those who have been accustomed to do less.

Interesting Instances

The most interesting Family Prayer in which I have ever taken part was in the palace home of a very godly foreign prince. We began with a hymn. After reading the Scripture the prince prayed in his native language. I followed in English; then the princess; then the cook, who was a member of the Salvation Army; and finally the footman, who was a Lutheran. It was a most delightful mingling of different voices, languages, and methods of thought, in the one address to our Heavenly Father, whose Presence overshadowed us as we knelt.

It was the custom of Archbishop Tait, when inviting guests to Lambeth Palace, to ask them

for an earlier hour than that of dinner or the reception, that they should first meet for evening prayer in his private chapel. This seems to me to have been a truly excellent practice ; for why should the worship of God be set aside for gatherings of our friends ? And surely those whose friendship is worth our cultivating ought not to feel it irksome, but the reverse, when the evening entertainment is introduced by the half-hour of social worship !

One of the most memorable scenes of Family Prayer with which I am acquainted, and in which I am thankful to say I have often been a participant, is that in the home of a well-known professor in a northern capital, and in an historic room. It always precedes breakfast ; the family includes sons who are passing through their university course, and young children who are studying in the elementary classes of the high schools, but they all take part. We read round the circle, first the professor, then the guest, and so on round the room, each of the servants, with different Doric accents, taking part, until the verses come back to the place from which the first one started ; then prayer, and the Lord's Prayer, in which all join. Then porridge, letters, the *Scotsman*, &c. . .

These are all interesting methods of family worship ; and I think one may add the practice of a Christian peer, who, after reading the portion, follows with a little homily, which I believe is known as "Hawker's Morning Portion." One often carries away some thought for the day from this exercise ; and it occurs to me also to recommend Mr. Spurgeon's "Morning by Morning," as containing a number of suitable portions for daily reading.

The Case of Working Men

In the case of working men who are obliged to go to their work before their family is astir, and are unable to regulate their households so as to gather their children around them in the evening, surely the Lord's Day should not be allowed to pass without gathering the whole family around them, either in the morning, or at least before or after tea, that they should say their texts, and sing their hymns, and become accustomed to the assembling of the whole family around the open Bible.

It is of course beyond measure best when the father is able to offer an extempore prayer. However short and simple it may be, it is better than

any read prayer, and comes closer home to the children's hearts and needs. To utter only a few sentences from the heart is better than to read two pages from a book. Often when a beginning is made in God's strength, one sentence after another is added to the first tiny effort, and each repetition gives more confidence. My distinct and very earnest advice is that, where at all possible, Family Prayer shall be the simplest and most natural, childlike, and unaffected speech possible with the great Father about the daily sins and needs of the family, never forgetting to name the little children.

My father was too nervous to pray thus ; but I shall never forget that one morning, when the doctor had pronounced my eldest sister as out of danger from croup, he inserted a single sentence of personal thanksgiving. The impression that incident made on me shows how much more interest attaches to such prayer than to the more stereotyped form.

A Plea for Family Worship

Where the father, for one reason or another, does not act as the priest of the home, let the mother take his place ; and when her lips are

sealed in death, her children, scattered to the ends of the world, will hear her voice reading again the familiar passages, and leading again in the pleading tones of prayer. Oh, mothers' voices! how ye ring on in the hearts of the children, though they may have travelled into far countries, sweet as the music of the cow-bells in Alpine pastures, soft and low, tender and thrilling, like the still small voice of Horeb's cave.

Let us build again the altar of family worship that may have become broken down as that over which Elijah bent on Carmel. Reverently let us gather the stones, and lay the wood, and look upward for the fire of God. We shall not look in vain, for "the Lord will create over every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, and over all the glory shall be spread a canopy."

CHAPTER II

SUNDAY OBSERVANCE

To many the mention of Sunday is suggestive of boredom, of weariness to death. From their childhood it has been suggestive of deprivation—the putting aside of the ordinary and congenial for what was tedious and irksome. The question with such people is how far they may go, and how much they may do, without offending against conventional Christianity.

It need hardly be said that for those who have learnt the secret of the Blessed Life—so that there is always an open channel between their deepest selves and God, and always a fountain of holy ministry towards man—these questions do not suggest themselves.

They anticipate the return of Sunday with delight, because it gives them, primarily, the opportunity of realising their union with the Divine. That union is never really broken, but amid the multiplicity of business engagements

it is liable to become obscured—the channel needs dredging, the reality of things has to be set against the appearance, the eternal against the transient and ephemeral. All through the week the soul gets snatches of observation, as the captain of a vessel in stormy weather ; but these are not sufficient ; the Christian yearns to obtain a prolonged quiet gaze at the Eternal Sun. Such a man will take down his favourite books, which have often proved a stimulus to his inner life ; will go forth to walk in his garden, by the sea-side, or in the woodlands ; will not miss the blessed opportunity of assembling with God's people ; and will eagerly seek for the inspiration and stimulus of kindred souls. Wrong things that had crept into his life will become perceived and corrected, the true drift of certain cross-currents will be appreciated, the specious expediency which had asserted a claim to take the tiller in hand and steer, will be unmasked and dismissed, for the true Pilot and Director of Life.

Then, with a clear vision of the Unseen and an open channel towards God, such a man will turn to those around him with a bright face and a sincere desire to make them truly happy. He will not be content to minister to the appetite for mere amusement, but, under the happiest

exterior, will lay the foundations of their deepest and truest well-being. Such a man will be the Sun of his home-circle, happy and happy-making.

To many thousands of Christian young men and women the weekly rest-day is the Day of Days. Driven from morning to night by the imperious demands of business, what chance would they have of renewing the springs of their spiritual life, of arresting the spread of decay, and of taking their soundings, as ships do when they are near a rocky coast, if it were not for the return of Sunday? Then time is given for the overheated machinery of life to cool.

Those also who have learnt the secret of Christian service will never be at a loss as to the true method of Sunday observance. When vast multitudes of the labouring classes are free from the factory and engine-sheds, and their children emancipated from the elementary school, the occasion presents itself for services and classes of all descriptions. Countless thousands of men and women find the hours of Sunday all too brief for the good work with which they endeavour to crowd them. They are wearied enough, when night comes, to sleep soundly; but the occupations which have wearied them do not unfit them for the business demands of the morrow, because

the nervous energy has been diverted from its usual channels for a brief space, to return to them again with fresh vigour.

All these, then, we may dismiss. None of them count that Sunday is an irksome and intolerable infliction. They call it a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable.

The great class which really needs help is that which professes respect for, and loyalty to, the religion of Jesus Christ, and would wish to be classed as Christians ; but its constituents have no strong spiritual susceptibilities on the one hand, and no special attraction towards religious work on the other. How are persons of this description to spend the Day of Rest, and how are they to train their families to regard it ?

The law of septennial periodicity is written everywhere in nature. Experiments on human and animal subjects always establish the need of giving a seventh part of our time to rest, in addition to our nightly sleep. It is almost trite to recall the experiment made at the French Revolution, when the anarchists, in their desire to expunge all trace of religion, decided that the week should consist of ten days, but found it

necessary to return to the older reckoning, because the nation could not stand the prolonged strain. It is a commonplace that the man who rests his horses and cattle on one day in the week will get more work out of them than he who keeps them always at work. And I was told the other day by a practical engineer that machinery works better and lasts longer which has a periodic cessation from its toils. Deep in the constitution of nature is engraved this law of rest, and because it is there it is obligatory on us all. Woe be to those who contravene and neglect it! It is inevitable that they will find themselves on the rocks. You cannot set yourself against the nature of things and prosper. Sooner or later you will have to pay your pound of flesh. The Day of Rest is primarily obligatory, therefore, not only because it is mentioned in the Decalogue, but because it is in the nature of things. Even for those who refuse the voice that speaks from Sinai, there is still a deep obligation to abide by its demands.

My readers will understand that I do not undervalue the venerable words of God by Moses : I only want to establish this point, that the matters on which God insists are right or wrong, not because of any arbitrary enactment on His part,

but because they are as they are in the nature of things. They are set down in the Decalogue because they had been set down in eternity; just as the chart does not make the black reef of rocks, where the waves break in foam, or the broad embrace of the natural harbour, but sets them down for all men to see and know, as having been there from the days when the dry land appeared.

It is clear then that while the nine commandments, which have no local and particular application, are of universal application as they stand, the fourth, which alone has the local and particular notes in it, is universally applicable only in its general principle, and not in those transitory elements which were evidently intended only for the people to whom it was originally addressed.

We conclude, therefore, that though we are certainly bound to give one day to rest, we are not bound to give the seventh day, and we certainly are not bound to observe the Lord's Day as the Jews observe their Sabbath.

In the discussion of debatable questions there is only one method of procedure—we must get down to the bed-rock of principle; and I think

that all the questions which may be asked, and all the problems presented for solution, will be easily dealt with when we have agreed on the following basic and fundamental principles.

1st. Sunday must be Observed as a Rest-Day

That is the natural deduction to which the preceding paragraphs have led us. But how can we rest most efficiently? By lying on our backs, smoking cigarettes, or dozing? There could not be a greater mistake. No, we rest best not by doing nothing, but by doing something else. We can work for several hours in succession if we change our line of study every two hours, whereas we are sore tired if we are compelled to keep to one theme. So in rest, the secret is to divert the nervous energy into entirely new channels—leaving the one tired string, and getting music out of the other four.

Obviously, then, one secret in Sunday observance must be, not in lolling in bed half the day, not in following the routine which governs ordinary days, but in making as complete an alteration as possible in our usual habits, topics, and pursuits.

**2nd. In our Sunday Observance we must Consider
as Much as Possible the Claims of Others**

Our manservant and maidservant, *our* ox and ass, should not fare worse than those under the Mosaic law—nay, better, because we live under a *régime* of love. To do otherwise is to rob them of their God-given heritage, and it is impossible to do this without exposing ourselves to the sure Nemesis of nature, which is God.

This principle will cut at the root of those Sunday parties in town and country of which we have heard too much, and which interfere with the rest-day of butlers, coachmen, footmen, cooks, maidservants, and the employés of restaurants which have to provide the luxurious *ménus*.

Would fashionable people travel by thousands to the Thames on Sunday if they considered their servants and dependants, and did to them as they would be done by? And there is absolutely no excuse for them, whose ample leisure would permit of such excursions on any other day in the week!

3rd. Sunday Observance should Include the Re-union of Families as one of its Chief Items

Fathers who rarely see their children, young people who are employed from early to late in business, boys and girls from school, ought to look forward to Sunday as the family and home festival.

Therefore we must spend the day in such a manner as to contribute our quota to the family happiness. To go off on a bicycle for the whole day, or for a husband and wife to be always accepting invitations for week-ends, whilst their children are left to their own devices, and for even the Christian worker to leave no time for the home circle, is inconsistent with the spirit of the day; and at this time, when the claims of home are so often ignored, we ought to make an honest attempt to vindicate them, by endeavouring to realise its true ideal in the programme of Sunday. Why could not more be done among our young people in the direction of sacred part-singing and the use of different musical instruments which would group the family around a common interest?

4th. In Sunday Observance we must Give to Each Part of our Nature its Appropriate Food

It is absurd to give all our time and thought to physical recreation, to games or exercise, for, at the best, the body is only the case and instrument of the spirit, and to cater for it alone is to concentrate attention on the least important ! Has the mind no claim ? Has the spirit no hunger for the infinite ?

Our forefathers held that to feed the spiritual hunger of man was the main purpose for which Sunday was given. But, even if we do not state the matter quite in those terms, surely we must admit that the most sovereign and Divine element in man should receive chief consideration on his rest-day.

5th. Our Sunday Observance should not Rob our Country of that High Ideal of the Rest-Day which has made the English Sunday so great a Blessing to Generations of our Forefathers

No one who has spent many Sundays on the Continent, with the *ouvriers* at work in the morning and the theatres in full blast at night, could wish it to be substituted for our English Sunday,

and we should be careful to hand it down in its integrity to those that follow.

In my father's home each of these principles was instinctively observed. Everything was different on Sunday from other days. On other days we breakfasted at 7.30, but on Sunday at 8.0; all the maids came in to prayers, led by the cook, in clean print dresses, and very white aprons and caps; the bread was new and delicious, always baked specially on the previous day; we all dined together, and father carved the invariable sirloin of roast beef; there were Sunday books; the regular hour for singing hymns; and at supper, the great treat for us children, permitted to sit up so late or who had been to the evening service, of potatoes in their skins. Forgive me for entering into such particulars, but in the change of the whole arrangements of the household something was done towards the restful observance of the day. To have the ordinary daily papers and books about is fatal. I was interested to see that the practice of Mr. Gladstone corroborated this. Any one entering his room in Downing Street on Sunday would find that the ordinary literature had been replaced by periodicals and books in keeping with the day.

In the other particulars our home arrangements conformed with the afore-mentioned obvious principles. The interests of the servants were carefully studied; the family life was always in evidence; the physical and intellectual were subordinate to the spiritual and eternal; and everything was done to heighten the reverence with which the day should be regarded.

In conclusion, we will briefly consider two or three general questions.

What Books or Pastimes would you Suggest for Growing Children, not Religiously Inclined?

I would be very careful to banish the ordinary books, such as the exciting story, the gaudy paper-covered novel, and the familiar illustrated papers. But I would take special care to put in the way of eager young minds other books which have a high ideal in the story they tell, such as Ian Maclaren's, Barrie's, George Macdonald's, &c. I should not read these for myself or wish them to be read in *my* home on Sunday, but I am dealing with a difficult case—the case of growing boys and girls who refuse religious books and must be saved from spending the day in devouring trash or scraps.

I can imagine also a father who had a distinct leaning to some special line of study always reserving Sunday afternoon for the wonders of the microscope, for directing or arranging botanical specimens, and for talking about the fossils of a bygone age—constantly indicating the traces of design and adaptation which attest the Creator.

Or, if he were specially interested in biography or history, what could he do better than read aloud the story of Hugh Miller, Wilberforce, Wesley, Lincoln, or Garfield?

What may we Talk About?

There should be nothing strained or artificial in the conversation, but the play and life of friend with friends, of brother with sister, of father with child—only a more careful ruling-out than ordinary of gossip, of the unkind criticism and the unseemly jest.

I think that, where possible, a man should walk out with his children, when the weather permits, for one or two hours, breathing in the fresh air and talking together of their common interests.

With a little forethought the elders are always able to suggest subjects of conversation, and

when some great event is transacting or some notorious case being tried before the bar of public opinion, how much may be done by suggesting principles on which just conclusions may be founded! Almost instinctively children will come to view matters from their fathers' stand-points. To look out on all life from the standpoint of the King of Truth is a fit occupation for Sunday.

What about Society?

If that term implies the formal party, the polite call, the fashionable gathering—certainly better not, in my judgment; but if *society* means the meeting of friends, the loving intercourse of kindred souls, who shall say Nay? Did not our Lord walk with the two on their way to Emmaus? But such social intercourse should never sink to levity, break up the wholesome routine of the home, or give servants much additional work.

What of Music?

One would dissuade young people from the popular song, the music-hall ballad, the strain which is associated with the place of amusement or the operatic singer; but surely with Handel,

Beethoven and Mendelssohn, Mozart and Gounod, to say nothing of the sweet and noble songs always issuing from our Hemans and Asaphs, there is plenty of scope for high-class and elevating music without confining ourselves to Psalms and Hymns.

How many Services?

Certainly the morning service, and in my judgment, where there are growing boy and girls, the evening service as well. I sometimes wish that we could count our Sunday from the appearance of three stars on Saturday evening to the same time on Sunday, as they did in Ward Beecher's boyhood, in New England. But we have to take the conditions of life as we find them; and our English Sunday being as it is, I would certainly advocate the attendance of the family at the evening as well as the morning service. But could not we ministers make our evening sermons less theological and formal, and more attractive and interesting though not less full of Christ?

So earnestly do I feel the undesirability of professing Christians relapsing into the once-a-day attendance, which is becoming so common, that I would even prefer their going at night to other places of worship than their own rather than that

they should spend the evening in dinner-parties or cards.

Why should it not be granted to the members of a Christian household who have attended the morning service at their own place of worship, and perhaps done some Christian work in addition, to attend some other places of worship at night, without hurting the feelings of their own pastor, it always being understood, first, that they go not for curiosity, but to profit ; secondly, that these places be within walking distance ; and thirdly, that there be no disparaging criticism of the less brilliant efforts and perhaps simpler services at home ?

All may not agree with the recommendations of this article, but it is open for them to make better ones. No one will be more thankful than myself to those who can amend or add to my suggestions. One thing only I feel, that before we allow the landmarks of our Christian Sunday to be wasted away by the incoming tides of secularity, we should make one honest effort to redeem it from any charge of dulness and stupidity which may rightfully be made.

CHAPTER III

THE CHILD

GOD has set a little child in our midst, to be our monitor and primer. We suppose that we are the teachers and the children the taught ; but in fact it is we who learn, and we have to become as little children that we may learn aright and enter the kingdom.

When a child is born, it is man in embryo. Each part of our nature is hidden in the tiny bud which, because of its rarity and preciousness, takes longer than any similar organisation to reach perfection. By reason of the body it cries with pain and for food to stay its hunger ; by reason of the soul, when a few months have passed, it recognises and reaches out its tiny hands towards its mother ; and by reason of its spirit, after a year or two, it folds its hands and closes its eyes in prayer. There are hidden within its tiny bosom all those forces that make heaven or hell, angel or devil.

**It cannot be Believed that there are Infants
"a Span Long" in Hell**

To teach such a thing seems little short of blasphemy. But probably no one now teaches it. Men try to forget that it ever was a part of the theology of the Church, or was held to be consistent with the nature of a loving God. Calvinism may be a perfectly logical system, but its extreme positions are eschewed by the heart of humanity, and the heart, with its intuitions, is the ultimate test.

**It is equally Impossible to Believe that little Children
are by Nature the Children of the Devil**

Many think that they are, and that they remain so, unless regenerated by the Holy Spirit. I refuse absolutely to believe that the devil is the father of our race. It is certain that he is not. We are "the offspring of God," as the Apostle put it on Mars' Hill; and every man has a right to look up into God's face and join in the ascription, "Our Father that art in Heaven." All are children, not in the sense in which Jesus was the Holy Child, not in the inner sense in which we become children through adoption, but still in a very real and blessed sense.

When a child is born, it is related by the *body*, with its marvellous apparatus of nerve and sense, to the world of matter, and by its *spirit* to the world of the unseen, which is infinite, eternal, and spiritual. In the early stages of its existence the spirit may be like an unused and undeveloped organ—a holy of holies into whose darkness the shechinah light has not yet shone—and it awaits the entrance of the Spirit of God. For each of us the moment arrives when the Holy Spirit appeals from the one side and the Evil Spirit from the other ; when the seed of the Divine may be received or the seed of the devil ; when the possession of the inner shrine is a matter of conflict and contest. Then the supreme choice is made, and the spirit becomes impregnated from above or from below. That is the moment of its birth. That choice determines whether the human being becomes a child of God or of the devil. Then it is born a second time into the kingdom of light or of darkness.

To every little child, whether born under Christian or non-Christian influences, the Light, which lighteth every one who comes into the world, makes its appeal. If it yield an obedient ear to that tender, winsome voice, it becomes a child of light ; it begins to tread the heavenly pathway ;

it is led forward by the gracious Spirit into an ever fuller knowledge of the truth, until a Peter is sent to Cornelius, and a Philip to the eunuch.

But too often the appeals of the Divine Spirit are unheeded, and when this is the case, and the spirit shuts itself against Him, it shuts itself up to darkness, coldness, the wild storm of passion, and the undisputed sway of the Spirit of evil. Then even the Eternal Love and Pity of God are compelled to recognise that it has become a child of the Evil One, and that the lusts of its father it will do.

The child of Christian parents is, if we may say so, predisposed to accept Christ. There will be a moment when it shall wake up to recognise for itself that it does belong to Christ ; but from the earliest it should be taught to know that it has been born into a redeemed world, and belongs to a redeemed race. "Thou art redeemed, little one," the parents may say, "redeemed by the blood and tears of the Son of God. Thy race has been redeemed, and thou with it, from the bondage of the devil into the glorious freedom of the sons of God,—awake to know thine inheritance and use it, for it is thine unless thou deliberately, by some malign choice, dost put it

away from thee." Too often we have spoken to children as though they were not included in Christ's Redemption until they accepted Him. Should we not teach them rather that they are redeemed unless they forfeit or reject the benefits of that supreme act which was intended to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and to make "the many" righteous?

If you speak to children as though to become Christians depended on their own choice, when they reach the years of discretion, they may procrastinate or refuse: but if from the earliest you teach them that they have been included in the love of Christ unless they sell their birthright, it seems to me that they will be much more likely sweetly to respond from the earliest dawn of consciousness, as flowers unfurling in the summer light and air.

I do not say that there will not be a moment when the Spirit of God will be definitely welcomed, just as there is a moment when dawn first breaks over the sky; but I desire that, in most cases, it should be with the children of God's servants as it was with me, who am entirely unable to remember the hour or when I passed from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. That there was such a moment

is certain, but I must wait till I see the story of my life, as it is set out in the chronicles of eternity, before I can be quite sure of its precise date.

In Dealing with Children, it is of all Things important that they be Taught instant Obedience

I can never forget a visit I paid to the home of a member of my congregation in Leicester. As I sat talking with her in her best room (and as a minister I protest being put into these miserable, catch-cold, stiffly furnished apartments, when I call on my people)—three times over, her little boy slowly opened the door and peeped in. Now it would have been in every way better if, in the first instance, the mother had beckoned the child in, and let me notice him. Instead of this, she told him three times over to go back and shut the door, on the final occasion accompanying her words with the threat of some punishment if he did not obey. But on his appearing for the fourth time, she called out, "Oh, you naughty boy, you never will do what mother tells you; come along to mother," and actually she took him on her knee, caressed him, and explained to me that he was a regular young tyrant, and that no one could manage him but his father. I could

not restrain myself. I didn't exactly call her a fool (of course in Solomon's use of the word), but I felt that if I had never before met an utterly foolish woman, she was certainly now before me. What could that mother expect in after life from her child, who was already as proud as possible of having obtained his own way ?

**It is Impossible to begin too Early in Life to
Break a Child's Will**

I have known of a little boy being kept in bed for three days because he would not say that he was sorry ; and of another, a little girl, who for two hours refused to pick up the spoon which she had thrown on the ground in a pet. But happy are the parents who will not relinquish the battle—one such struggle in early life may save years of sorrow afterwards.

**It is a Good Rule never to give Commands
which you are not Prepared to insist on**

But when you have made up your mind that a certain thing ought to be done, see to it that your decision is carried out to the letter. There ought to be no battle royal, however, except for

matters of truth and goodness, such as the child's conscience can recognise as right. Never dissipate your influence by insisting on matters which owe their importance only to your arbitrary whim. Be sure and carry the child's conscience with you. Do not compel its obedience by the use of force, but by a persistent appeal to its moral sense. If you compel it by outward force you will alienate the child's affections, and induce the resolve to withstand you some day, when it has reached full growth. On the other hand, if you convince it that you are right, and compel obedience by an unhesitating appeal to its moral sense, you will secure its respect, its future obedience, and its consciousness that your demands are righteous and necessary. Of course there may be times when for a lie, an act of rudeness, or some gross impropriety, the cane may have to be used. But these occasions are very rare, and such punishment should be inflicted only when a wrong has been done, and not to compel the child to do what its conscience has already pointed out as obligatory.

Some parents are always appealing to their children by the name of Jesus. I have heard them say, "Jesus would not wish you to do this," or "Jesus would like you to do that." But to

my mind, this method of reasoning is not so good as to appeal to their moral sense as the Apostle did, when he said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." The deepest conviction to which you can make appeal is the sense of right and wrong. If you cultivate this, you are teaching a child to guide its steps by an infallible rule, and are calling into play one of the noblest and divinest qualities of our moral nature.

Of course no sane Christian parent will ever tell a child that under these or those circumstances God will cease to love it. This would be a bitter libel on God. Of course God will love it, do what it may. And probably the one thing which, some day, will bring back that wandering boy from the cold, will be the conviction that, however great his sin has been, it has not shut up the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Where should we have been if God had only loved us when we were good, and had not loved us in spite of our sins, until we were thawed and saved?

Prompt obedience is all-important as the foundation of a strong and healthy character, but love should always leave the door open for the prodigal's return.

It is very Important never to Deceive a Child

Let us never excite hopes that cannot be realised, nor answer questions in a way which will certainly bring a recoil of mistrust. Children will often ask questions about matters which it is impossible to explain. Under such circumstances it is always better to say frankly that you will explain everything one day, and in the meanwhile solicit confidence and faith. Anything is better than to give some foolish and jesting answer, which will never be forgotten, will shake confidence, and will make the subject in question a forbidden one between you.

One of the most necessary Conditions of Child-life is Acquaintance with Nature

If your home must necessarily be in the great city, you can grow plants in your rooms, have fish or birds, horses, rabbits, cats or dogs; you can walk in the parks and open spaces; you can arrange long happy rambles on Saturday afternoons, starting from some place outside the wilderness of brick, to which tram or train shall have carried you.

Nature is the Foster-mother of Young Children

Their pure eyes see beauties in her old face which we older folk miss. She is never so happy as when her woodland glades are filled with the ringing laughter of boys and girls. She listens with still delight, and leads them on by ever new displays of flowers and glades and fruits.

**There are many Traces in the Words of Jesus
of his Devotion to Nature**

He could look into the depths of her eyes and heart. It must have been in his boyish days that He watched the foxes creeping to their holes, and the birds of the air winging their flight to their nests ; the lilies in all their glory, the dead sparrows of the markets, and the flowers of the field withering under the scythe. It is easy to see how close a student He was of every natural process ; the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear attracted His reverent heed. Every process of agriculture, from the sowing of the sower to the ingathering of the autumn, was familiar to His eye. Like Solomon, He could speak of all trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop springing in the wall.

No boy or girl will go very far wrong who has learnt to love Nature, to observe her secret processes, to care for dumb animals, to classify specimens for home museums, to use the geological hammer, the microscopic lens, or the snap-shot camera.

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It is All-important for the Father or Mother, or both, to keep an Open Door of Sympathy and Intercourse between the Parental Heart and the Child

I have a dear friend all whose children have turned out to be a comfort and a pride, who traces their strength and purity, under God's blessing, to the talks that she encouraged from their earliest days. As soon as her children were beginning to develop, it was her habit to go up to their bedrooms, after they had gone to bed, and sit beside their beds in the dark talking over the events of the day. Under the shadow of the darkness confidences could be exchanged which were impossible by daylight. That was the time when the quick mother's instinct could detect where the girl's modesty had been shocked, or the boy's purity assailed and sullied, and to this

blessed habit she attributes the fact that when her boys began to form their love-attachments, the first person they consulted was the mother, from whose heart they had never drifted far, and who had shown herself so appreciative of all that had affected their life-course. This was her great and abounding reward. Where wrong may have been done there must be no anger, no surprise, no threat, but the calm stillness of the confessional, and the wise indication of how the wrong may be righted and forgiven. Yes, dear mothers, you make the best confessors after all! We don't mind telling you our secrets—you will never betray our confidences! You will mingle your tears with ours,—and the assurance that *you* forgive will make us hope in the mercy of God!

It is most important that our young men and maidens should never have reason to speak of the father as “the governor,” and of the mother as “mater,” because of the deep and close comradeship (if one may use the word) into which the obedience of childhood has passed by almost insensible degrees.

In the earliest stages of child-life there is, as we have seen, urgent necessity for exact and

prompt obedience. It is a profound mistake to refuse to the young vine the trelliswork of support, which it naturally, though unconsciously, demands. Like the Son of God, every nature which ultimately is to attain to pre-eminence and power to rule must learn obedience by the things which it suffers. Nothing is more detrimental than to leave matters of importance open to a child's choice. It has not had experience enough to enable it to arrive at just conclusions, and it will therefore, if it be left to choose, follow the promptings of its own caprice or whim, and consider only what is easy and pleasant. But none of these motives should control the choice of a moral being. Therefore the parent or guardian must lay down certain simple and sensible rules, which shall be regularly and systematically observed, until habit becomes a second nature. This is the normal condition for child-life; and pitiable enough it is when parents are so selfish and self-indulgent that they shrink from the effort, which is undoubtedly required, of securing obedience.

But as soon as the earlier stages of growth are passed, and the habits which make for health and well-being are formed, it is disastrous if the father or mother continues to expect or exact

the old literal and often blind obedience. To do so is to bring about strained relations, and to lay on young necks a yoke beneath which they will chafe and rebel. The desires and wishes of the parent will have then to be secured in another fashion ; and by this time the emotions of love and respect should have become so deeply rooted that the expression of a wish, together with the reasons that underlie it, should be quite sufficient to secure the purpose in view.

The father becomes, as years go on, a friend, companion, and almost an elder brother, though always surrounded by a halo of honour and respect which no elder brother can lay claim to. The comfort and honour of the home becomes a common object of mutual pride and co-operation. There is no trouble about the latch-key, because the older can trust the younger, and the younger respects the least wishes of the older—
—and so the latch-key is given, but used with the uttermost regard for the comfort of the home. There is no conflict about late hours, because the unreasonableness of giving needless work to the servants has from the earliest been one of the recognised axioms of the family life. There is no division of interests, for the children have long ago seen that the parents have no interests

apart from them, and therefore naturally expect that the children in turn should share with them each new hobby or companionship that may engage them.

That these results can be achieved in the majority of cases is undeniable, as the experience of tens of thousands happy homes attests ; but the one all-important condition is how far the parents from the earliest are prepared to surrender their own interests and give unremitting pains and care to secure the happiness and true well-being of their children. They have no right to hand these tender natures, at the most impressionable time of their life, to servant-girls and strangers, except under very exceptional circumstances.

CHAPTER IV

SERVICE AND SERVANTS

WHEN the New Testament was written, the service of the world was for the most part rendered by slaves ; and such a life, in spite of all its hardships, was frequently held up by the Apostles as the ideal of their own relationship to "the Master that bought them." Paul never wearies of describing himself as "the slave of Jesus Christ."

There was no limit placed on the proprietorship of a Roman master ; his authority was absolute. If he chose to throw his slave into the lamprey-pond to enrich the choice flavour of his oysters there was no redress, no punishment. A slave might be bidden to bend his back beneath the draught-board for hours together, and punished with death if he moved a muscle till the game was over, but none showed pity or astonishment. There was no enlightened opinion, no philanthropist, no "Exeter Hall" in those days. Yet the early Church saw in the

passive endurance of the much-suffering slave the type of the Lord's relation to His Father, when He took on Himself the form "of a slave," and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Nay, there was but one emulation, one passion—to become more entirely devoted to Christ, as the bond-servant of His will.

The service of an absolute master no doubt relieves the serf from the necessity of choosing for himself, and casts the responsibility on another; and this was probably the reason that the monastic life in the Middle Ages presented so strong a fascination to multitudes, who were bewildered by the many voices that spoke to them, afraid of the terrors of the other world with which they were threatened, and only too thankful to relieve themselves of making the momentous decisions which life involved, and involves still for us all. Was that the reason that led the Apostle to say, "Wast thou called being a bond-servant, care not for it?"

To Serve is Itself an Education

To subordinate our will to another's quells our pride, saps our self-will, compels us to consider the desires and commands imposed by us from

without ; and any discipline which effects such results should be prized. Would you be a leader and helper of men ? Be sure that you must begin by learning obedience in the things that you suffer. The strongest natures are those which, in service of some iron and imperial necessity, have acquired habits of self-negation and self-restraint. It is an untoward sign of the times that so many are refusing the yoke of service because they desire to be their own masters and mistresses. The Lord needs again to gird Himself with the towel of His humility and take His place among us as one that serveth, that He may set us an example to do as He has done, for so only can we become highly exalted, or climb to thrones of influence and power. The throne-life is for those only who are willing to serve unto the uttermost, not accounting that their own comfort or life should be considered for a moment, when weighed in the scale against the help they may render to others.

In our own day men are no longer enamoured with service for its own sake. They do not see that *Ich dien* (" I serve ") is the motto of a royal escutcheon. They do not realise that, when a position of service is properly filled, it becomes a stepping-stone to the highest style of living.

They do not embrace the opportunity of so blending themselves with the interests and aims of another, that the noblest qualities of their own nature are called out into the completest development. Some who read these lines may be conscious of never having realised the highest type of character. They are willing to admit that they are less than they might be in the calibre of the inner manhood. But they do not know that probably the reason lies in this, that they have been too self-centred, and have never known what it is to listen to a voice which they had no option to refuse, and to which they must needs give an uttermost devotion. If you cannot become literally a servant, then accustom yourself to heed every voice of duty, of affection, or of public interest, and answer, as one who detects the Divine through the Human, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Be sure to be at least the slave of your own high ideal, never giving anything less than the best to the severest task-master that ever allotted a duty or set a lesson. Be merciful to all who serve you; but merciless to yourself—steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in service for God and man.

**Service ought not to be Rendered merely
for a Money Equivalent**

This is almost universally the case, except, of course, where love binds the child to the parent, friend to friend, or the devoted wife to husband and child. For the most part, whether in the factory, the store, or domestic service, the one unfailing incentive to serve is the thought of the money recompense. "If I serve so much, I shall receive so much pay, and it is therefore well worth my while to do it."

But, surely, this is not the highest ideal. Let us take as our illustration that sacred office which is known pre-eminently as "the Ministry." All the world knows that ministry means service. "God had but one Son," said the old Divine, "and He made a minister of Him." Now, let me ask, what is the Ideal according to which men expect their ministers to work? Is it one based on money considerations? Surely not. So far from this being the general expectation which is entertained of the class of men who are specially designated *servants*, if one of them happens to leave a considerable sum of money behind him, men are apt to discount

his character, leave his books unread, and express strong sentiments on his inconsistency.

It would excite a good deal of remark if the minister were to answer a criticism on the weakness of his sermons by saying, "What more can you expect, when the remuneration I am to receive is so miserably inadequate?" The ready answer would be, that the scale of payment should not for a moment affect the quality of service; whatever *that* might be, *this* should ever be of the best. The minister is expected, and rightly expected, to preach as fervently and eloquently though his fee is only represented by shillings as when it is measured by sovereigns. Surely also this is a perfectly legitimate expectation. The money-payment ought never to enter into the calculation of the true shepherd of souls, however largely it may bulk with the hireling. No, the God-sent preacher will always try to do his best, because he is God's servant, standing in the vestibule of eternity, and certain to be called upon one day to render an account of the use he has made of his opportunities. You may find him in a Highland valley pouring out his soul to a number of plaided shepherds, as eloquently and earnestly as in the crowded city church. What have the coins, which he may or

may not receive, to do with the elevation of his spirit, or the eloquence of his words? The money-payment is to keep him in food and raiment, and to set him free from labouring with his hands, that his mind may more easily take and keep Heaven's imprint; but it is in no sense an equivalent for his service. What, can the dust of the earth, however it may have been refined and wrought, prove sufficient compensation for tears and blood, for prayers and supplications that take sleep from the eyelids!

But if it be granted that money cannot compensate the minister of the Gospel, the question arises, "Ought it to compensate any one?" Ought not service to be rendered from the heart? If we are evidently called to serve, ought we not to put our whole heart and soul into whatever we have to do, doing it with our might as unto the Lord, and not unto men? I know this is a lofty Ideal, but surely it is a true one. And if all servants would recognise that they were to do their work after this fashion there would be fewer changing from place to place, murmuring and complaining, and more putting heart and soul into what they do, "with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not unto men."

Of course there must be money, and money is

a good and useful commodity. It buys our clothes, pays our life-insurance, enables us to help our relatives, gives us the opportunity of obtaining beautiful and useful articles for the enrichment of our lives; but it ought not to be the equivalent of what we are capable of giving, and ought to give. Would that we could get away from this constant thought of money, and do what is set before us because it is right to do it, because we desire to lighten the burdens and cheer the sorrows of those around us, and because Christ accepts as done to Himself all true and faithful service.

Do something in the world. Every day go forth with an anointed head and a washed face, with a smile on your countenance, joy in your tones and elasticity in your tread. Whatever your lot, dare to believe that it has been assigned you by God, and do what you have to do with a single eye to His good pleasure, and undeterred by the thanklessness of those to whom you minister. Is it not enough that God is pleased? He says, "Thank you," even if every other voice is silent. "What glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently; but if ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is a matter for which God gives you thanks."

It may be Thought that this Ideal is
Altogether too High

At this point, however, I had the opportunity of putting the question to my host and hostess, "Have you ever had in your household a servant, or servants, that served you for other considerations than money?"

"Yes," said the lady of the house, "I have had two cooks and the present one, each of whom has refused to leave me till our School sermons were over, and in Lancashire these are all-important occasions."

"Tell me about your present cook," said I.

"Certainly," was the reply. "I went into the kitchen the other day, and said, 'Well, Mary, so you are going to get married, but I hope you won't leave me in the lurch.' 'No,' she answered; 'he said the other day that he wanted to get wed in May, but I told him that he'd have to wait till the June School sermons were over and the housemaid had had her holidays, and you and master had been away for yours, and then I'd be ready.'"

Now, that comes more nearly to my ideal than anything that I have met with lately. The girl is probably a true Christian, who does her work not because she expects her wages at the end of

the quarter, but with the sincere intention to put an even selvedge to every piece of work that she does in the world for Christ's sake.

In the treatment of servants there are two or three principles of great importance which masters and employers would do well to bear in mind.

**It should be Recognised that Nothing is
Menial or Degrading in Itself**

A woman will often perform offices for her husband or sick child which no money would induce a hireling to touch. If she were pitied because of the character of such deeds, she would laugh you to scorn. Menial! Degrading! Nothing of the sort! The light in her eye and the flush on the wan, worn cheek tell out the radiance of her soul. She is in her element. Is she not needed? Is she not doing work that none can do as well as she? Is she not doing it for those who are dearer to her than life?

There is nothing that requires the doing which is in itself common or unclean. Hence St. Francis thought it sacramental to cleanse the sores of lepers and tend those who were stricken with the black plague. His love for man dignified his

labour, and his love for God shed the halo of Heaven's own benediction on his lowly service.

Let us only allow these high and noble ideals of service to take possession of our souls, and we shall cease to make distinctions in the nature of our work ; all will become one fabric of cloth of gold. We shall also verify in our experience the expressive words of our Lord : " Give alms of such things as are within, and behold all things are clean unto you."

**It should be Understood that the Results of the
Work will be Bulked and Divided equally by
God, and that He will See to it that the
Reward shall be equally Shared**

At family prayer not very long ago I said to my servants, " Please understand that I am not too proud to black my boots, make my bed, or brush my clothes, but if I did these things which you can do as well as, and better than, I can, I should have neither time nor strength for writing and speaking. Therefore, I leave you to do what you can do equally well as myself, whilst I do what you cannot do ; but at the end of all things, God will put together the total output of this household, and if there is any result from

all my work, some of it will certainly be credited to you in proportion as you set me free to do it. All the souls that have been helped by my books or sermons will some day come to you and thank you for having made it possible for me to help them. If, on the other hand, your work is done in so perfunctory a manner, and, for instance, your bad cooking upsets my digestion and makes me unable to do my usual daily quota, the blame of the wasted hours will fall, not on me who would have wrought for the Master, but on you who made such work impossible."

Words like this bind together master and servants, employer and employed, and one purpose links together the multiform duties of the household, as the output of a mill makes all the operatives and masters one.

**The Best Way to get Good Service is to be
more Lavish of Praise than Blame**

It is the habit and wont of too many to find fault with the least failure in the service of those whom they employ; whilst they are stinting in commendation when all is done to their mind, accepting it as a matter of course. Let there be the smallest failure on the one hand, or infringe-

ment of rule on the other, and the whirr of the alarum at once bursts out with startling distinctness.

There is a more excellent way. Do not always be finding fault. It breaks the spirit, sours the temper, dispirits and weakens the energy of the soul. That you must find fault and rebuke is clearly your duty, when some egregious wrong has been perpetrated, or some duty has been flagrantly shirked, but there must be other notes in the voice than those of blame and reprimand. When an evident effort has been made it should be instantly recognised, and the master or mistress should be so prodigal of praise, that the trained ear should at once detect when the wonted encomium is absent, and begin to search for the reason of the omission. The effect would be to make the repetition of the fault less likely on another occasion. We must bring as much sunshine into our homes as possible. Much more, and much better work will be done if the household be full of song and light. To be quick to notice an improvement, and to thank for an act of service will procure more satisfactory results than "the nagging" of constant fault-finding. The good coachman will get more work out of his horses by the cheery encouragement of his

voice than by the most violent cracking of the whip. Rarey, the great horse-tamer, said that a cross word sent up the pulse of an average horse *ten beats a minute*.

Take a Human Interest in your Servants

How many a young girl would have been saved from a fate worse than death if her mistress had been something of a mother-friend ! How many a constitution would have been saved from physical wreck if a kindly eye had noticed the overstrain which was too much to be borne, and a thoughtful hand had alleviated the pressure for a time ! Those young girls have their anxieties and perplexities. The letters which the postman brings them contain many a tale of poverty and difficulty in the distant town or village. Full often it is with a heavy heart that a domestic servant goes through her wonted tasks. To notice this and speak the word of sympathy may bind the woman's heart to you for ever.

What is true of women-servants applies equally to our business employes. The common interest which bound masters and men in a former generation has passed away. Once they were *souls*, now they are *hands*. It is a change for the

worse. Once it was not uncommon for the governor to know all his workpeople by name, and to visit them or to send to them if ill. Now there is jealousy if he seem to be too attentive. He is suspected of ulterior motives, if too mindful and careful of individuals. And it is more difficult to deal with men through the third person, who generally represents the impersonal Trade Union. Still, an effort should be made to maintain the personal touch.

**We should Endeavour to Save our Employées
from their Faults**

A most faithful and useful servant of mine had a very quick temper, and when this was upon him he spoke and acted as if he were possessed. After one ungovernable outbreak I asked him into my room, and put a chair for him to sit on, because I desired to speak to him as a friend, and distinguished between the attitude to be adopted when serving me and that which one should assume when speaking man to man. Lovingly and tenderly, but firmly, I told him of his fault, led him to confess his consciousness of failure and his profound regret, with the result that the poison was sucked from the wound and the dirt

washed (but not with scalding water) from his feet.

We, who are called to be masters, must never forget that we have "a Master in Heaven," and as we would have Him deal with us, so must we deal with those whom we employ. Often when we are tempted to lose our temper, and get provoked, tempted to dismiss, tempted to an unwarrantable act or speech, let us remember how He has borne with us—how tenderly, patiently, and wisely—and let us turn again to one who is, after all, our fellow servant, saying, "Since my Master has forgiven me ten thousand talents, I will forgive thy hundred pence, only strive, as I also strive, to be more perfectly modelled after the fashion of the servant whom God hath chosen—His elect in whom He is well pleased!"

CHAPTER V

ON LIVING TO BE A HUNDRED

AN interesting old book that fell into my hands the other day set me wondering whether it would not be worth while to try to live for a century. The healthy old Florentine who, in its pages, told his experiences of well-nigh a hundred years, made my mouth water. His zest for life was unabated; he found as much pleasure as ever in the sunny air of the beautiful city; his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren filled his life with laughter; his sense of the goodness of God was profound; and for death he anticipated so gentle a slackening of the silver cord of life as to be practically painless and imperceptible—and so, indeed, it befell.

There are not a few inducements to try for a century. One would have become free from the fierce tempests of passion that sweep down on us in young and even mature life; would have

formed habits which presumably should have become automatic ; and would be able to gather fruit from orchard-trees that one had planted decades of years before, and reap harvests from acres that in far-away autumns had seemed hopelessly stubborn. We shall never be in this world again, and we have plenty of time in front of us for heaven. Then what a Mentor one might be to younger generations !

By weight of years,

Old experience would attain
To something of prophetic strain.

There would be ample time to understand the true drift and value of human life ; for from the hillside, at the close of the battle, it is far easier to estimate the plan of the conflict than whilst it is in progress and the clash of the combatants lies over miles of country. A man, like those old patriarchs, who thought that their first-born had not reached his prime till he was 500 years old, must have been encyclopædias of information, to say nothing of the ripeness to which they carried their inventions ! If only Newton or Faraday could have lived with unimpaired powers to celebrate a centenary, what a wealth of glorious achievement would have been garnered for

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mankind! Then, too, what a true and deep knowledge of God would be acquired if one were to walk with Him for even a fourth of the time that Enoch's earthly fellowship lasted. The Beulah borderland experiences of such a soul would be as remarkable as the after-glow of the tropics, when for a second time all nature is saturated and dyed by the resplendence of the sunset.

These anticipations were slightly checked, I own, by a visit to a venerable old patriarch of eighty-six, who had outlived the contemporaries of his earlier years, and, though his mental faculties were clear, was in such feeble health that life seemed only "labour and sorrow." "No," I said to myself, "if life is to end in the helplessness of a second childhood, God take me away in the midst of my years, whilst I am still able to gird myself and walk whither I will." But when, a few days after, I stumbled across a cheery old veteran of ninety-five who, among his memories, spoke familiarly of his father patrolling the Norfolk coast with a musket, to prevent Buony landing, and of seeing Mr. Huskisson's death when the first locomotive ran between Liverpool and Manchester—my courage revived, and since then I have been making the

necessary preparations for another lap or two of life's race, if such might be the will of the Heavenly Master who warned us that with all our thought we could not add one cubit unto our age (R. V. margin).

**Now as to the Methods which we must Adopt
to Attain our Quest**

My friend the Florentine lays special stress on *diet*. Almost to weariness he rings the changes on the necessity of eating only wholesome food, and rising from the table with an appetite for more. He is never tired of saying that we eat too much, so that our natural organs break down prematurely under the burdens which we impose on them.

Sydney Smith said, as humorously as suggestively: "According to my own computation, I have eaten and drunk between my seven and seventieth year forty-four waggon-loads more than was good for me." Probably as many people die of over-eating as over-drinking; not that they go to the extreme of the philosopher Seneca, who ate a few hundred oysters daily and blamed the mollusk for his indigestion, but that they habitually overload their organs.

Here let my reader, who is going to start with me on this long race, make a mental note, *I must eat less ; and I will henceforth rise from every meal able to eat more, if not positively hungry.*

Yes, gentle reader, but you hardly realise how hard the task will be, or how much self-control you will have to exert. Remember, too, that there must be no "bites" between meals, any more than the semi-teetotalers will permit "drinks"; and you must make up your mind to reject—however much you may hurt your lady-hostesses and grieve your friends—what a brilliant writer calls "abominable little messes, reeking with butter, sugar, and all manner of glorified greasiness—broiled dyspepsia, toasted indigestion, and fricasseed nightmare."

We shall have to come back to the food, though not necessarily the attire, of John the Baptist, with good water for our drink and honey for our sweets, only substituting for his locusts good whole-meal bread or oatmeal porridge, to say nothing of a teaspoonful of Plasmon or a few drops of Bovril.

One honoured friend of mine eats nothing but a single meal a day and walks eight miles afterwards. It is a dreary life! The breakfast-bell

brings no joy to him. The call to supper drives him to his lonely room. No afternoon tea, with its delightful gossip, entices him. No supper rare-bit furnishes a pillow for his head. And then that eight-miles walk! In tropical heat or winter storms, up and down the streets of London, or to and fro from stern to stern of steamers—always eight miles! If one must do as much to win the goal, I frankly say that I give in, let those go on who choose.

But if Diet is Important, Exercise is not
less so

I make fun of my friend's eight miles a day, but I recognise the wisdom of his prescription. Another old friend, Sir Isaac Holden, who nearly converted me to Fruitarianism so long as those welcome hampers came to my London vestry from Oakworth, used to insist on walking at least four miles a day. Theodore Parker, when on his way to a foreign grave, whither he was carrying a prematurely broken-down constitution, said to a friend, "If twelve years ago I had bought a saddle-horse, or taken real repose in the summer time, I should not have come to this now."

It is probable that our tubes, and trams, and motors will have an appreciable effect in shortening human life by depriving the present generation of exercise. Men who used to walk to the City pay their nickel and ride. Can they not save time as well as read their newspapers whilst they are conveyed to their businesses and back, with the easy and equable motion of modern locomotion? Mr. Gladstone felled trees; Mr. Balfour plays golf; many a time have I seen dear American friends of mine putting up houses for themselves in new settlements, with as much deftness and energy as if they were bent on earning so much an hour; but this is the way to send the red-blood away from the brain when the severe thinking is done, to the stomach where the digestive juice needs to be repaired and reinforced.

Often enough I ask young men, who have been mewed in hot counting-houses all the week, why they are content to stand for hours together, with cold feet and stagnant blood, to see other men enjoy the pleasure and glory of our great English games. To belong to a football team, to kick the ball, or, as we used to do, to pick it up and run with it though ten hung round our necks, to stand for the hustle, team straining

against team till the sinews stood out like cords, and to discuss the game afterwards, with the air of heroes—surely this was worth living for, and that Saturday afternoon was the sufficient counteractive for all the physical humours and brain-fag of the week. It made our skin act as might a vapour-bath and oxidised our blood. But if you cannot manage this, my eager aspirant for a hundred years of life, try every morning a glass of cold water on waking, a cold bath or dripping sheet, and Sandow !

**But it is more Important still to Preserve the
Supremacy of the Soul over the Body**

Too many people talk as though they were nothing but bodies. You ask them how they are, and all they can answer is, "I am rheumatic," or "I am dyspeptic," or "My liver is out of order." I remonstrate when my friends answer my inquiries thus. One must not be careless about the physical health of those whom one counts as friends, but, after all, this is but a small part of the totality of their being. They are not bodies, but souls ; within them are faculties and capacities which ally them to Demosthenes and Cicero, to Shakespeare and Racine, to Luther

and Latimer, to Haydn and Mozart, to Raffaele and Michael Angelo. It is absurd to say that inquiries after the well-being of such complex and glorious natures can be answered by a doleful reference to the stiffness of a joint—as well answer the inquiry by saying that the bicycle-tyre is punctured, or a slate has been blown off the house !

We must keep the body in its right place as the instrument and vehicle of the soul. The strenuous purpose of the will may often nerve it to new endeavour when its physical energies are flagging. The warm pulse of affection will keep its cheeks oval, its eyes full of the love-light, and its movements light and elastic. The persistence of our fixed endeavour to reach some high summit will often open fresh stores of unexpected vigour, as when Mr. Gladstone came forth from what most people thought was the permanent retirement of his old age, to arouse the country against the Bulgarian horrors, and finally to resume the premiership of the State.

It is marvellous how great a change may be wrought in the body by the complexion of the mind. Suppose, for instance, we have met with some staggering blow of trouble, and we say to ourselves, "That trouble has taken ten good

years out of my life"; or suppose our friends say thoughtlessly, "You look ten years older." At once the body begins to age; we stoop, and move more slowly; we are conscious of supervening feebleness, and lose our spring and energy; we complain that our year is "in the yellow leaf."

On the other hand, suppose we resolve, whatever may befall, to be bright and glad, to anoint our head and wash our face, to get through with a smile,—it is marvellous how the body will brace itself and the nervous system get new verve and tone. The experience is much as when a new driver takes in hand a tired team, and summons them with cheery voice to mend their pace.

We need to take this factor also into consideration, in our pull for the century against the adverse stream. To be sanguine and hopeful, to be persistent and strenuous, to make up our minds that we will not let ourselves become old and set, will add considerably to the likelihood of coming at least within measurable distance of our goal.

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But, probably, the Cultivation of a Cheerful Disposition is the most Important Condition of any we have Considered

The old adage tells us that every sigh shortens and every laugh lengthens life. It is said that there are something like two hundred muscles in the human face, which are all exercised only in a hearty laugh ; how that may be we know not, but we remember to have heard that a merry heart doeth good like medicine, probably because it helps the digestion, quickens the circulation, and acts as a cordial to the liver and a tonic to the nerves.

But nothing is more intolerable than to aim at merriment as an end in itself, as when Queen Christina wrote to a friend : " My chief employments are to eat well and sleep well, study a little, chat, laugh, see plays, and pass my time in agreeable dissipation. I hear no sermons and despise all orators. All wisdom is vanity ; eat, drink, and be merry." The only gladness which is really exhilarating and life-giving is that which arises from the perpetual endeavour to make life's rough path easier for tired feet, and speak encouraging words to those who are toiling upwards through the mists that lie thick upon the mountain side.

There is no task harder, but none more fraught with blessedness, than to go through this world as a band of music passing along the streets, which quickens the pace of every pedestrian, makes the weary pluck up new courage, and starts the children dancing. We are apt to become too self-centred and sombre, the lines on our faces are cut always more deeply, our voices have too much of the falling and too little of the rising inflection ; they suggest depression rather than hope, the falling shadows of night more than the opening glory of the dawn. We forget how many look into our faces, hungrily, scanning them as the raft's crew scans the mainyards of the distant ship for an answering signal. The world is full enough of sorrow ; let us do our best to comfort it, concealing the recent traces of our own tears that we may be more at leisure to soothe and sympathise. In doing this, we shall save ourselves as well as those that hear us. They that love their own souls lose them, but they that are willing to count them second and, if needs be, to lose them altogether, shall save them.

One of the greatest acts of self-denial is to refuse the satisfaction of being pointed at and pitied as a conspicuous sufferer and to refuse to pity ourselves, that we may be free to com-

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municate our joy. This is the policy the Master practised when His heart was sore troubled, even unto death. But He set Himself to comfort His disciples, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled; be of good cheer, I have overcome."

There is nothing like this in the history of religions. Buddha advised his followers to forget themselves in the service of others; but the end in view was that they might more quickly escape the pains of existence—in other words, the actuating motive was one of pure selfishness. The ascetic believes that his suppression of self is *per se* pleasing to God and secures a reward in heaven. But Christ teaches us to interest ourselves in the joys and sorrows of others, as if they were our own, looking for nothing again; and it is only when we do this with no thought of reward and only for his sake that we find ourselves so absolutely blessed that it seems as though a slab of Heaven's blue ether had fallen into our hearts.

The soul that lives like this is never old. The body seems constantly repaired from within. The disintegrating forces that prey on us most readily when we are low and depressed are unable to gain a foothold. We have reached the springs of immortal youth and mount up with wings as

eagles, running without being weary and walking without being faint. Whether, after all, this will secure the term of farthest longevity is comparatively unimportant. It is enough to recall the handfuls of seeds which we have scattered as we trod the acres of our years, each seed being destined to fruit in glory to God, on earth peace and to men goodwill.

But Life, after all, is not Measured by
its Years

Into three decades of years men have crowded work to do which others would have required a century, whilst many who have lived to great age have left no record. The world has known comparatively few who have really lived: the immense majority of its inhabitants have merely existed. Millions have been little better than oysters—never moving from the rock to which they first adhered, and opening their mouths at the rising of every tide for another meal. Many who have died have more vitality than myriads who are living: *they* still rule our spirits from their urns, whilst *these* may be described in the awful phrase which one hears often enough in the Southern States as *white-trash*.

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The confession of Grotius was a sorrowful one, *Vitam perdidit operose nihil agendo*, "I have spent my life laboriously doing nothing." Indeed, as Dr. A. T. Pierson says, "the measure of *power* is the true measure of *life*."

We live in deeds, not years ; in thoughts, not breaths ;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial ;
We should count life by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best,
It matters not how long we live, but how.

Let us then do with our might what our hands find to do. Let us give every flying minute something to keep in store. Let us live whilst we live. Let us take up a worthy aim and pursue it with all the thoroughness of which we are capable. Let us never scamp a square inch of building with wood, stubble, or hay, which we might have filled with gold, silver, and precious stones. What our life lacks in superficial area and extent, let us make up in depth and intensity. The worth of a small roll of canvas or a block of marble is increased beyond computation by the genius which handles it. I would rather, says one, be a great man in a small house, than a small man in a great house ; and we may cap the sentence by saying, I would rather do the work of a century

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in a year than spread the work of a year over a century.

After all, it is well that we cannot Tell the
Number of our Years

They are fixed by inscrutable wisdom and infinite compassion. No answer is ever vouchsafed to the prayer, "Lord, make me to know mine end and the number of my days, that I may be certified how long I have to live." The hour of our departure is fixed and entered already in the Annals of Eternity, but the secret is well kept. "If I will," said the Master to one whose prying curiosity would have intruded into these secrets, "that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me."

It is enough for each of us to abide where God has placed us, till He bids us home. Whether He come for us in the midnight, at cockcrow, or at peep of day, we must be found watching. And if it be His will that we should outlast all our contemporaries, and linger on like the last leaf on the old tree, which stays on the bough till April comes again, still He will bear us company, for He hath said: "I will never leave, nor forsake!" Ponder, then, the Song of the Aloe:

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I grow upon a thorny waste,
Hot noontide lies on all the way ;
And with its scorching breath makes haste,
Each freshening dawn, to burn and slay ;
Yet patiently I bide and stay,
Knowing the secret of my fate ;
The hour of bloom, dear Lord, I wait,
Come when it will, or soon, or late,
A hundred years is but a day.

CHAPTER VI

NEIGHBOURS AND NEIGHBOURING

THERE is no doubt about our duty to love our neighbours. It is a comfort, however, to me, at least, to learn from Christ's definition of the word, that *neighbour* does not necessarily mean the person who lives next door. The Samaritan who befriended, and the Jew who needed befriending, had probably never seen each other before their memorable encounter on the road to Jericho, and they certainly did not live beside each other in the same town. The Jew may have lived in either Jericho or Jerusalem, whilst the Samaritan seems to have been a commercial traveller, well known at the inn or hotel where he was accustomed to put up. He was so regular in his journeys, and so prompt in his payments, that he could be trusted to repay any additional expenditure on his *protégé* when he came again.

If *neighbours*, in the Bible usage of the word, meant literally the people who live next door,

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obedience would be even harder than it is. It is so much easier to be pleasant and helpful to people you meet on the coach in the Highlands, or on board an ocean steamer, or in an hotel in the Austrian Tyrol, than to the family who live next you in the suburbs, with a large party of young people, who ruin your Sunday peace as they strum waltzes from morning to night in winter and play lawn-tennis all day in summer.

Our Neighbours

The elderly spinster who keeps a small regiment of cats! The lady who hangs her vociferous parrot in the verandah! The youth who is *slowly* acquiring a knowledge of the cornet or bassoon and practises with his windows open! The man whose dog barks by night and chases our sheep by day! The poultry fancier, whose chanticleers awake other sleepers besides the rosy-cheeked Dawn, and sometimes mistake the gleam of a policeman's search-light for the first beam of morning! The well-meaning thrifty couple who are always sending in to borrow our forks and spoons, our medicines and cordials, our coals and groceries, and forget to repay our loans. until prompted by our unmistakable

reminders! The eyes that are always looking out from behind the curtain whenever we go out or come in, and certain to see us when we are least prepared in clothes, parcels, or companions, to court the inspection! The tongues that discuss us! The obsequious bows of people who want to get on friendly terms with us, and whom, for that very reason, we feel estranged from! The distant acknowledgment or stony stare of those by whom we are dying to be recognised! The man whose ashpit is allowed to accumulate refuse till we are nearly poisoned, or whose garden is full of thistle-down which blows over to our choice plants!

Such are some of our neighbours—our comfort being that they do not all live beside us at the same time, for in the nature of things there can be but one on our right and another on our left. But at one time or other of our earthly pilgrimage, with its incessant repitching of our moving tent, we have come across most of these.

We must not be forgetful of the many amiable and delightful neighbours in whose vicinity it has been a luxury and profit to live; and yet, as Mr. Spurgeon used to say, one bad fish in a fishmonger's shop will strike your imagination more acutely than the hundreds of good ones

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lying on the white marble slabs or the blocks of ice. Similarly I recall at this moment, not so much the sweet music which I have heard at various times from my neighbours' pianos, but the agony of those three months when the flat over mine was sublet to a family which came up from the country to enjoy the benefits of the School of Music, and the daughters played from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. in relays, sometimes two, but never less than one, generally making the same inevitable mistakes and nearly landing us all in the asylum. At such times, since music is said to have charms to soothe the savage ear, one feels prepared to renounce all the rights and privileges of civilised life and become a savage.

Now, to love all these is no small task, and much harder, as I have said, than to love the poor Jew who lives on the high road to Jericho, weltering in a pool of blood. Yet we must try for this also, so far as opportunity offers.

There are several Little Courtesies which we
may Show our Neighbours

If the doctor's carriage is often at the door, or straw laid down in the road, we should send

in our card, or some verbal inquiry, to show that we are not unmindful or careless of their anxiety. If our neighbour is standing at his garden-gate, or going to his suite of rooms in the same lift, at the moment when we are returning home, we should salute him with a courteous "Good evening." If the wife and mother is passing through a time of mortal anguish, it is neighbourly and kind to ask her little children to come in to spend the afternoon with ours. These are little courtesies; they do not cost much, but they indicate that a glint of God's love has entered our hearts with its warm and blessed glow. They may not be reciprocated—well, be it so; the son of peace shall come back into your own bosom, and I am not sure that I should not continue to show them, unless I were quite sure that the repetition would be misunderstood. At the worst, we have our Lord's advice not to cast our pearls before swine. Still, genuine love never faileth; "it is not provoked, and taketh not account of evil."

It is Wonderful how Contagious the Spirit of Good is

There is a story told of a labouring man who was endowed with a highly refined taste for

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beauty and neatness, and who took a house in a long squalid street, the cottages of which had front gardens. When he first went to his new home, those gardens were trodden hard with children's feet, filled with rubbish, the happy hunting-ground of cats and dogs, with here and there a hutch of rabbits or a trellis-work enclosure for poultry. He did not find fault with others, but set himself to cultivate his own little patch, digging it up, making paths, sowing seeds, and building a miniature rockery. His neighbours on either side felt that they could not admit so striking a contrast to their own allotments, and they also set to work, until others were stirred by shame and envy to do the same, and in course of time the whole street was transformed; not in the gardens only, but the homes and the people who lived in them. So kind words and deeds shown by us to our neighbours may ultimately induce the same spirit in them and the perfume of our life will be wafted throughout the neighbourhood.

Besides, when we have shown ourselves courteous and kindly—without invading the privacy of any or sacrificing our own, it will be much easier to bear with some of the annoyances which we have mentioned. We shall think kindly of

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the lonely old lady who has never had husband or child, and whose heart dotes on her cats because they come to her caress ; of the young man who has been reclaimed from a life of dissipation, and is beginning to take up with new ways of employing his leisure in wholesome music ; and of the young couple who are short of the things which they are always borrowing, because, in addition to their family of young children, they have two old aunts living with them, one of whom is a chronic invalid and the other not altogether right in her mind. As soon as we know something of people, we find it possible to look at the other side—the forgiving, forbearing, and sweetly reasonable side—of things which before had only grated on our nerves. Thinking only of ourselves we are driven beyond endurance, thinking of them we are filled with a great compassion.

Out of all this, also, will come our deliverance, for when we have shown ourselves kindly to people, they are much more willing to save us from an annoyance of which we may have given them a casual hint. The lady will hang her parrot in the front of the house if she knows that we are studying in the back ; the musical man will shut the window when he is practising

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on Saturday evening whilst you are finishing your sermon ; the young people will not call out quite so loudly to each other at their lawn-tennis if they know that you are taking your Sunday afternoon siesta, or that your child is needing quiet after that terrible attack of brain fever.

The Way of Sanctified Common Sense

Is not to begin by giving tracts all round, but by showing a little human interest Before you attempt to convert your neighbours, I would suggest your distributing pocketsful of sweets to the groups of children as they come home in the afternoon from school. You will soon achieve notoriety ! Do this for six months and you will be able to talk about God to the veriest churl whom every one avoids. But be sure not to distribute sweets as a means of ingratiating yourself ; that is mean, and people will soon see through it. Distribute them because you are a noble, happy, God-loving nature, and out of that same heart, when the time comes, will pour fountains of water of life. Do you think that the Good Samaritan did only one memorable deed of mercy ? It is not thinkable. The Jungfrau rises from a tumultuous heap of mountains, and

that deed on which the light of heaven has shone, as the dawn on an Alp, for 1800 years, became possible because his life had been crowded with innumerable acts of modest and unobtrusive goodness. He had never been commended, and had hardly been noticed; he did not realise that he was building up the character of the good man, for whom "some one would even dare to die," and who, when a great occasion calls, will meet it with a store of unexhausted benevolence yet to spare.

Those are our Neighbours, also, whom we are
Continually Meeting in the Walks of Daily
Life

The men who travel to the city by the same morning train and frequently in the same carriage; the working girls who always catch the same tram; the guard who travels with the train; the conductor who takes our coppers and punches our ticket; the newspaper man who, as he sees us coming, whips out the paper we always read and hands it to us; the "coachee" on the box of the Tally-Ho; the charwoman who cleans the office; the night-watchman who guards the premises; the owner of the store next door; the clerk who

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frequents the same dining-place, and made room the other day for us to get a seat—all these are neighbours, and it is good for us and them if we will unbend a little and exchange comparisons of the weather, the temperature, or the state of the streets.

A smile, a nod, a word, are enough to keep your heart from becoming a frozen pond. If only a small stream of kindly feeling is always pouring in, and another flowing out, it will enable you to resist the hardest winter that ever tried to restrain and bind a human soul.

You need not do more than this, but to do this oils the wheels of life, keeps our humanity living and fresh, and sets the door open for the entrance or exodus of more important matters, supposing an occasion for them should ever arise. On the Continent I have again and again been struck by the greater freedom in exchanging courtesies than amongst ourselves. The German servant welcomes you as you enter the house; the gentleman will take off his hat as he enters or leaves the railway carriage where ladies are sitting, or, if gentlemen only are there, will wish them "Good morning" or "Good evening"; men and women as they go to their work, along the country roads, will cheerily salute you; your most casual

acquaintance if he meets you on the street is not content with raising his hat, but brings it down with his arm to a right angle. People have said that a good deal of this is superficial, but whether that be so or not, I greatly admire it, for I am increasingly sure that the outward manner has not a little to do with creating the inward disposition.

But our Neighbours, as Christ says, include
any who Need our Help

"Who is my neighbour?" said the scribe.
"Show yourself a neighbour!" replied the Master.

All men have their RIGHTS. Some are *above* us, some on our *level*, some *beneath*; let us respect them and do our best to maintain them unimpaired, whenever they are invaded. When we can do aught for their preservation, whether it be the right of the Armenian to live, or of the day-labourer to pasture his donkey on a common, let us not stint time, thought, or strength.

All men have their SORROWS. Let us be as quick to notice the red eye, the wan cheek, the bit of mourning, as Joseph was the sad expression on the faces of his two charges on the

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morning after their dreams ; and let us see to it that we do nothing to aggravate, but all we can to alleviate and comfort.

All men have their SINS. Some are lepers, some paralytic, some taken of fever, and many are blind or deaf ; let us not shrink from touching their sores, lifting them by the hand, binding up their wounds, taking their side against their besetting sins, and restoring them with the more tenderness and grace, as we recall our own liability to be tempted.

**But let us See to it that we are Animated by
the only Motives which can Stand the Strain
and Realise the Possibilities of such a Life**

It was an awful phase in the history of London philanthropy when the West End went "slumming" to the East End, as a new craze and for the sake of its exhilarating excitement. Then, young ladies who never noticed the hectic spot on the cheek of the little kitchen-maid of their father's mansion, or thought of helping her to be a sweet, pure woman, put on special costumes of dainty make, but rather subdued in colour, and went off to lecture poor people on the necessity of going to church and having their babies christened.

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The story is told by a good man who could not have fabricated it, I think, of an ardent young lady who told her friend that since her father became paralysed and her mother blind, it had grown so dull at home that she was going out as a hospital nurse ! Whilst the same authority (*gentle reader, I prythee notice that I am only quoting*) says that he knows of uncomfortable people "who can't get on at home," who invade poor districts and meddle in the domestic affairs of unhappy Englishmen and Englishwomen whose little houses have long ceased to be their castles !

Now, these are quite evidently exceptions, and should not blind us to the myriads of holy souls, men and women, who are for ever stealing up and down the world threading their way along narrow streets, diving into squalid courts, climbing up creaking staircases, and finding a welcome into miserable, untidy, feculent rooms, where you can almost cut the air with a knife, and doing deeds of unselfish kindness, on which angels look with tender eyes. These have learnt to think over again God's deepest thoughts of love ; such love only has the necessary staying power, the necessary delicacy of touch, the necessary grit and grace. These are they whose feet are beau-

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tiful over the mountains of sin ; these are they who repeat the urgency of the angels who came to Sodom at eventide and refused to go out of it alone ; these are they who keep the world from losing its faith, since as men look up into their faces they see there the reflection of a love which never shone on sea or shore.

When that love comes into the heart it becomes the fountain source of Love to man. Because we love the Divine Man, we love our brother also ; and as we, for love's sake, begin to minister, our love grows in depth, and strength, and wealth of resource, like the wealth of the vine, from which a hundred hands each autumn tear off the abundant foliage and fruit ; but without complaining it girds itself to more prolific growth.

How Rich the Annals of the World are in Stories of Souls like these

Men cannot afford to let their record die. Generation after generation tramples again the earth around their graves and lights again the fire of holy inspiration from their memory. Let us repeat our recollections of these—specimens of a host that no man can number of all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues, who counted not

their lives dear unto themselves, not saving themselves that they might save : St. Francis, Howard, Shaftesbury.

Shaftesbury, who at the age of twenty-seven wrote in his diary : " On my soul, I believe that I desire the welfare of my fellow men," and who, after almost sixty years of incessant devotion, and activity, on their behalf burdened with a great weight of years on the threshold of the Eternal Rest which he needed so sorely, said, " I cannot bear to leave the world with all the misery in it."

Howard, who tore himself from the ease and refinement of his home in Bedford, and spent his years in travelling through the world to discover the condition of the prisons and alleviate the anguish of its prisoners, and who died alone and untended in a distant and inhospitable country smitten by prison-fever.

Francis of Assisi. One night, when still in his young manhood, as he stepped out from the glare and hilarity of a prolonged revel, he stood suddenly like one arrested beneath the stars, contrasting their calm pure beauty with the scenes he had left, and realising the hollowness of the things which appeal only to sense. " Are you thinking of a bride ? " said one of his companions.

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“Yes,” he said, “of a bride nobler, richer, more beautiful than your fancy can conceive.” And as an eminent prelate has told us, he there took as his bride, Humanity, bleeding from a thousand wounds, whom none had chosen for his own since Christ Himself, to cherish to his life’s end with unfailing tenderness. He loved Christ as few have loved Him, and for love of Him he loved men. Were they not dear to Him? Did He not, in looking into the eyes of the pauper, the robber, and the leper, look into the eyes of His Lord?

There are few sweeter stories told of him than the one which narrates, how, one day, in the early years of his dedication, he met a leper—one of those terrible spectacles so common in Europe in the Middle Ages, as still in the Orient. He sickened at the sight, but conquered himself, and getting from his horse he gave an alms—and then a kiss. The legend goes on to say that as he went forward on his journey, looking round once more he saw no leper standing on the plain, and knew that he had seen the Lord. There is a profound lesson in these words. Not in the Gothic church alone, which the mighty organ fills with solemn music; not in nature only, where the universal chorus of praise from cricket

up to seraph stirs the sluggish heart to praise ; not beneath the fig-tree, where the guileless Nathaniel meditates on Jacob's ladder, or on the house-top, where the Apostle beholds the white sheet, emblem of a redeemed world, but in the prison cell, in the overcrowded tenement, in the attic where the cripple sits all day in his chair, or the cellar where the sick woman lies in her weakness, we may meet Him, whose delights are with the children of men, and who is found where they need Him most.

Do not wait to do great things ; be content with little ones. Do them as they come to hand. Out of the smallest seeds arise the noblest trees. Do not shrink back before great opportunities, for He who gives them waits to supply all needed grace and power. You are nothing, but you are in partnership with God, and He is all. Do not love men with *your* love ; it will falter in the terrible strain, but let *His* pass through you. Do not help them with *your* help ; it is not enough, but let *His* succour them, passing through you, as the electric current along the overhead wire of the tram-line. Do not stay counting *your* five barley loaves and two small fish ; it is true that they are nothing among so many, but put them into *His* hands, and they

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shall satisfy five thousand men, besides women and children. "For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

So, as we consecrate ourselves afresh, to love first and best our Master Christ, and love all men as neighbours for His dear sake, let us say each for himself, with William Blake, the mystical seer and poet of the eighteenth century:

I will not cease from mental strife,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green and pleasant land.

CHAPTER VII

"I AND ME"

IF we were beginning life on some grant of land in the Far West, our first endeavour would be to ascertain its contents. As soon as it was daylight on the morning after our arrival, we would climb some neighbouring eminence to prospect. If there were a river, a lake, a stretch of pasture-land, or ground dotted with forest-trees which seemed capable of cultivation, each of these would enter into our calculation and determine the sort of development we should adopt. The track of land might not be ideal, but we would resolve to make the best of it, and the difficulties of making it productive would only give opportunity for greater skill and ingenuity. The last thought of our minds would be that anything should be left to a lucky chance.

So in life. Each of us, as born into the world, has an immense amount of latent possibility stored in his nature; and our success will be in

direct proportion first to our knowledge of our capacities and limitations, and next, to our steady purpose in the development of the former and in the avoidance of whatever would tend to our disadvantage. Just as good farming may make poor soil excellently productive and remunerative, while a rich soil may become unfruitful and disappointing if farmed by a careless or ignorant owner; so patience and industry may make a great and useful life possible from very slender endowments; whilst the world is full of brilliant geniuses and men of rich endowment, who for lack of painstaking and perseverance, and especially for lack of high principle, have notoriously failed.

It is necessary, therefore, at the outset that "I" should take stock of "me." They are not quite the same. The *I* is my sense of personal identity; the *me* is the make-up of all that I can call mine, not only my body and soul, but my clothes and home, my relatives and friends, my cycle and violin, my position in business and my social standing; all that goes to make up my distinct personality. *I* is the subject that thinks; *me*, the object of my thought. *I*, the spirit or soul, probably the soul; *me*, the armour I wear, the house in which I live, the ship in which

I must meet the shocks of the ice-floes, the estate I must cultivate, the capital on which I must trade.

Now, what are the contents of your *me*? Let us make a rough inventory.

First, to begin at the highest, you have a *Spirit*, which is an aptitude or capacity for God, a window towards the Divine, the Infinite, and Eternal. That window may still be curtained and shuttered; it may even have become blackened and darkened by the grit of the ocean or the drift of the storm, but it is an essential part of the original construction of your nature. It will be wise to cut away the ivy which has begun to twine over it, and to cleanse and open it. But of this more presently.

Next comes *the soul*, with its wide range of faculty, like the broad expanse of notes on the keyboards of an organ or the enamelled tablets of a typewriter. Away there on the right is the power of will, and next it the moral intuitions; then, in order, the judicial, intellectual, emotional, and affectional properties; the gifts and endowment that enrich; the instincts that prompt; and the appetites (these on the extreme left) that supply the motive-force of life.

Horace Bushnell used to say, "The soul of

all improvement is the improvement of the soul.' And, from far away back in the history of the world we recall the noble words of Socrates; "I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons and properties, but first and chief to care about the greatest improvement of the soul." This at least is within the reach of us all. We may not be wise or eloquent, nor have friends, money, and rank, but we may all build up a noble character in the soul-life, which shall be "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever."

Besides spirit and soul, there are some other assets in our estate—stock-in-trade we may call them—with which we start in life. Chief among these is *the Body*. The old saying was that each human person consisted of soul, body, and clothes. It is a curious jumble, but there is a good deal of truth in it, for in all likelihood, if we were asked to choose between having a beautiful body, always shabbily dressed, and an ugly one always spotlessly attired, we should not find it difficult to decide upon our answer. It may not have been the purpose of your Creator to give you as beautiful and richly gifted body as some have, but some of those who have most richly blessed the world have achieved success in spite of

physical deformity and defect. Socrates was an extraordinarily ugly man. Who has not heard of the blind professor who lectured with marvellous eloquence and precision on the laws of light and colour, and of the gifted Civil Service coach who was a martyr to excruciating pain and could hardly rise from his couch? It was only recently, also, that I met one who had no hands, but was able to perform all the functions of the hand by the dexterous movement of the feet!

We must take into consideration some other things, however, before our enumeration is complete. Our *friends*, the first faces that bent over our cradle, the first voices that struck on our ears, the loving souls that are bound to us by the sacred ties of flesh and blood. Our *rank* in society, which may become a great factor in the influence we wield, but is not all-important, since some of the greatest names in history have sprung from unknown parents. Our *fortune*, also, is a matter of indifference, because a true man will make his way in spite of the poverty of his early years; nay, will be schooled for nobler achievements by privation and want. The children of luxury, on the other hand, may become so pampered and enervated as to resemble the Persian standard, of which Gibbon tells us

that originally it was the leathern apron of the leader of a race of mountaineers, but when, in the period of national decadence, it was captured by their conquerors, the leather was entirely covered by jewels—an emblem of the luxury which had brought about their ruin.

This, then, is the estate that God has given us. But it is for us to make the best of it. A fruit-grower, the other day, showed me a hillside covered with the most heavily laden cherry-trees that I have ever seen. He told me that the soil was poor enough to start with, but that you can get anything you like with the soil, if only you take trouble and time.

This, then, is our work during the first decades of life. First, we must know ourselves; and secondly, we must set ourselves to build up strong and noble characters on the basis of what we are by nature.

Now, of course, in character-building very much depends upon our ideal. The word itself occurs but once in the New Testament, where we are told that Jesus Christ was the express image (*character* in Greek) of His Person. Character, then, may be said to be the impression made on our heart and life by the contemplation

of our ideal, just as when the prepared paper takes on the likeness of a sun-lit face.

But this is not all. There is another potent agent in the formation of character—I refer to the law of Habit.

In one of his profound sermons, the great Christian metaphysician, Bishop Butler, says: "By character is meant that temper, taste, disposition, and frame of mind from whence we act in one way rather than another . . . those principles from which a man acts when they become fixed and *habitual* to him."

But here we may ask a further question—How do these certain principles become fixed and habitual? It is of great assistance when habit comes on our side to help us in our fight for purity and righteousness. It is like a balustrade on which we lean in climbing a steep and difficult staircase. This thought is stated by Butler when he says that there are but three steps from earth to heaven, or, if you will, to hell—Acts, *Habits*, CHARACTER. Thackeray expanded the same truth in the memorable words: "We sow a thought and reap an act; we sow an act and reap a habit; we sow a habit and reap character; we sow character and reap destiny."

It is evident, therefore, that the formation of right habits is all important for the building up of character. It is impossible to exaggerate the immense effect of habit on what we are, on the influence we wield, and on the whole complexion of our existence here and hereafter.

It may be well, therefore, to notice the physiological basis of Habit. Let us begin at the very lowest rung of the ladder. We are all familiar, of course, with the Five Gateways to the outer world—Sight, Hearing, Touch, Smelling, and Tasting. Each of the organs associated with these various senses—the eye, ear, skin, nose, and mouth—is connected by a bundle of nerve-fibres with cells in the upper part of the brain, where the hemispheres of grey matter are formed. The terminal organs may be compared, therefore, with so many telephones into which the material outer world is ever speaking, the nerve-fibres are mere transmitters, and the brain-cells at the other end are the telephonic ear-pieces, at which the mind listens to the far-off call. Now, suppose that in a certain town, whenever the occupant of a certain house rang up or spoke to the central Telephone Office, he always asked to be connected with a certain other house; and suppose this went on for

years, the attendant would at last become so accustomed to do the same thing for his client that as soon as he was called up his deft and knowing fingers would establish the connection without waiting for a definite request. This is as good an illustration as we can devise of the law of habit.

In all of us there are many so-called automatic actions ; such, for instance, as the heart's beat, breathing, digestion, and the like, which do not require the interference or attention of the mind and will. They go forward day and night. It is sufficient that there is the need of fresh air, and the assimilation of food, and the processes are attended to. There are also many actions which we perform daily and have become almost automatic, which were not originally or necessarily so. They are the result of our nervous energy having made, in the first instance, a pathway through the brain, at the instigation of the will, and having trodden it so often, that there is now no need for us to direct and control it by a conscious act of volition. To return to our illustration : the nerve-centre has been so often asked to connect the nerve-fibre, which receives a certain impression, with other nerve-centres and fibres, that the connection has been

made, and works almost unconsciously and immediately, without the interposition of the will.

In this way we are saved an enormous expenditure of time and thought. With what ease we wash our hands, and fasten our buttons, and tie our knots ! But when first we did these things, as children, how long we fumbled over them, and how clumsy we were ! What has made the difference, except that habit has so concatenated the nerve-fibres that the appeal of the outward requirement immediately produces swift and easy responsive muscular movements. The direction of the will and attention of the mind were necessary at first, but afterwards the process was left to take its own course, and now our higher thought-centres know hardly anything about these minor matters. Few of us could indeed tell off-hand which sock, or shoe, or trousers-leg we put on first. So of the questions, Which valve of the shutters opens first ? Which way does my door hang ? We cannot tell the answer, but our hand never makes a mistake. No one can describe the order in which he brushes his hair or teeth ; yet it is likely that the order is pretty well fixed with us all. In the same way knitting appears altogether mechanical,

and the knitter keeps up her knitting even while she reads or is engaged in lively conversation. This is because the feeling of the needle-points and the cotton produces certain actions at the nerve-centres, which produce in turn definite motions of the muscles that regulate her fingers.

"Habit a second nature! Habit is ten times nature," said the Duke of Wellington, who had seen the effect of daily drill end in making men obey the voice of command with almost automatic precision. "There is a story," says Professor Huxley, "which is credible enough, though it may not be true, of a practical joker who, seeing a discharged veteran carrying home his dinner, suddenly called out, 'Attention!' whereupon the man instantly brought his hands down and lost his mutton and potatoes in the gutter. The drill had been thorough, and its effects had become embodied in the man's nervous structure. Similarly, riderless cavalry horses on many a battlefield have been seen to come together and go through their customary evolutions at the sound of the bugle-call."

The period before twenty is the most plastic time of our life, and the easiest for the connecting of the various nerve-fibres. After thirty, the character sets like plaster. The great object,

then, in our young life should be to make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy, and to bring our will and moral nature to hasten the work of making automatic and habitual as many useful actions as we can. Amongst these we may class the habit of early rising, the unalterable practice of taking our Bible in hand and falling on our knees before we leave our room, the daily walk or exercise, the regular habit of the body, the application to our studies or business in the early hours of the day, and such like.

¶ It may be that some of you are conscious that already, for want of attention and the exercise of moral power, you have glided into bad habits which are beginning to hold you as in a vice. If you are to attain your full maturity, these must be ruthlessly set aside and better ones substituted. But in this matter there is nothing better than to adopt the advice given by Professor Bain in his chapter on Moral Habits.

For the Abandonment of an Old Habit, or the Acquisition of a New One, be sure to Arm Yourself with as many Strong and Decided Motives as possible

Recapitulate to yourself all the possible reasons that point away from the old towards the new.

Put yourself in the way of every condition which will help and encourage you in the right way. Make engagements which are incompatible with the old. Put fences across the track which you have trodden over the grass. Take a public pledge if the case allows. Above all, trust the Good Spirit to work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.

When crossing the ocean from Jamaica a few months ago, I was startled in the early morning by hearing an electric bell ringing as if its heart would break. After bearing it for some time, I called my bedroom steward and asked him what was the matter. "Oh," he said, "there's no accounting for that bell; when it starts ringing, there's no stopping it. I'd advise you, sir, to reckon yourself deaf to it." "That's all very well," said I, "for *you*, but it's easier said than done." However, when he had left me, I reflected that he had given a good piece of advice, which was applicable to other matters than the ringing of a deranged bell. Old habits will sometimes ring within our nature to the detriment of our peace of mind; and we have so often obeyed them that there seems no option than to obey them still. At such times it requires considerable effort, and more than effort, earnest

and fervent reliance upon the help of God, to reckon ourselves deaf. There is sound philosophy therefore, in the words of Paul, "Reckon yourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God."

When once You have Started, see that no Exception occur, till the New Habit is securely rooted

Each lapse is like letting fall a ball of string which you have been carefully winding up ; a single slip undoes more than a great many turns will wind up again. Continuous training is of the greatest possible moment in making the nervous system act with infallible precision. In such a process it is most important never to lose a battle. Every gain on the wrong side undoes the effect of many conquests on the right.

It is wonderful how soon a desire will die of inanition if it is never fed. I have seen this exemplified scores of times in people who have come out of prison and have made up their minds to abstain from drink, from the use of narcotics, or even from the opium habit. There may be a sharp period of suffering, but every day that passes after the first break makes the battle easier, until the very desire for that which had

been the root of all the sorrow of the past life ceases to cry for satisfaction.

If a lapse should come to the believer in Christ, he at once goes to Him with tears and confession ; he never rests till he is conscious of forgiveness and restoration ; he seeks for the strengthening of His purpose by the infusion of divine grace. Then, as the consciousness strengthens that all things are possible to him that believeth, since faith is the connecting link with the power of His Saviour, he returns to the fray knowing that He can do all things in Him that strengtheneth him. "Not I, but Christ in me," is the solution of every difficulty, the winning of every fight.

Seize the Earliest Chance of Acting on any Resolution You Make, and on every Emotional Prompting You may Experience

A tendency to act only becomes solidified into a habit in proportion to the uninterrupted frequency with which we act upon it ; and there is no such time for action as when the impression is fresh. When a fine glow of feeling is allowed to evaporate without leaving practical fruit, it is worse than a chance lost ; it operates so as positively to hinder future resolutions and emotions.

No man is more contemptible than the sentimentalist dreamer, who spends his time in a golden haze of dreams, but never embodies them in a manly concrete deed. If we glow for an abstract good, but practically ignore some concrete case, we resemble the Russian lady who wept over the sorrows of fictitious personages in the play, whilst her coachman was freezing to death on the box-seat outside! We should never allow ourselves to be swept and energised by a strong and good emotion without expressing it somehow in some action. "Let the expression," says our Professor slyly, "be the least thing in the world—speaking genially to one's grandmother, or giving up one's seat in a car—if nothing more heroic offers."

The closing paragraph I must quote entire. "The physiological study of mental conditions is thus the most powerful ally of hortatory ethics. The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells us, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our character in the wrong way. Could the young but realise how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own destiny, good

or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue, or of vice, leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time.' Well, we may not count it, but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the minute molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up, to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral sphere by so many separate acts of prayer and faith. Let no youth have any anxiety as to the upshot of his education whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy and careful of each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation."

The other day I had to address some 2000 children, and fearing lest I might fail to secure their attention, I called a lad of twelve into my pulpit, and proceeded to wind around him a long

knotted entanglement, first cotton, then string, next twine, next small cord, afterwards rope, ending with a chain and padlock. Of course he could break the cotton, but this led swiftly to the string, and this to a stronger, and so on, till at last the clasp of the padlock made him fast, my prisoner, "bound by the cords of his habits." And I think those boys and girls will never forget the lesson of the inevitable connection between thoughts—acts—habits—character—destiny.

When one reaches middle age, a sense of loneliness oppresses the soul. You look around for those who commenced life with you, who were in your class in the school, roamed with you over the downs in hare-and-hounds, searched for geological specimens along the cliffs, or played in the great school games. Where are they? But you are apt to look in vain, so far as the majority are concerned. The majority of the horses that have come back out of the charge are riderless, and the empty saddles tell a lamentable story of wreckage and ruin, of disaster and death. Where is the keen and brilliant intellect which no knot could baffle and no prize escape? Where is the gay, laughter-making companion whom no disappointment

could daunt or sadden for more than the first five minutes? Where is the captain of the cricket eleven, or of the football team? You look for them in vain. The school-fellow and the class-mate, the clerk who shared the same bedroom in the big house of business or sat at the next desk, the students of your year, the men who seemed destined to a great career, and of whom tutors and examiners prognosticated such great things! With what nervous care then ought we to give ourselves to the important work of character-building. However brilliant our genius, or multiplied our natural endowments, they will avail us nothing unless based on a strong substratum of character. However fair the house, it will fall unless it is built on the rock of moral worth, which ultimately is the foundation which God has laid in Christ. Character gives staying-power. Character gives weight to one's words and permanence to one's acts. Character secures the confidence of those who employ us, the respect of those above us, the love of those on our level, the loyalty of those beneath. Character is the guinea-stamp on the gold, the signature at the edge of the portrait, the ring of the genuine coin, the accent of the speech

of the New Jerusalem, which is found only on the lips of the true citizen. Therefore, with unwavering resolve, let us seek for *character*, CHARACTER, CHARACTER, as it is suggested by the impressions of the Divine Spirit, and wrought out by habit to act, and act to character.

CHAPTER VIII

ON MAKING THE BEST OF THINGS

GOETHE tells us of a fisherman who lived with his family in a poor hut on a desolate shore. Privation and penury were their constant experience, though borne with remarkable patience and resolution. One day, however, on his way across the shingle, after a night of fruitless toil, he lit on what appeared to be a discarded lamp—perhaps washed up from a wreck. Taking it home to his wife, she managed to fit it up with oil and wick, and presently a tiny glow flickered on the rude furniture around. Suddenly beneath the wild radiance a marvellous change took place, slowly but certainly it began to turn to silver, and before an hour had passed, the hut with all its contents was a fabric of solid silver. That lamp is within the reach of all who have learned the art which one of the greatest on the page of History showed himself proficient in, when he said, “I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.”

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To be content with what life brings because nothing can happen outside the permission of infinite Wisdom and Love ; to accept stern and searching discipline with unmurmuring resignation ; to make the best of awkward and undesirable things—these are the marks of a royal and beautiful soul.

* * * * *

Make the Best of a Sleepless Night

You have been kept awake by the catawauling of a dozen household pets, discussing their grievances under the moon, or by raging toothache, or by the baby who has woke up when every one else is endeavouring to go to sleep, or by the mice which have scampered round and round your room. Now, be careful, when you come down to breakfast. Remember that there are five or six at the table, whose day will be largely influenced by your behaviour. There is no need to say that you have had a good night, when you haven't ; but there is no necessity on the other hand, to dwell too largely on your discomfort. Remember how contagious our emotions are. Without meaning to do it, we unconsciously quicken or retard our neighbour's heart-beats, and affect his entire circulatory system.

“One topic,” says Emerson, “is peremptorily forbidden to all rational mortals, namely, their distempers. If you have not slept, or if you have slept, or if you have the headache, or leprosy, or thunderstroke, I beseech you by all the angels to hold your peace, and not pollute the morning. Come into the azure, and enjoy the day.”

That was a beautiful resolution of Sir Walter Scott, piously recorded in his Journal, that when he was in a state of depression, he must labour hard to conceal it from all the rest in the house, because, as he thought, it was bad enough for him to bear it, without inflicting it on others.

When the night is over, it is over. We cannot make it better or worse. Why should its weary hours be allowed to cast their dark shadows over others that succeed. These at least may as well be bright as depressed, yea much more so.

The next best thing, by an effort of the will, is to arrest the further spread of our pain and weariness, and by a diversion of our thought to create a happier, merrier mood, which shall act on all the house as a shaft of sunshine.

* * * * *

Make the Best of an Accident

One of the tenderest descriptions of how to do this is given by Ralph Connor in the *Sky-Pilot*, when the little minister tells the high-spirited girl, crippled for life, the story of the making of a canôn in the prairies of the Wild West. The fury of the elements, the seeth of the roaring torrents, and the rifts of earthquake cut deep gashes into the heart of the earth, and for a while the naked wound is horrid to the sight, but Nature begins to carpet it with verdure, and festoon it with strings of creepers, till presently it is filled with the loveliest flowers, scenting the air with their fragrance, and attracting the lazy hum of myriads of honey-bees. The girl caught the suggestion, and from being wild, restless, and complaining, became strong and sweet, and thoughtful for others—only anxious that the highest possible results for herself and them might accrue from what seemed an altogether hopeless calamity.

It was my great pleasure to spend a few hours once in the company of a refined and cultured woman, who from her birth was deprived of arms and hands. Many a one would have settled down into confirmed depression at so terrible a handicapping in the race of life. Not so with this brave

soul at least. Encouraged by her noble mother she resolved to do by her feet what others do by their hands ; and by dint of long and patient care she has succeeded in becoming a portrait-painter of no small merit—so much so that she is able to contribute largely to the education and maintenance of her brothers and sisters.

Helpless invalids, chronic cases of inveterate and life-long suffering, cripples from birth—to all such, there is but one advice—Don't brood too sadly at your deprivations ; consider and be glad for what remains ; look around your life, and somewhere in its dark dungeon, you will espy a rope hanging within your reach, by which you too may climb up into the bright sunny air. Do not say that you have looked for it in vain. It is not possible that you have been left without one strand of comfort, one means of egress and escape. Look again, with the freshly lighted torch of faith and hope !

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Make the Best of a Hard Sphere

If ever there was a hard sphere, it was St. Agatha's, at Landport, when Father Dolling and his three sisters settled there in the autumn of 1885. His premises were situated in the midst

of fried-fish shops, gin-shops, and houses of ill-fame, and pervaded with the odorous stench of slaughter-houses. In that district he said, sin was no shame; the conduct and language of the people was free and unrestrained to a degree, which at least relieved the town of any accusation of being either respectable or dull. But, how admirably he made the best of it, and how magnificently his environment elicited all that was noblest in his character. In the ten years that he was at St. Agatha's he raised £56,000, built a new church, waged uncompromising war with the sins that made Portsmouth "a sink of iniquity," and exulted in having reformed thieves, rescued fallen women, emigrated young men and women from their evil surroundings, and manifested that geniality and humaneness of soul, which in spite of his High Church proclivities, procured for him the warm sympathy of the dissenters.

There is a great deal of restlessness and dissatisfaction among those whose lot is cast in sterile and difficult neighbourhoods. Let not such be too eager for removal to happier and more likely localities. Life in the suburbs is not unmitigated bliss. Better far would it be to extract Edens out of the wilderness, and to make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. Whilst

we are looking longingly to the mirage on the far horizon, we may be missing the chances that lie around us of making gardens of the Lord.

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Make the Best of an Unfortunate Marriage

In "The Children of the Ghetto," Mr. Zangwill tells a beautiful story of an aged Jewish couple, far from sympathy with each other, and far from happy in the first years of their married life, who finally found each other out, and fell mutually in love. What a beautiful moral is here. All marriages are not happy, though I believe there are many happier ones in the world than we suppose—for we only hear of the unhappy ones; and even those that begin happily are often overcast and their even tenor arrested by the interference of friends, the malice of enemies, the irruption of losses, misfortunes, and unforeseen catastrophes. But where hearts are brave, where the chattering voices of the world are excluded, and where each makes the best of the best in each, the result is often more satisfactory than the kindest of well-wishers could have anticipated.

If only Carlyle and his wife had acted on this principle, the world would have been saved some heart-rending revelations, which have smirched

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the fair names of two or three, whom otherwise we should have canonised. It was unpardonable of him, when his wife told him that she had, at one time, almost resolved to leave him, to retort, "Well, I do not know that I should have missed you, I was very busy just then with Cromwell"; but she did not improve matters by comparing life with him to keeping a madhouse. Mrs. Carlyle's nervous prostration must have been hard to bear, and it may have led her to imagine things which did not exist, but it is impossible to explain away the passage in his diary referring to "the blue marks which in a fit of passion he had once inflicted on her arms."

It may be that your husband does not take the same interest in you as once, hardly notices the care with which you dress to please him, sits at the table without uttering a word, and goes quickly out without saying where he is going. You have said a hundred times to yourself that he is ill, or that business is unusually trying, and that he will soon be his old self. But it is a long time now since you saw the old smile on his face, the old light in his eyes. Take care or you may make the bad worse, and may make the worst of this. Don't speak of your grief to others, who may make scandal out of it, which like the duck-

weed, will choke the waters of your life : above all, don't neglect your personal appearance, your table, your home, and allow all that was pretty and sweet to become bedraggled and slatternly ; and whatever you do, or don't do, don't abandon yourself to drink, with which many a woman has endeavoured to drown her sorrow. All these things only serve to aggravate the case, and give a reason for that neglect which your husband is beginning to manifest.

Or it may be that your wife is drifting into a fatal intimacy with one who enjoyed your home and hospitality, and was as a brother to you, and you know that her apparent love for you is no longer spontaneous but forced. You, too, may make the worst or the best of this. God allows such tragedies to invade the lives of men, that they may have the grandest opportunities of victory. Clive's victories at Plassy and Arcot were the more remarkable because gained in the face of overwhelming numbers, and when his soldiers were in desperate need of rest, ammunition, and food. Be brave, and true, and strong ; your Guinevere will be at your feet presently, ennobled and sanctified by your high honour and tender comparison. Never let yourself descend below your loftiest ideal. Her sin will not justify you in

descending to the hog's level, and trying to satisfy your hunger with husks. Good at last shall conquer evil, and love be victor in the strife with hate.

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Make the Best of Family Trials

They will come, and they are hard to bear. Ah, those skeletons in our homes, they will not stay in the cupboards, but have a knack of stepping out, and sitting beside us, when the house is still, and we are busy with our meals or trying to get a nap. They make me think of the old stories of the Knight's armour, in which their departed masters were accustomed to clothe themselves, and descend at dusk from their place on the walls of baronial palaces. But we must not let them rob us of all the joy and peace of life. It will not do to be ever brooding over them, and talking of them, or cowering before their menace. We cannot ignore them ; we must not run away from them ; we are meant to get meat out of the eater and sweetness from the strong. But how to do it is a lesson that needs as careful learning as the hardest ever set us in our old school-days. We must mix grace and gumption with such circumstances, as Turner mixed brains with his colours, to produce those wonderful effects.

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One of the most touching illustrations of this is given in the life-story of Charles Lamb, who took into his home his afflicted elder sister to be the cherished companion of his life. What a daily agony it must have been for his nervous and sensitive spirit to watch lest the dreaded symptoms of mania should return; and may he not have sometimes trembled before the fear lest he should be assailed by the hand which had been raised against their mother. Yet the brother mourned during the days of her enforced absence, and welcomed the happy day of her return with genuine and child-like pleasure. Nowhere on the page of history is there a more exquisite instance of how love can make the best of a very sad and difficult lot.



Make the Best of Getting Old

The age belongs to the young—young journalists in the editor's chair, young politicians in the senate, young ministers in the pulpit, young men in the Exchange—and the elderly are reduced to the fate usually allotted to back numbers, unless they resemble that friend of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was "a stripling at seventy."

It is a sad moment when for the first time a man

hears one porter say to another "carry the old gent's bag," when the leaders are not given to us to write, when our sketches are hardly acknowledged, and when our party makes an important move without ascertaining our views or asking our advice. It is hard to be left out in the cold, hard to give precedence to a youngster who cannot do as well with both hands as the veteran can do with his little finger, hard to be ignored.

This experience is very galling, and beneath it a man is apt to become a cynic. The wine of life turns to vinegar, and the old hero of many a well-fought field is apt to become a critic. This is making the worst of our years, for criticism hurts the soul of the critic more than it does the target of his criticisms.

It may be a relief to hurt your vanity, my friend, to shoot your Liliputian darts at your Gulliver, but you inflict infinite harm upon yourself. You will lose your faculty for admiration. Your sense and taste will become too blunt to appreciate what is really beautiful and good. The sacred, pathetic, and heroic in the current life of your age will awaken no enthusiasm in you. Your nearest and dearest may be unaware of the atrophy which is in progress beneath your bland and smiling exterior, but in the depths of your

soul, disintegration and corruption will be at work.

To quote Amiel's words : " How malign, infectious, and unwholesome is that attitude of ironical contemplation which corrodes and demolishes everything ; that mocking pitiless temper which holds itself aloof from every personal duty and every vulnerable affection, and cares only to understand without committing itself to action. *Criticism* becomes a habit, a fashion, and a system, means the destruction of moral energy, of faith, and of all spiritual grace." Too often a man whose age is endangering his prominence becomes a merciless critic, that his venomous stings, his biting words, may at least secure an unenviable notoriety. From such a fate our worst enemies might ask that we should be preserved.

There is a more excellent way. History abounds with the record of men who have taken up new studies in their old age. Cato did not learn Greek till he was an old man. At the age of sixty, Robert Hall began to acquire Italian, that he might be able to read Dante in the original. John Knox did not learn Hebrew till he was close on fifty. Goethe began the study of Oriental literature when he was in his sixty-fourth year. These are immortal examples of the freshness and virility

of which the mind is capable : and nothing will more surely keep a man in living touch with his times than to be able to speak intelligently and fully of any subject which is engaging the attention of the world around us.

But there is a still more excellent way—the habit of constant thought and care for others. “For,” as Jacob Behmen says, “this is the true path for man, namely, to die from himself, and in all his beginnings and designs to bring his desire unto the will of God.” The man who is always willing to sink himself, and to be ignored, if only he can promote the well-being and happiness of all about him, is the last man that men can afford to ignore. Here, as everywhere, the maxim is true, that those who seek lose, and those who are content to lose, save.



Make the Best of Your Limitations

“Remember my bonds,” said the Apostle. How their iron must have entered his soul. But so far from repining against his hard fate, he bravely faced it, and rejoiced that his imprisonment had opened the doors to souls with whom otherwise he could not have come in contact. He rejoiced that his bonds were known in all Cæsar’s house-

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hold, and that many had been encouraged by his example to confess Christ even to the last extremity.

How beautiful it is to find John Bunyan covering the walls of Bedford gaol with frescoes, the immortal colours of which can never fade, and writing books on which hundreds of thousands have been nourished. But how well he had learned the secret of making the best of things, as it is set forth in his own striking style: "Our safety is in God. Commit the keeping of your souls unto Him. Satan can make a jail look as black as hell, and the loss of a few stools and chairs as bad as the loss of so many bags of gold. There is in God a sufficiency of power, to them that have laid their soul at His feet, to be preserved. God can make fear flee away, and place heavenly confidence in its room."

Sometime, when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars for evermore have set,
The things, which our weak judgments here have spurned,
The things, o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,
Will flash before us, out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue;
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,
And how, what seems reproof, was love most true.
But not to-day: then be content, poor heart!
God's plans, like lilies, pure and white unfold,

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We must not tear the close-set leaves apart,

Time will reveal the calices of gold ;

And if through patient faith, we reach the land

Where tired feet, with sandals loosed, may rest,

Then we shall clearly know and understand,

I think that we will say, "God knew the best."

In that faith, therefore, and hope, let us go through life, making the best of all that seems most severe and inexplicable. The hardest nut contains the sweetest kernel. The ugly duckling will prove to be the swan. The rough packing-case hides the rarest and costliest gift.

CHAPTER IX

LEISURE HOURS

THE busiest workers must have leisure. The Apostle John is said to have amused himself with the playful fondness of a favourite bird, and to have justified himself by saying that the bow must not always be kept strung. For the same reason the poet Cowper had his hares. But there are widely different ways of spending the hours snatched from the strenuous work of our life. Some spend them in sheer indolence ; they lie on their backs or sit on the beach throwing pebbles into the water. Others spend them in such intense exertion that they get back to their stated work utterly exhausted in mind and body, and unable to take up their duties with any freshness or alertness. Others, again, occupy themselves with reading and places of amusement of such a nature that their minds are befouled and smutted over with moral filth, than which nothing more certainly impairs the vigour of the soul.

Each of these practices is open to grave objections, and is a sad waste of time, besides failing of the true elixir of enjoyment.

It is undeniable that we recreate ourselves better by changing our employment than by mere idleness. Cicero used to say that even our leisure hours should have their useful employment. I have found in my own experience that nothing rests me more, than to do something else, as different as possible from what has been exercising my mind. If you have been reading theology for a couple of hours, turn to history or biography. If you are tired of reading, take up your correspondence. If you feel jaded with thinking out some subject, begin to organise, or plunge into some vigorous exercise, or visit the picture-galleries and art-museums. Divert the stream of nervous energy from brain-cells that show signs of weariness into others which have not as yet been taxed, and you will be surprised to find how long you can work and how well you are able to sleep.

On the whole, it is better to spend four hours on two or three different subjects than to spend all that time on one subject. Of course some of us need three or four hours before we can become thoroughly engrossed in our scheme, or on fire

with it, and in such cases it would be suicidal to abandon our quest. We must continue to seek for the goodly pearls until we find them ; but more often, and for most, it is better to turn from one subject to another as soon as one becomes conscious of exhaustion.

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**We must See to it, however, that our Leisure
Hours are Times of Recreation,**

that we may be better fitted for the stern duties of life. Work while you work, and that you may do so, play while you play. Do not seek amusement as an end in itself, or it will pall on you ; but seek it that your mind may be clearer, your brain rested, your power of attention quickened, and your whole nature reinvigorated. Send the red blood into the exhausted brain-cells, as the ocean tides up tidal rivers. Divert the nervous energy to another string of the violin, that those which have been worn thin may have a chance of recuperation.

For purposes of recreation, there is nothing, so far as men are concerned, better than our great English games — football, cricket, lawn-tennis, golf ; and, in America, base-ball. Every young man should be a fair hand at one of these, and

be able to play well enough to enjoy himself. Saturday afternoons should be sacredly devoted to violent exercise, which should throw the body into a violent perspiration, with the hot bath and the thorough change of clothes as a finish. The professional player and the sporting man are intruding too largely into our football and cricket fields, but surely there is no good reason why the sports which have helped to make our race what it is should be abandoned to either. There are, indeed, many reasons why Christian young men should count it a pleasure and duty to take up athletics and keep them pure and sweet for the generations that are following on. It would be a national disaster if our playgrounds were given over to the devil.

I know quite well the objections that may be raised, and if it be true in your individual case, that the men of your team or eleven are so vicious in their life and speech that you cannot spend your leisure hours with them without being contaminated ; and if, moreover, you have done your best to secure improvement, but in vain ; and if you feel that you cannot continue to expose yourself to their society without hurt to your own nature—of course you have no alternative than to come out. In that case Christ's words must be ful-

filled : it is better to enter into life maimed. But it is much the better policy to continue in the group of young fellows with whom it is most natural to share your leisure hours. It is a fine thing when a Christian man has the chance to say : " If you want me to be your bowler, your goal-keeper, your captain, you must pay my price—no swearing, no unseemly talking, no betting—then I am your man " ; and what a triumph it is when such a challenge is met by the reply : " All right, old man, we can't do without you ; come along." Endeavour to be so fine an athlete that men may be prepared to pay you any price to retain you among them. When W. P. Lockhart, the famous Liverpool cricketer, became a Christian, he gave his eleven a supper, told them what had happened, and made some such speech as I have described, with the result that not only did they enthusiastically retain him as their leader, but several of them became religious.

What has been so far said of men is, of course, equally true, *mutatis mutandis*, of women. It is a very hopeful sign for the future of our race to see how English girls are emulating young men in healthy athleticism. So long as outdoor exercise is not sought as an end in itself, but carefully subordinated to prepare for the main object of

life, there is no reason for pessimism. The future Waterloo, as the past, will still be won on our playing-grounds.

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It is a considerable assistance, both to ourselves and others, amid the strain of ordinary living, *to maintain a bright and happy bearing*. What a blessing it is to have a breezy, happy disposition, which goes through the world as Henry Ward Beecher was wont to walk through the streets adjacent to his home at Brooklyn, his pockets full of sweets for the delectation of the youngsters. There is no necessary connection between grace and gloom. There is no reason why Christians should not sing as blithely, whistle as light-heartedly, laugh as heartily, and enjoy themselves as thoroughly as any of their companions. Let us set them the example of pure unadulterated happiness, in which there is no regret, no wry taste afterwards, nothing to leave a soil on another's life.

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It is good that *we should each have a hobby*, to which we may turn in our leisure hours. Surely we may say in this connection, "Blessed is the man who has a hobby, he will never find his leisure hang heavily on his hands." What is a

hobby ? It is not easy to define ; but I hazard the following : it is an interest or pursuit which is not obligatory, but which we look upon as the business of our leisure hours. With one, this hobby is photography ; with another, a collection of natural objects, such as birds' eggs, fossils, marine or fresh-water animals, mosses, ferns, or moths ; with another, coins, or stamps, or old rare books ; with another, it is a mechanical skill in wood-carving, fretwork, or cabinet-making. In the summer evenings you see the hobbyist pursuing his quest in the lanes or by the ponds. To some, the annual holiday is principally anticipated because of the chances it will give of acquiring a new set of photographs or sketches. Some are always looking into the boxes of second-hand book-shops, with the delicious expectation of coming on some rare find. But the cultivator of a hobby has always an object which gives value and zest to leisure hours. And how much can be done, if there is something to turn to, as soon as the work-bell rings us off and before it rings us on again !

A visitor to an insane asylum came on a lunatic sitting on a desk, and hitting it as though it were a steed. " What are you doing ? " he said ; " riding a horse ? "

"No," was the quick reply, "I'm riding my hobby!"

"What's the difference between a horse and a hobby?" the visitor asked.

"You can get off a horse, but you can't get off a hobby," was the insane man's sane repartee.

But perhaps there is no real disadvantage in this, for we need to become so enamoured with our hobby that we turn to it with ever fresh and increasing fascination. Mr. Watts, the celebrated painter, tells of the change that passed over the lives of village youths when under his tuition; they acquired the art of wood-carving. From being loutish, lounging ne'er-do-weels, hanging around the doors of the public-house, they were transformed into self-respecting workmen, with a real appreciation of art and considerable faculty for producing artistic work. Mark Rutherford has drawn a pathetic picture of a man who was saved from madness, from the agony of thoughts that foreboded irreparable disaster, by a sudden taste for entomology. He became attracted by a butterfly, and a curiosity grew up in him to know more about a creature so fragile and so wonderful. This curiosity drew him out of himself, and to his surprise he found life once more becoming interesting. That wise mentor of young

men, Mr. F. A. Atkins, in connection with this, adds the following pertinent remark : " I have often said that most of the sins of youth spring from inability to use rightly the leisure hour. The leisure hour is the most perilous of hours. But this peril any youth can avoid if he is only sensible enough to provide himself with some pursuit which develops his tastes and enlarges his intellectual horizon ; and who of us cannot do that ? "

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The great difficulty which perplexes every fresh generation of earnest people is, *where to draw the line*. Where may we go, or not go, for amusement and relaxation ; what may we do, or not do ; and what is the underlying principle by which we can guide ourselves ?

There are some things which are clearly innocent and right, others as clearly wrong and harmful. Concerning these we need but little help, because we can decide for ourselves what course we ought to follow. But there is the border-land between them, the *chiaroscuro*, the debatable territories concerning which even good people differ. What attitude shall we adopt towards these ? This difficulty agitated the Church at Corinth in the old centuries, when Christianity was young, as it agitates us to-day. It was

brought before the attention of the Apostle Paul for such solution as, under the guidance of God's Spirit, he could afford.

Let us understand the precise position of those Corinthian Christians that we may see how closely it approximated to our own. Dean Farrar tells us they were daily living in the broad and busy streets of their native city, in sight and hearing of everything that could quench spiritual aspirations and kindle carnal desires. The gay, common life pressed on them so closely, the splendour of Christ's advent seemed so far away. Might they not mingle with the heathen festivals, join in the gay processions, watch the dancing-girls, or take part in the fun and frolic of the careless city—and yet keep their hearts true to Christ? Must they only live on the heavenly manna, and never taste the onion, leek, and garlic of Egypt? Were they never again to drink of the foaming cup of earthly pleasure, or mingle in the dance, the feast, or pantomimic show?

In answer to these difficulties the apostle lays down two principles, which contain between them the light by which we may be enabled to pick *our* pathway through the world, to teach us how to act with regard to the thorny questions that agitate our consciences.

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me ; *but I will not be brought under the power of any.*" (1 Cor. vi. 12.)

"All things are lawful ; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful ; *but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's good.* (1 Cor. x. 23, 24.)

**First. We must not be Enslaved by any Form of
Pleasure**

The Apostle said that he refused to be brought under the power of anything, however lawful it might be in itself. It is marvellous how easy it is to become enslaved by forms of pleasure which in themselves are perfectly innocent and natural. A man may become so intoxicated with the love of golf, cricket, or football ; and a woman so infatuated with lawn-tennis or bicycling, as to be spoiled for all the practical business of life. At the call of their favourite pastime they will, at any moment, postpone the most urgent and important engagements. It seems as though they can think, and dream, and plan for nothing else.

When this is the case, whether the form of amusement be one of those healthy out-of-door

pursuits already named, or the more hurtful absorption in the theatre, the ball, or the music-hall ; when what should be only the means to an end becomes itself the end ; when we awake to realise that our best energies are being subtly withdrawn from the serious business of life and dissipated in the flotsam and jetsam that float on the surface of the waves ; when our whole soul is engrossed in the handling of a bat, the striking of a ball, and the swiftness of a machine, it is time to pull up and consider which way we are drifting.

Surely life was given for higher purposes than these ; and if it be pleaded that healthy pastimes promote the health and agility of the body, still we must reply that at the best the body is only the organ and instrument of the soul. It must be vigorously kept under and made subservient to those lofty purposes which the soul conceives in its secret place and executes in life's arena. Some such line of reasoning seems to have led the celebrated singer, known as Jenny Lind, to leave the stage. An English friend once found her sitting on the steps of a bathing-machine on the sands, with a Lutheran Bible open on her knee, and looking out into the glory of a sunset, which was shining over the waters. As they talked, their conversation drew near to the inevitable question,

“ Oh, Madame Goldschmidt, how was it that you ever came to abandon the stage at the very height of your success ? ” “ When every day,” was the quiet answer, “ it made me think less of this (laying a finger on the Bible), and nothing at all of that (pointing to the sunset), what else could I do ? The Bible and the Sunset—each of them is closed and barred to those who cannot bring to them a certain spiritual tone, and this tone is impossible to preserve among the distractions of an actress’s life.”

I have known of one or two who were devoted to athletics and were great adepts at manly games, who, on their conversion, were compelled to break right away from them, not because they were wrong in themselves, but because they had obtained such a masterful hold over their thoughts and habits. Though these things were as natural and apparently necessary as the right hand or the right eye, there was no alternative but to cut them away, that the soul might find its equilibrium and be able to enter into the fullest life.

I pray you, therefore, to look into your life, and if there be anything in it which is perfectly justifiable and harmless in itself, but which in your case exacts too masterful a sway and occupies too much of your time, dare, in God’s strength,

to put it aside for the present, even if afterwards you should resume it in moderation ; and if this is true for what is innocent and harmless, how much more will it apply to all that is questionable and pernicious.

Next. We must Have an Eye to Others

There are forms of amusement in which we cannot indulge without putting a stumbling-block and an occasion for falling in another's way. As we take part in them, we not only do not build up, but we destroy the work of God. We have no right to jeopardise the eternal interests of those who copy our example or who minister to our amusement.

Paul affirmed that, so far as he was concerned, he felt at perfect liberty to accept an invitation to a meal in the precincts of an idol temple, but that he would not go, lest some fellow Christians, overborne by the weight of his example, but not fully persuaded in their own minds, might go also, and so their weak conscience become seriously injured.

Our attitude towards certain places of amusement and pastimes should be determined by the consideration whether we wish those that take

their cue from our example to follow us thither. What effect will our conduct have on our children, on our young brothers and sisters, and on others who are not as strong as we are to resist the pernicious influences which may be associated with this or the other form of amusement. Let us remember that young steps are behind us, and though as experienced mountaineers we might take the more precipitous route, for their sakes let us follow the safer and more easy track.

Besides, we must consider whether the effect of some system which gives us pleasure may not be in the highest degree deleterious in its effect on those who minister to our laughter or love of spectacular display. Have we any right, for our pleasure, to hold out baits of money to young girls or children or others, to jeopardise body and soul, and spend their days on the edge of a precipice. "All things edify not," said the Apostle, "we must seek not only our own, but another's well-being." In this connection the statement made some time ago by Mr. Clement Scott, the well-known dramatic critic, deserves to be very carefully weighed. "It is nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession."

I am not able, from personal knowledge, to say

how much truth there is in Mr. Scott's statement, but even if it were true in the cases of half or even a third of those employed, should we be justified in contributing our money as a lure or bribe to entice them to the brink of perdition ; it being a grave question whether they could look over the eddying path without losing their foothold !

Whatever Cain said to the contrary, there can be no doubt that each man is the keeper of his fellow man ; he must not, therefore, destroy those for whom Christ died, but be a neighbour to help and rescue them, gladly foregoing what might yield a passing pleasure, rather than run the risk of causing one of Christ's little ones to fall.

There are two other texts which may still further help us in finding principles to guide us in determining our line of conduct :

“ Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Col. iii. 17.)

“ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God*. Give no occasion for stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the Church of God.” (1 Cor. x. 31, 32.)

The *name* of the Lord Jesus is, of course, His *nature*. We must do nothing out of harmony

with the nature of our Master ; nothing which would grieve the holy nature, which has been begotten in us by the Holy Spirit ; nothing which the Lord Himself, were He on earth, would refuse to join in.

The *Glory of God*, also, must be our guiding star. We must not only avoid what would grieve the Spirit of God, but we must see to it that all we do should have a practical bearing on His being better understood and loved.

We must also remember that injunction about not giving occasion for others to stumble over what we may permit ourselves to do. (Rom. xiv, 22.)

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It was said in the olden story, that when the knight made the sign of the Cross over a poisoned drink, the glass shivered in his hand ; and it seems to me that we may easily test for ourselves whether any amusement or pleasure is likely to hurt us ; for whatever would indispose us to our religious duties, whatever we are unable to ask God's blessing on, whatever we cannot enter upon with the living sense of His presence and fellowship, is a poisonous draught of which we must beware.

There are three difficult questions which each of us must decide for himself, with the aid of the

principles already enunciated. First as to *billiards*. There is, in itself, no more harm in the billiard-table than in the bagatelle-board. But a friend of mine, a first-class player, tells me that his son may learn any game he likes except billiards, because of the terrific fascination of the game, which draws the most steady from their business, and because of the expense, it being generally the loser who has to pay for the use of the table. And since billiards are generally played in a public-house, it is perilous for those to join in this game who are at all liable to the fascination of strong drink.

The use of *cards*, also, must be faced at the beginning of life, and dealt with on principle. The great objection to games of cards is that almost invariably they lead to money-stakes. I have been told that even habitual card-players lose their zest for the game unless money passes ; and, of course, if we are adepts at card-playing we are liable to be drawn into society which is highly detrimental both to morals and pocket. There is a crew of professional gamblers who are continually crossing backwards and forwards on the transatlantic liners, for no other purpose than to make all they can at the card-tables of the smoking-saloon ; and more than once I have come

across most distressing stories of the way in which they have fleeced their unsuspecting victims. In one case a young man lost some hundreds of pounds, which his father had given him for the purpose of buying a ranch in the Far West, and was forced to borrow money from a fellow passenger to pay his fare home—a discredited man.

I want to put in a word for *draughts*. Few games need a more mathematical brain, a clearer head, or give more scope for ingenious methods. In several great cities, and notably in Liverpool, the game is much in vogue among the employes of the great business houses over an afternoon cup of coffee, and the effect has been most beneficial in the substitution of a game of draughts and a cup of coffee for the once prevalent phrase, “Will you come and have a drink?” Every educated person ought to be able to play chess, but this needs considerably more time and deliberation than most of us are able to give, and therefore it is both easier and more convenient to be able to play a good game of draughts. One further recommendation of this game is that it is never played for money.

We must not unchristianise those who do not see with us in these matters, nor impose restrictions on other consciences which they are unable

naturally to recognise. It is not our business to go through the world adding four or five commandments to the ten given from Sinai. Our aim should rather be to set up as the standard of appeal in all doubtful matters the opinions and wish of Jesus Christ, and to act as He would have acted or wish us to act. *His* must be the final verdict ; and happy is the disciple who will dare at all costs to follow the inner light.

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**On the Whole, the Simple and Natural Pleasures
are the Best**

The skate over the frozen pond rather than the dance in the over-heated ball-room ; the family party rather than the scenic representation of the theatre or music-hall ; the real rather than the artificial ; the day rather than midnight ; the dear ones of the home rather than the society of strangers.

Let every one do something well, be it to handle the bat or alpenstock, use the camera, glide over the ringing ice, or climb the beetling crag. None of these need a leave wry taste in the mouth, or cause a feeling of compunction as we look back, and each may be as the whetting of the scythe

amid the mower's toils, and the mending of nets torn by the midnight fishing-cruise.

And thus, at least, we shall all admit, that *some part of the leisure which comes to us should be devoted to the help of others*. One evening should be devoted to the Boys' Brigade, the club for youths or girls who otherwise would be entangled by the streets, to the mechanics' institute, or the visiting of the poor and sad. There is no pleasure in the world to be compared with that of doing good to others ; and nothing so absolutely refreshes the mind as to think for them. Remember what Christ said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," words which inspired the noble lines of Browning :

"Renounce joy for a fellow's sake !
That's joy beyond joy."

There is in my mind's eye, as I write, a young man whom I love, who has always a light upon his face and a happy look in his eyes. He is not well-to-do. His weekly earnings leave little margin after he has deducted the cost of necessary food and lodging, but he seems to me to be drinking the very wine of life. As soon as his daily work is done he is off to the club, where a group of grown-up lads will be awaiting him. Till he came

into their lives they absolutely knew of nothing better than the depths of hooliganism, living a wild banditti life in the streets, with the ditties of the lowest music-hall as their only music, and the manners of the lowest women as their code of morals. But since he has come in contact with them they have begun to acquire new ideals. Some are carving wood, some learning the piano—all are drilling and acquiring habits of obedience and discipline. Questions are being asked which show that the soul is awakening. They are rough as yet but the diamond is beginning to show. They are like children learning to walk, who meet with many a tumble. As for a place of worship and parsons, they mistrust all that ; and yet there is a wistfulness, an inquiry, an interest, which is very reassuring. Is not my friend repaid ? Is there not a new interest in his own life ? Is he not getting much more than he gives ? Is he not acquiring priceless training for his future, whatever it may be ? This, at least, is a method of spending leisure hours which is full of seed-sowing and has a promise of prolific harvests.

CHAPTER X

THE ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL LIFE

EACH of us, as we look at life in the earliest of its stages, is eager to make a success of it, and this is a laudable ambition. In our desire to avoid the ambition that overleaps itself, and ends disastrously, as Wolsey confessed when he lay a-dying in Leicester Abbey, men are sometimes lacking in that high purpose and intention of the soul, hidden perhaps in its depths, but very manifest in the unity and directness it imparts to all the years.

But if that ambition is to achieve its purpose, we must be sure of certain elementary conditions, which cannot be neglected with impunity, amongst which are the following :

A Great Ideal

When Mr. Gladstone died, Lord Salisbury delivered an eloquent eulogium on his late

political opponent, in the course of which he said that Mr. Gladstone was guided in all the steps he took, made the efforts he made, by a high moral ideal—"He sought the attainment of great ideals which issue from the greatest and purest moral considerations."

What is an ideal? I suppose it is a mental conception of character, after which we desire to conform our lives. It may have been suggested by some strong and noble figure on the page of history, by a public character of our own time, or by the glimpse which has been afforded through biography or by a brief interview into the inner life of a man, with whom we ourselves have had some dealings.

Sometimes this mental conception, or ideal, is a compilation. We have culled one trait from this man and another from that, till we have filled in our imaginary portraiture with an assemblage of qualities which were never found in any child of Adam, save in Him, who was full of grace and truth. You will remember the significant way in which the Apostle speaks of "the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ!"

But, from whatever source we borrow the colours with which we fill in the outlines of our conception, it is well to paint on the walls, not

of our private room, but of our imagination, these noble frescoes, for there is a perpetual education of the heart through the eye, and as we behold we become like. It is for this reason that I so earnestly urge on my young brothers the study of biography. For many years I fed my soul on the story of other men's lives. As I write I recall Stanley's Life of Dr. Arnold, the Memoirs of Augustus and Julius Hare, the Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson, the biographies of R. M. McCheyne and W. C. Burns, the Diary of Henry Martyn. There were many others, but these were my favourites, which I read and pondered continually. One would not accept Pope's dictum that the man's chief study should be man, but we are prepared to think that for young men it is impossible to find any study more helpful in the formation of character.

There are three rules, which should be borne in mind as the ideal assumes shape :

(1) *It should be so much beyond us as to task every power of our nature.* We should not be content to climb the low hills immediately near our home, but resolve to scale the lofty peaks of the distant mountain range, which seems like a layer of cumuli clouds, awaiting on the horizon the westering sun. The choice of ideal must be

something to strain our muscles, and task our strength ; something which our friends and companions never thought us capable of.

(2) *It should not be inconsistent with the nature that God has given us.* It is a mistake to set before our minds some aim or purpose which conflicts with the claims of nature or kinship. We are not called upon, for instance, unless there is a sufficient reason, to propose to ourselves the life of the celibate, or to withdraw ourselves from human society, or to do despite to some special taste and faculty with which God has endowed us. You only add to the awful difficulties of attainment when you choose to act in defiance of the nature with which you are endowed. Of course you must subdue and keep it under. Of course you must compel it not to hinder but help the attainment of your life-purpose. But it is much better to fill out the entire being with the love and wealth of a noble character than to amputate or excise it, except for some over-mastering reason.

(3) *It should, so far as possible, be modelled on the character of Jesus Christ.* We must take as our model those traits and dispositions which He came to make common coin amongst His followers. The Christian ideal is the highest

deal. There are ample and satisfactory reasons for reading Plutarch's Lives, in which we find much that seemed to anticipate the days of Christ, but the fairest models will not be found there but in the great stories which the universal Church has to tell of her sons in so far as they reproduced His Image.

* * * * *

Amongst the first qualities which go to the building up of a successful life is one which we have already suggested, but which cannot be too clearly emphasised as

Reverence

We must recognise and worship God, our Creator, Father, and Saviour. When we stand before the sublime and terrible in nature, we must realise that we are in His temple. When we enter a place of worship, we must be thoughtful and recollected, as Moses before the burning bush, when he took off the shoes from his feet, recognising that the place was holy ground. When we are about our daily business we must realise that we are doing God's work and living in His Presence. And out of this will arise a sense of duty which will rise with us in the morning

and go to rest with us at night—co-extensive with the horizon of our knowledge, and cleaving to us as a shadow on a sunny day.

Bravery

comes next in order. The consuming fear of God is at the base of that true British pluck which is regardless of life and only careful of honour, and absolutely disdainful of odds when the cause is good and duty is clear.

This was the spirit that animated Sir Richard Grenville, the Captain of the *Revenge*, which, after a twelve hours' fight, as told by Walter Raleigh, defied to the last the whole Spanish fleet of fifty-one sail, which lay around her, waiting, like dogs around the dying forest-king, for the Englishman to strike or sink. Shot through the body and the head, the captain was taken on board the Spanish admiral's ship to die, and gave up his spirit with these memorable words: "Here die I, Sir Richard Grenville, with a joyful and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life, as a true soldier ought, fighting for his country, Queen, religion, and honour; my soul willingly departing from this body, leaving behind the lasting fame of having behaved as every valiant soldier is bound to do."

Courage

We should also have a touch of that magnificent courage which led John Ruskin, at the age of four and twenty, to challenge the verdict of his age concerning Turner. At that time the great painter was almost universally the object of unmeasured abuse and scorn. Watching for sunsets that once in twenty years throw their wealth of colour over the western sky; lashed for hours to the mast of the tempest-ridden vessel in order to catch the spirit of the storm—he depicted Nature in her rarer moods, and it was hardly to be expected that ordinary men should sympathise. But Ruskin deliberately hazarded all that life was worth in placing himself in direct antagonism to the universal opinion, contradicting the criticism of the Press, and asserting the true principles of art in the face of the established canons of four hundred years. The result was that the popular voice became as enthusiastic for Turner as it had been damnable before.

Or taking an illustration from another walk in life, we should have something of the spirit of the engine-driver who recently saved the lives of six hundred passengers on the Pennsylvania railway. The furnace-door had been opened by

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the fireman to replenish the fire while the train was going at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour. The back-draught forced the flame out, so that the car of the locomotive caught fire, and the engine-driver and fireman were driven back over the tender into the passenger-car, leaving the engine without control. The speed increased, and the volume of flame with it. There was imminent danger that all the carriages would take fire and the whole train be consumed. The passengers were panic-stricken. To jump off was certain death ; to remain was to be burned alive. The engine-driver saw that the only way to save the passengers was to return to the engine and stop the train. He plunged into the flames, climbed back over the tender, and reversed the engine. When the train came to a standstill he was found in the water-tank, into which he had thrown himself, terribly burned and only half-conscious, with slight hope of recovery.

Such a spirit must underlie any successful life. To be morally and physically brave ; to dare to espouse an unpopular cause, and to be willing to stand by and defend it, whatever odds may be against us.

The Regular Maintenance of Religious Duties

Watch the morning watch. Do not see the face of man till you have seen the face of God. Before you enter on the day with its temptations look up into His face and hide His word in your heart.

At night you may be too sleepy to pray long as you get into bed. One moment's committal of oneself into the hands of the Faithful Creator may be all that is possible to an overtired brain. It is well, therefore, to find half an hour, immediately on the return from business or whilst one is preparing for the evening meal, when the dust of the day may be washed away, the sins of the day confessed, and the soul adjusted with God. How eager the captain of the ship is to get a meridian sight of the sun. He waits, sextant in hand, for an opening of the clouds. The day's run may be greatly out of the true course of the ship unless that is secured. So we must not let our days pass without getting our bearings, and obtaining a view of Him who waits to manifest Himself to the humble and anxious disciple.

God's day specially must be carefully hedged in from the intrusion of daily business and earthly care. The truest possible rest and refreshment

come by the vigorous observance of this rule. You will remember the statement which was circulated through the Press of Mr. Gladstone's particular care that nothing should intrude on the peace of his Sundays, even when he was in the midst of the multitudinous interests of his Premiership. The books were changed from the ordinary literature of the day to those of a religious tone. Regular attendance was given at Divine Service. Above all it was the chosen opportunity for the enjoyment of the home-circle with its endearments and tender associations.

Attendance in the House of God, the quiet walk in the midst of Nature, the dedication of some part of the day to doing good, meditation over some stimulating and heart-searching book, and opportunities for intercourse with God in heaven and with dear ones on earth—such are ways of spending the day, which make it a delight and draw out of it the maximum of refreshment for the strain and stress of the coming week.

Every experiment made by great workers, writers, and speakers, as well as the tests on horses and other animals, goes to prove that more and better work is turned out during the six days when the one rest-day is observed than would be secured by plodding through seven days,

without the one day's parenthesis, with its change of thought and occupation.

Mr. Moody was one of the hardest workers of his time ; and he thus summed up his experience : " The day of rest is a necessity. I look forward to my Friday. I used to think, because I was engaged in God's work, that I could work seven days in the week, and I was older at thirty than I am now at sixty. I had not the spring or the vigour that I now have."

I would urge that these holy customs should be maintained in foreign lands as much as at home. It is very sad to see how even professing Christians will throw off the sacred ties and bonds of religious observance as soon as they cross the Channel as though their God were a local deity, and were a God of the hills and not of the plains. Whereas, surely, amid the fascinations of many a continental city, when we are cast among strangers and are no longer subjected to the observation and restraint of the homeland, we need more consciously than ever to be encompassed with the thought of God.

When we have to share our sleeping-room with others it is very necessary to maintain the sacred habit of kneeling before God, both because if a thing is right, it is right always and every-

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where, and because it is a weak thing to allow ourselves to be sneered or laughed out of our duty to God as though He were not present, awaiting the acknowledgment of our love and faith. Under such conditions the very act of kneeling, even when unaccompanied by the flow of desire and word, will often bring us greater blessing than the longest and most fluent of our prayer-times.

Abstinence from Stimulants and Narcotics

The medical experts are unhesitating in their verdict as to the effect of these things on our physical organs. Alcohol retards the digestion, disturbs the heart's action, and lowers the normal temperature. Tobacco stunts the growth, weakens the eyesight, and injures the nervous system. I confess that in my own case the knowledge of these facts, which are indisputable, has been sufficient to deter me from the use of either. I might say much of the insidious effect of these and similar agents in creating an ever-increasing appetite for larger and yet larger doses, and of the necessity for our throwing the weight of our personal example in the scale against their fascinating and pernicious influence

over tens of thousands of our fellows, but I feel that physical health and tone are so important, and the desirability of having a thoroughly healthy body as our instrument for our life-work is so urgent, that I am prepared to rest the whole of my contention here, and appeal to all who desire to possess a healthy mind in a healthy body to abjure the use of stimulants and narcotics. If you never begin to use them you will never feel the want of them.

The Avoidance of Late Hours at Night

“Early to bed” is as good advice as “Early to rise,” and almost as difficult to follow. We cannot awake in the morning, feeling fresh and bright and fit for the duties of the day, if we sit up to the small hours, absorbed in some exciting novel or talking more or less brilliantly in the social circle, to say nothing of the ballroom with its stifling air. The overtired nervous system will certainly exact its penalty during the coming day if it has been subjected to an unnatural strain. Some of us need more sleep than others.

Six for a man,
Seven for a woman,
Eight for a fool.

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I, for one, must rank with the fools, and I am certain that the gaiety, the elasticity of spirit, the bubbling-over of humour, the hopeful courage amid the strain of life are in direct proportion to the thorough renewing and recruitment which come to our nervous system in sleep. Sleep is the bath of the tired nature, in which every muscle is relaxed and a pause is placed on all but automatic activities.

It is a profound mistake to suppose that our brains do their best work under the light of the midnight oil. I confess that I have not always thought so, but I have again and again been terribly disappointed with the morning perusal of paragraphs which the night before had seemed like an inspiration. The fact is that we may accustom the brain to work at any hour we choose; and in the early morning, especially if we do not take a heavy breakfast, it will yield the sanest, most wholesome, and satisfactory results. At night its products are apt to be tinged with the hysteria of an over-excited imagination preponderating over the clear vision and calm judgment of the earlier hours. Why must we get half through life, before acting on the wise old saw—“*Early to bed, and early to rise?*”

Promptness and Thoroughness

It is a good thing to insist on doing at once what has to be done. A good motto to hang up in your room is, *Do it now* : and it is the secret of success to be prompt and alert. Somewhere I read of a young man (was it Budgett?), that he was instructed to have some goods carted the next day. He at once gave instructions to the carters to be at the warehouse on the following morning by six, and before eight the whole work was finished. When the principal came at nine, and saw no preparations on foot for the execution of his directions, he asked sharply, why they had not been attended to. "Please, sir, the work was done between six and eight," was the reply : and that laid the foundation of the young man's rapid rise to a share in the business, of which he became ultimately the owner.

Be punctual, you have no right to waste a moment of other people's time.

Be prompt, do at once what has to be done. Every day that you put it off, it gets harder.

Be reliable, if you undertake to do a thing, or are deputed to do it, do it offhand and to the best of your ability.

The success of life and its laurels are not won

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by a momentary spurt. That is well enough at the end of a long, hard race, when your competitor and you are rowing side by side within a few yards of the goal ; but the race is not won by the spurt but by the quiet, deliberate, long sweep and pull of the oar. "Hard pounding, gentlemen," said the Duke of Wellington on the field of Waterloo, "but we shall see who can pound the longest."

It is remarkable how, when a piece of work has been thoroughly done, it will help afterwards in the prosecution of the life-task. An interesting illustration of this is given in the life of Daniel Webster. When quite a young practitioner, a poor woman, who could only afford a twenty-dollar fee, asked him to defend her. Her case was a very difficult one, demanding a knowledge of the law which was outside the course of an ordinary practitioner. However, Webster went to Boston, worked up a precise acquaintance of the law and the legal precedents, came back and won his client's case. Years after, when travelling through New York, he was entreated by a very wealthy man to undertake his case, leaving him to name his own fee, because he could not find a lawyer that understood it. Webster discovered before long that it involved the very point which he had mastered

years before ; and brought to bear on the case so thorough an acquaintance with its technicalities that he won the fee and laid the foundations of his great career. When my friend, Dr. Conwell, was in London a year or two ago, he was interviewed with the object of ascertaining the secret of his marvellously busy and most useful and successful life. Here is the account of the conversation as given by the correspondent :

“What is the secret of it all, Dr. Conwell ?” I finally asked him. “How can you manage to do so much without breaking down ?”

“My first rule is to do the thing nearest at hand, and while you are doing it, don't think about anything else,” Dr. Conwell replied. “Do your business as quickly as ever you can, and don't go lolling about or lying down till you have got it right through. Above all, don't worry about your work. It is worry kills men, not work ; worry wears away the brain, destroys the body, and doesn't enable you to do anything the least quicker or better.”

“That is very easy advice to give Dr. Conwell, but not so easy to act on.”

“I know that. I had got on to middle-age before I could follow it. But it can be acted on, and you *can*, by exertion and determination,

discipline yourself to it. When you have done one thing, take up the next, and so on. Rapidity of accomplishment and freedom from worry are the real secrets of work.

“There is one other thing that is worth remembering,” Dr. Conwell said in conclusion. “Be content to have your work only partly successful. Every man who is worth anything sets before himself a higher standard of accomplishment than he can ever attain. Now, after you have done your best, don’t despair because your best comes short of the best. Be content to have your work as good as you can make it rather than the ideal of perfection.”

The habit of *neatness* is one worth striving for. Pastor Oberlin, of Alsace, a man of action and much business, used to say to his pupils: “When you write, remember to form every letter perfectly to the glory of God.” I must not say too much about neat handwriting, lest I condemn myself; but I do urge that it is the sign of a right-minded man to leave his bedroom, his wardrobe, his desk, and papers in good order, so that he may know where to lay his hand on anything he wants to find.

Many seem to think that it is the mark of a well-bred man to give servants as much trouble

as possible. I have no sympathy with that kind of spirit ; and it has been my habit, in relation to all personal matters, to be self-reliant, and to ask for as little assistance from servants as was possible. Help yourself so far as you may by having a place for everything and putting everything in its place.

Care in the Use of Money

(1) Don't be extravagant, and throw it away : it is a sacred stewardship for God.

(2) Keep a proper account of your income and expenditure, and balance it once a week.

(3) Be sure to keep within your income. To spend sixpence a week more than you earn is to be in constant anxiety, and to enter on a course of living which will bring you to ruin.

(4) Give a certain percentage of your income to Christian and philanthropic work. If possible, not less than a tenth.

(5) Insure your life, so that there shall be a lump-sum accruing to you at fifty-five or sixty, or to your relatives in case of earlier death. The earlier you begin this the better.

(6) Never put your money in sweepstakes, or stake it on a wager. You are a steward of

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God's money, and it cannot be His will that you should increase your capital in illegitimate ways or fool away His gifts.

(7) Don't lend money, or you will be sure to make an enemy of your friend. *Give* him out-and-out a fourth, or some other proportion, of his request.

In this connection we may quote the advice of the late Henry Ward Beecher. Writing to his son, he said :

"You must not go into debt. Avoid debt as you would the devil. Make it a fundamental rule : No debt—cash or nothing.

"Make few promises. Religiously observe the smallest promise. A man who means to keep his promises cannot afford to make money.

"Be scrupulously careful in all statements. Accuracy and perfect frankness, no guesswork. Either nothing or accurate truth.

"When working for others, sink yourself out of sight, seek their interest. Make yourself necessary to those who employ you, by industry, fidelity, and scrupulous integrity. Selfishness is fatal.

"Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Demand more of yourself than anybody expects of you. Keep your own standard high. Never excuse

yourself to yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself, but lenient to everybody else.

“Concentrate your force on your own business ; do not turn off. Be constant, steadfast, persevering.

“The art of making one’s fortune is to spend nothing ; in this country any intelligent and industrious young man may become rich if he stops all leaks and is not in a hurry. Do not make haste ; be patient.

“Do not speculate or gamble. Steady, patient industry is both the surest and the safest way. Greediness and haste are two devils that destroy thousands every year.

“I beseech you to correct one fault—severe speech of others. Never speak evil of any man, no matter what the facts may be. Hasty fault-finding and severe speech of absent people is not honourable ; is apt to be unjust, and is cruel ; makes enemies to yourself, and is wicked.

“Lastly, do not forget your father’s and your mother’s God. Read often the Proverbs, the precepts and duties enjoined in the New Testament. May your father’s God be with you and protect you.”



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These are important factors in a successful life, and they will almost certainly secure it if other things are equal. But even if they do not secure what the world knows as success, they will bring a sense of peace and contentment which are of greater value than the millions of the plutocrat. The outward state that wealth brings to some is far from being a condition of happiness ; whilst the man who has neither poverty nor riches sleeps at night with a peace which the other envies from his pillows of down. Let us at least deserve success, whether we attain it or not, and God shall choose our inheritance for us, be it less or more, as He shall see fit.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTIAN COMMERCE

THE word Commerce means "Exchange of Goods," but when we use the word in this article, we mean the industry which develops the resources of the world, and the exchange or distribution, which brings them within the reach of all.

Considered in itself, Commerce is a high and noble calling, and it is because I desire that young men should look upon it as a Divine calling that I put my hand to this article, though I am almost sure, in doing so, that my ideas will seem to some to be visionary and unpractical. If it should so appear to my readers, they can easily close the book and toss it from them as unworthy of the further expenditure of thought and time, and obtain from some other source the mental *pabulum* they need.

* * * * *

My appeal is mainly to young men, and it is remarkable how much of the work of the world has been done by young men. Take the Bible as evidence. David was a stripling when he won the hearts of all Israel by his valour ; and at the age of thirty-one he ascended the throne. At eighteen Solomon was declared King of Israel ; and was not more than twenty-three when the Queen of Sheba visited his Court, and confessed that the half had not been told her of his acts and wisdom. Joash became king at seven years of age, Josiah at eight, Azariah at sixteen, Jehoiachin at eighteen, Ahaz at twenty. At sixteen Josiah began to seek the Lord ; at twenty he began to purge Judah of idolatry ; and at twenty-six repaired the Temple. Hezekiah was only twenty-five when he restored the Temple of the Lord, and destroyed the brazen serpent of the wilderness. For four hundred years Judah was ruled by her young men.

The greatest event in human history is the beginning of the Christian era ; yet right in the dawn stands John the Baptist, a young man of thirty. Our Lord Himself was thirty years old at his baptism, and only thirty-three at His death. The probability is, that, with the exception of Peter, all the Apostles were young men ;

and of Paul it is recorded, just before his conversion, that the witnesses against Stephen laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Newton made his greatest discovery in the realm of natural forces before he was twenty-five. Bacon had conceived his dislike for the philosophy of Aristotle, and had started on his own philosophical lines of thought, while not yet twenty. Watt had the principles of the steam-engine clearly in his mind before he was thirty, after years of thinking in that direction. Raphael died at thirty-seven, having long been the world's greatest painter. Mozart was not thirty-seven when he died. Michael Angelo was only twenty-three when he executed his *Pietà*—a work that indicated his complete knowledge of design and anatomy, and his fullest powers of expression in sculpture. Luther entered on his conflict with the theology of the Church of Rome when he was twenty-nine; and Calvin was only twenty-seven when he published his "Institutes of the Christian Religion," which is still looked up to by theologians as an authoritative statement of doctrine. Ruskin published the first volume of his matchless "Modern Painters" when he was twenty-four; the younger Pitt was steering with

resolute hand the destinies of his country when many men are completing their education ; and Spurgeon was hardly out of his teens when he was the foremost preacher of his age.



Much of a man's success in life will depend on his early choice of a suitable life-purpose. God has a purpose in creating and sending forth each individual soul. Each has a divinely appointed course to run, a divinely appointed battle to fight, and a divinely appointed task to fulfil, and for each there is a divinely appointed strength. God does not launch us forth on the sea of human life to be driftwood on its changeful currents, as fate, or chance, or the caprice of our own hearts, or the whim of man, may determine. Each is a vessel, laden with priceless merchandise, chartered for a precise purpose, and intended to make for a specified port.

"I committed," says Robert Dale Owen, "one fatal error in my youth, and dearly have I bewailed it. I started in life without an object, even without an ambition. My temperament disposed me to ease, and to the full I indulged my disposition. I said to myself, I have all that I see others contending for—why should I struggle ? I knew not the curse that lies on those who have

never to struggle for anything. Had I created for myself a definite purpose—literary, artistic, scientific, social, political—no matter what, so, that there was something to labour for and to overcome, I might have been happy ; I feel this now—too late, the power has gone, the habits have become chains. From all the profitless years gone by I seek vainly for something to remember with pride, or even to dwell upon with satisfaction. I have thrown away a life ; I feel sometimes as if there were nothing remaining to me worth living for. I am an unhappy man.”

Many a young soul who reads these words is conscious of inexhaustible longings—desire to travel, thirst for joy, hunger for work, for emotion, for life. It is as though something explosive had caught fire, and is in danger of scattering you to the four winds. Like Solomon you stand in life’s enchanted vestibule with doors leading out on either side into chambers, dight with every splendour, and dowered with every possible attraction. Here is the boiling current ; but what shall be its course ? There is no attraction in the career of the jellyfish consisting mostly of mouth and stomach, floating to and fro with the ebb of the tide, boneless, muscleless, brainless, heartless ; or in the oyster fixed

in its bed, opening and closing its bivalves lazily to receive and to eject the water on which it thrives.

But, "What shall we do?" is the question. "We have no special gift for poetry, art, science, the bar, or the pulpit." I answer, TAKE UP COMMERCE. This is one of the noblest pursuits for human genius and force; only take it up in the Spirit of Christ. Enter upon the life of commerce as the young divinity student enters upon his training for his holy work; and remember, that in business life you may find opportunities which will not only task all the nobility of your nature, but furnish an opportunity for doing great and good work in the world, and benefiting largely your fellow men.

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Those who have thought a commercial life simply means the endeavour to make money may be startled by my advice, but *it is not necessary that the two should be associated, and he who enters on business life should have an altogether ulterior object than to make money.* He engages, as we shall see, on a life of co-operation with God in the manufacture and distribution of the produce of the world. Money will come to him incidentally, but his primary object is, not to

make the money but to fulfil a great and useful ministry to mankind.

The harm is not in acquiring wealth so long as you get it honestly, and resolve to be its steward and almoner. No harm in giving days and nights to opening up new markets, or inventing new methods, if only you determine to place all the results at the service of your fellows. No harm in urging your way from the ranks to a position of influence, if only you are intent in using all the results of your industry and genius for the lasting welfare of others. All the harm possible will result if, like the Dead Sea whose dark waters lie hundreds of feet below the Mediterranean, you use all the confluent streams of your life to minister to your own aggrandisement, without making a single effort to promote the well-being of the world.

To live for self, to live to enjoy yourself, to live to amass, to resemble the boy in our nursery rhyme who "put in his thumb and pulled out a plum, and said, what a good boy am I!" to be always looking for plums—this is devilish, and has in it the germ of the bottomless pit.

Let us draw an analogy between the motive which should actuate the young man who is entering upon commercial life and that which

prompts the minister of religion or the missionary to the heathen. Should the thought of the sum which will accrue as the stipend of the servant of God be the main motive that should actuate him as he steps forth across the threshold of his life-work? "Certainly not," you answer, "he should be inspired only by the hope of saving and helping his fellow men." "How then," I ask, "where does the question of money come in in his case?" "Ah!" you reply, "a man must live, and if he does his best for the glory of God and the benefit of man, with clean hands and a pure heart, there will be no difficulty about his finding the wherewithal to meet his daily need, and to bring up his family with a moderate amount of comfort. He certainly must not do his work for the money it would produce, any more than the true artist designs, draws, or paints for the amount which his pictures will fetch. The man whose soul is inspired with the true spirit of his vocation cannot refrain from following the bent of his genius, altogether apart from considerations of monetary value. Yet the world has been so constructed that true art and unselfish devotion will secure a fair and sufficient compensation on which artist or minister will be able to thrive."

This is a true and fair statement of the case, but why should it be true of the professional man and not true of the man of business? May *he* not as truly feel called to buy and sell as *they* are called to their professions? And should *he* not pursue *his* vocation for the pure love and use of it altogether apart from the thought of money? If it is an imputation against the character of the artist that he paints for publicity and gain, and against that of a minister of religion that he has his eye upon a fat preferment, should it not be equally so of the merchant or manufacturer that his one thought is to increase the money in his purse and the balance standing to his credit in the bank? What is wrong for the one class is equally so for the other.

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**What Motive then can Christianity supply to Induce
a Man to devote Himself to Commerce?**

Let us consider. There are two main sources for the wealth of the world. The one, the produce of the ground and the life of animals; the other, the toil of human brain and muscle. The city may boast itself as it will of its companies and banks and stock exchange; but, after all, the country and the work that the peasant does

there supplies all the millions with which men gamble.

Take, for instance, God's work in agriculture : He sends His sun to shine, His rain to fall, His dew to distil, and gives man year after year the harvest of the field and orchard. There His work stays. He calls in the help of man in the initial process of preparing the ground and sowing ; and in the final process of gathering the autumnal stores, and when these are garnered there is a further work for man to do—he must distribute what God has produced, just as he must manufacture the wool of the sheep, the skin of the beast, and the silk of the cocoon. He must first manufacture and then distribute. In each of these great processes God calls in the help of men. They help Him first when they take the raw material and manufacture it into the finished product ; they help Him secondly when by ship, railroad car, and costermonger's barrow, they distribute the good gifts of God, which they have prepared, to the myriads of the race. Just as the minister of religion takes the seed of truth which God gives in the Word, elaborates it in his thought until the soil of his heart is covered with the waving harvest, and then enforces the truth upon the heart and conscience of his fellows ; so

the manufacturer takes the fabric which awaits his transforming touch, prepares it for use as clothes or food or household furniture, and then hands what he has produced to the distributor, who passes it forward for the service of man. Is it not a great work to be summoned by God to co-operate with Him in this ?

Take, for a moment, the costermonger ; how often have I looked with the deepest interest on the barrows, pushed by hand or drawn by donkey, issuing forth from Covent Garden in the early morning laden with exquisite flowers and fruit, or useful and wholesome vegetables, which they are carrying to the fetid courts and narrow alleys of London. What a necessary and beautiful ministry is theirs, and how much better to be a costermonger so engaged than to be a lordling lolling through life engaged in aimless bubble-blowing ! Can there be a higher service than to produce rice in China, tea in Ceylon, currants in the Far West, and to bring these indispensable commodities within the reach of our toiling millions ? Can there be a more important ministry than to discover where strong, durable furniture, crockery, linen, or cotton goods are manufactured, and to expose them for sale to those who have no means of forming a reliable

judgment on such things, and who might be easily deceived, to their great loss and inconvenience? As buying and selling are too often conducted, their primary and exclusive object is to benefit the salesman, who strains every muscle to gain an extra farthing of profit that he may add it to his store; and the result is the strong tendency in business men to be selfish, to make profit their main consideration, whilst they leave the purchaser to do the best he can for himself. Hence the advice to mind the main chance, and the devil's adage, "business is business."

But the main idea of commerce is to do your best for your client who may be altogether inexperienced, and for the poor gullible public, dazzled by flaming advertisements and resembling a whale stranded in shallow water, which is a target for every weapon.

Supposing then, you are a cloth manufacturer, may you not enter upon this as your calling, that you should be associated with God in His endeavour to clothe His creatures, protecting them from the inclemency of the weather and the pitiless nip of the frost; may you not look up into His face and say, "Great Giver of clothes for men, who in Paradise didst make skins to

clothe the nakedness of our first parents, permit me to help Thee in Thy beneficent work ? ” You go then to your life-work, carefully choosing good wool that you may give men as good value as possible for their money, refusing to adulterate it so that it may seem to be more durable than it really is, and endeavouring to produce an article which will not be unworthy of the God with whose work you associate yourself and the purchasers whom you seek to benefit.

You ask, “ Where does the question of money come in ; must not a man live ? ” Certainly, and people are quite willing to pay a moderate sum over and above the actual cost, to the producer, for the experience and pains which have been expended in selecting and preparing the goods that are offered for their purchase.

Or you are a builder ; may you not, as you undertake this work, also look up to God and say, “ Thou hast so created man that he must needs have a house in which to dwell, for shelter by day and night, may I help Thee in constructing it ? ” Then as you go forth to build your foundations, or roofs, or walls, you may look up into His face and say, “ I will do this thoroughly and carefully for Thy sake. Thy materials I employ, and Thy service I perform, and Thy creatures shall shelter

here in coming years." In this connection I remember a dying man who but feebly grasped the work of Christ, and greatly comforted himself in his last hours by the reflection that, so far as he knew, no poor person who had trusted in his walls or roofs had ever had reason to be disappointed.

Or you may be a retailer ; yours may be a spacious warehouse, or a shop, or a pedlar's pack. But may you not look up into God's face and say, " I want to help Thee in distributing through the world articles needed by mankind ; help me to choose the best, that those who know nothing by experience or training of the worth of the goods they purchase may be able from my knowledge and experience to be saved from spending their money amiss, and may be provided with the strongest and best."

It seems to me that anything like short weight, or adulteration, or the demand for enormous and unwarrantable profits from the weak and inexperienced, would be impossible to him who was trying really to serve his fellow men. His one aim is to give them as good value as possible for their money, seeking for himself only so much as might be necessary to repay him for brain and care and time. The retailer who buys

the pick of the fabrics offered by various manufacturers has a right to count on his percentage, which is indeed well-earned. Not for a moment do I think or say that there should be no monetary reward for the care and thought by which cheap and good articles are procured and brought within our reach, but that this must in no sense be the main object and end of a business life.

You answer, "Supposing a man is always seeking the interests of others rather than his own, will he not be soon launched in the Bankruptcy Court, and his wife in penury?" I should be sorry to believe it; it would greatly shake my faith in the teaching of Christ, and the construction of the order of the world by a wise and loving Providence, if such a contention could be established. I remember One who said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you . . . he that seeketh his life shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall save it." The world is surely constructed on such principles, that to live for others is the truest way to get the necessities and sweets of existence, else it were fitter to be called the devil's world.

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Of course, the Spirit of Christ will always insist

that in the commerce of the Christian man there can be nothing but justice, and justice is at the basis of love. *In all Christian Commerce there must be justice and love.* Justice in commercial life condemns fraud of every kind. The Christian man cannot give false representation of the goods he exposes for sale ; he cannot permit an advertisement of his goods to go out into public print which is not absolutely true ; and he cannot allow any goods which he sells to be inferior to the samples which he has sent out by his representatives ; he will insist upon absolute integrity in every dealing, not merely in the actual change which may be passed across the counter for a five-pound note, but in the spirit and temper with which the whole of his undertakings are inspired.

Judged by this standard of absolute justice, how much of the commercial dealing of the present day falls short ? Take, for instance, the question of the milk trade. God provides the milk, through the rich gift of the pasture-lands, and the udders of the cow ; it should be the joy of honest men to take the nutritious liquid to little babes and invalids, and for the nourishment of growing life ; giving just measure and pure unadulterated substance ; but how seldom, comparatively, does the milk that comes upon

our tables at breakfast or at tea speak of the equity of the milkman's dealings with his customers! Or take the kindred trade of butter; a young man once burst into my vestry with the inquiry, "Is it wrong to sell margarine for butter?" It was a somewhat unexpected question for a man who has never had occasion to buy either one or the other so far as he can remember. I asked my young querist the price of margarine, I think he said sevenpence, and then the price of butter, and I think he said one and twopence. "Then," I said, "each time you sell margarine for butter, imposing on the credulity or ignorance of your customer, you put your hand into his pocket and steal sevenpence." He tried to excuse himself by saying that his governor must bear the blame since he forced him to act thus; but I showed him that he was also responsible, as he was taking wages to do what he knew to be dishonourable. Margarine is no doubt a good and useful article in itself, and serves a necessary purpose, but it is unjust to the client for the tradesmen to pass it off as butter.

There must be *love* also. We are not only not to cheat a man, but we are not to allow him to cheat himself, when he does business with us. People who come in to buy goods, of which

they know but little, trust the salesman to do his best for them ; has he any right to take advantage of their simplicity and pass over to them the inferior article, when they are prepared to pay proper value for the best ? Always the salesman must put himself in the place of the customer, endeavouring to do his best in his interest, as he would wish his own interests to be served ; and always desirous that as the customer looks upon the goods which he has procured, it may be with the assurance that his interests have been well cared for and his money well laid out. Do unto others as you would they should do unto you, is the one standard of Christian Commerce.

It is quite likely that no fortune would be piled up by rapid increments ; quite likely that the Christian merchant or shopkeeper might be outdistanced by his far-reaching and ambitious competitors ; but it is quite certain, also, that those who had come once would come again ; that an atmosphere of trust and confidence would grow up around him ; that one would commend him to another as likely to subserve his interest ; and that so the basis of a substantial business would be laid, which would ultimately become a mine of wealth.

**Christianity will, of Course, have a Word to say as
to the Choice of Profession and Occupation**

Necessarily this should be limited. The Christian man going into business must be governed by the principle, "Whatsoever you do, do it in the Name of Jesus Christ, and unto the glory of God." Any business or profession that cannot be conducted within the limits of that injunction will be impossible to him. He cannot enter into a business that provides for the destruction of the body or soul of man. It is impossible, as far as I can understand it, for a Christian to engage in the manufacture of intoxicating liquors, or in the production of vicious literature, or in the dissemination of anything that promotes and fosters vice. I always honoured a young man of my acquaintance, who, after weeks of enforced idleness because he could not obtain a berth as a chemist's assistant, came to me one day overjoyed that he had secured a position in a chemist's shop in the Strand, but two days afterwards told me that he had been compelled to abandon it because he was asked to sell goods which were connected with shamelessness of life. How I honoured him. I was not able to follow his career, as he was

compelled to return to his distant home, but I knew, as I said good-bye, that he had the grit and strength of a true hero, and that God, after trying him, would open to him great possibilities, for God needs such men to assist Him in carrying on the good government of the world.

But surely I have said enough to show what marvellous opportunities there are for a man who desires to help God to feed, or clothe, or house, or provide innocent amusement, and, above all, good and wholesome literature, for the teeming myriads of men. And even, I suppose, it is possible for a man as Christian stock-broker or share-dealer to perform honourable and useful service for his clients, securing reliable investments for them, and giving the widow, the spinster, and the professional man the benefit of his intimate acquaintance with safe and remunerative investments.

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And when the profession is chosen, and the life-work begins to yield substantial results, then again, *as to dealing with the proceeds the Spirit of Christ steps in*. There must of course, be the provision on a fitting scale for wife and children. Next, there should be a liberal provision of life insurance, which will mean not only a substantial sum in the event of premature

death but an amount accruing at sixty or sixty-five, when, perhaps, the energy begins to flag. Next, of course, there must be a sufficient amount laid up as capital for the extension and maintenance of business. But when all these claims have been met, then, concerning the surplus, the voice of the Master is heard bidding the man of business consider himself as God's steward. The voice of the Master is heard saying, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." The worldling amasses far more than he needs, fills his barn, and bids his soul take its ease—eat, drink, and be merry. He talks about *his* fruits, *his* barns, *his* goods, *his* soul; but in the night the fabric of his fortune withers like Jonah's gourd, or he is struck down by paralysis and is unable to garner the results of years of labour. No! says the Master, you must not hoard, you are but a steward, it is for you to administer whatever is over and above your immediate necessity. You are to look upon your gain, after you have met your necessary need, as being claimed by God, to be laid out in his service and administered to promote the highest interests of the race.

I have known men who have made all they need as a competence for themselves and their families, but who have remained in their business for no other purpose than that they might make money for God, and every penny of profit has been set apart and contributed to philanthropic and missionary enterprise. Neither God nor the world can do without Christian millionaires, and therefore from time to time we see Him raising up men whose business faculty is greatly blessed, and who enjoy opportunities of enriching the entire race of men.

It may be asked, "Do many live on such principles as these?" Certainly, all over the world there are noble men who have no ambition to be rich, but a very high ambition to help God do His work; who resolve that come what may they will never be false to their loftiest ideals; who count life a great opportunity, not for acquiring but for becoming; and who seek, each one, not their own but the weal of others. The world knows them not, passes them by as visionaries and fools, flings its sneers and taunts at them, and hastens on its way; but they will outlive its worst behaviour, and shine as stars for ever and ever. "For the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

CHAPTER XII

TRUE GENTLE-FOLK

FOR my opening paragraph I feel inclined to purloin and adapt some prefatory remarks which I came across in a book of Extracts, which has suggested some of the following thoughts, and say that if my reader takes up this article for guidance on minute points of ceremonious behaviour, he will look in vain. I fear that I cannot instruct the men how to carry their canes or hats, or the women how to arrange their guests at a dinner-party. My design is quite different, for I am sure that if once the principles are acquired which inspire the hearts and lives of true gentle-folk, they will always know, by a kind of spiritual instinct, how to behave—even though the ordinary notions of propriety may be a little shocked.

For instance, in her village home, replete with curios from all the world, the walls of which are

hung with valuable paintings, a beloved relative of mine has a Sunday afternoon Bible-class of very old labouring men, each of whom is bent double as he walks. By her tender grace and teaching, their hearts and lives have been greatly sweetened and beautified, and they might be fitly ranked as gentlemen in feeling, if not in rank and education. But one of them a little startled the proprieties of the house, when in the middle of the class on one lovely summer afternoon he asked permission to take off his coat and sit in his shirt-sleeves. It might be a breach of etiquette, but from the way in which he made his request, and the simplicity and *naïveté* of it, I will contest the point with all comers that there was no violation of the manners of a gentleman.

It is stated that the type of character indicated by our English words, Gentleman or Gentlewoman, is peculiar to our country. The French *Gentilhomme* is specially applicable to rank and superiority of blood, whilst its English equivalent denotes an ideal of social grace and moral excellence, which are independent of the artificial claims of rank and wealth. It is said that a group of Japanese students at Cambridge formed themselves into an association for the purpose

of studying this particular social ideal : but for this I cannot vouch.

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**What are the Qualities of Heart and Disposition
that lie at the Foundation of the Character of
true Gentle-folk?**

Perhaps if my readers have read the exquisite, sketches of character in "Cranford" they will have formed a truer conception of what is in my mind than any definition could teach ; but I should say that there are three elements, at least, which go to make up the ideal which we are seeking to delineate : first, a noble self-respect ; next, a keen sensitiveness for the feelings of others ; resulting, lastly, in an entire absence of all thought of self in the one aim to shed the consciousness of happiness and ease on all around whatever be their rank or age.

These are qualities which are not conferred by birth or riches, education or manners. None of these alone, nor all of them together, constitute gentle-folk. We may discover specimens of that rare and noble quality at the plough and the forge, in the cottage and the factory, as well as in Court circles. "A gentleman," says Whyte Neville, "is courteous, kindly, brave, and high-

principled, considerate towards the weak and self-possessed amongst the strong. High-minded and unselfish, he does to others as he would they should do unto him; and shrinks from the meanness of taking advantage of his neighbour, man or woman, friend or foe, as he would from the contamination of cowardice, duplicity, or tyranny. *Sans peur et sans reproche*, he has a lion's courage with a woman's heart; and such a one, be he in peer's robes or a ploughman's smock, is a true gentleman."

That *high self-respect* may be illustrated by a hypothetical case, suggested in "The Perfect Gentleman," which is not an improbable test for any of us. You may be paying an afternoon visit, and are shown into the drawing-room. While waiting for the lady of the house to appear, your eye falls inadvertently on a letter which lies open upon the table. In the quite involuntary glance you cast on it, you are arrested by the fact that your own name is written there by an unknown hand. Your curiosity is naturally excited, and you cannot but wonder what it is that is said of you, and for what purpose your name was introduced. Minute passes after minute; the lady whom you are expecting does not appear; you are left alone with that interest.

ing letter ; it lies within your reach and no one would be a whit the wiser if you were to take it up and see what it was about—nay, you could read some of it as it lies, without even altering your position. Now comes the crucial test. To yield to that dishonourable curiosity and read that letter proves that you are deficient in one of the highest traits of true gentility ; whilst if you resist the temptation, and live up to your highest ideal, you are, so far at least, one of the true gentle-folk.

An old-time illustration of that high code of honour which characterises such souls is furnished from English history. Some time after the Battle of Cressy, Edward III. of England, and Edward the Black Prince, the more than heir of his father's renown, pressed John, King of France, to indulge them with the pleasure of his company at London. John was desirous of embracing the invitation, and accordingly laid the proposal before his Parliament at Paris. The Parliament objected that the invitation covered an insidious project of seizing his person. But the King replied, with some warmth, that he was confident his brother Edward, and more especially his young cousin, were too much of the gentleman to treat him in that manner. He did

not say too much of the king, of the hero, or of the saint, but too much of the *gentleman*, to be guilty of any baseness. The sequel verified this opinion. At the battle of Poitiers King John was made prisoner, and conducted by the Black Prince to England. The Prince entered London in triumph, amid the throng and acclamations of his people. But this rather appeared to be the triumph of the French king than of his conqueror. John was seated on a proud steed, royally robed, and attended by a numerous and gorgeous train of the British nobility, whilst his conqueror endeavoured, as much as possible, to disappear, and rode by his side in plain attire, and degradingly seated on a little Irish cob. He was too much of a gentleman to take an advantage of a fallen foe.

As for that sensitiveness for the feeling of others, we are reminded of Charles Kingsley's Amyas Leigh, whose training had been that of the old Persians, "to speak the truth and draw the bow," both of which savage virtues he had acquired to perfection, as well as the faculty of enduring pain cheerfully, and of believing it to be the finest thing in the world to be a gentleman, by which word he had been taught to understand the careful habit of causing needless pain to no

human being, poor or rich, and of taking pride in giving up his own pleasure for the sake of those who were weaker than himself.

Perhaps we may be pardoned for quoting again that anecdote, told in the "Reminiscences of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft," of the treatment of a young soldier by his colonel. He had been promoted from the ranks, and given a commission in another regiment, and, according to custom, was invited to a farewell dinner by the officers. As the guest of the evening, he was placed on the right of the presiding colonel, and helped to all the dishes first. He was but little used to the manners of polite society and the courses of an officers' mess, and was somewhat embarrassed, although the colonel, one of the truest types of a gentleman, did his best to put his guest at ease. The soup having been served, a servant came to the side of the newly made officer with a large bowl filled with lumps of ice for cooling the champagne. He had no idea of the use of the ice, and finally in answer to the challenge of the servant, "Ice, sir?" in desperation he took up a piece of ice, and not knowing what else to do with it, put it in his soup. A smile passed round the dining table, but when the bowl was offered to the colonel, without moving

a muscle of his face, he also dropped a piece of ice into his soup. Those who followed took their cue from the colonel, or let the bowl pass: but the situation was saved, and the young officer breathed freely again to think that, after all, he had done the right thing. That little act showed that the colonel had the nature of a true gentleman, in its delicate sensitiveness to the feelings of another.

And, once more, for that absence of *all thought of self in order to make all others at their ease*, I like to think of those incidents of Thackeray told in that entertaining book, "Celebrities and I." It is charming to think of the big giant with the silver hair, the rosy face, the spectacles, and the sunny sweet smile, making a genealogical tree for the dolls; standing treat for as many tarts as could be eaten, absenting himself from the shop that they might be eaten in peace; and, finally, settling for ever on the children's behalf that most distasteful carrot-soup.

True gentlemen or gentlewomen make therefore most delightful hosts, carefully avoiding whatever may cause a jar or jolt among their guests; they are the servants of all, with eyes for all in the company, putting all at their ease, and laying themselves out to elicit the best

qualities and strongest points in each ; willing to undergo any amount of personal effacement, if at the end of the day the individuality of every member of the household has been consulted and persuaded to yield the fairest flowers and richest fruits—at the same time the self-effacement is so perfect that those for whom it is made do not realise how complete it is.

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True Gentility is shown in comparatively Small Things

A gauge of the nature of your companions is furnished by their behaviour in a railway carriage. In my judgment, to raise your hat when you enter or leave a carriage where ladies are sitting is a pleasant act of courtesy ; and, of course, to offer your paper, to be willing to adjust the window to suit those who are travelling beside you, or to help to beguile the time for the weary and anxious are tiny marks of Christian good-breeding which are not as frequent as they might be. They seem to come more naturally to German, Frenchman, or Italian than to the dwellers in our more conservative country. But I have often been struck by the unmannerliness of people who are alighting at a certain station *en route*. It is as likely

as not a cold gusty day, you have carefully adjusted your window at three or four holes so as to get an inch or two of ventilation, and are quietly engaged with your paper. Suddenly, some one gets out of the carriage, and is not content with letting down your window to reach the door-handle, with no attempt to put it up again, but actually leaves the door wide open, and the whole carriageful of people is exposed to the mercy of the elements. I am sorry to say that in my experience well-dressed women (I will not call them ladies or gentlewomen) offend more often in this respect than the other sex. I suppose it is that women are timid of speaking to men (if, indeed, this be the reason, I readily excuse them); but it has often startled me to notice, how much one may do for respectably dressed women in the way of opening railway doors, calling porters, and getting tea, without one word of thanks or recognition. But I suppose that parsons are regarded as part of the toiling masses, and that whatever they may do is only their duty, having done which they are still unprofitable servants.

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Nothing more quickly indicates true gentle-folk than their behaviour to women, servants,

and others who may rank beneath them in the superficial judgment of human society.

In one of his noble stories George Macdonald says exactly what I would like to say here, distinguishing the noble courtesy of a truly gentle soul from the familiarity of the snob. "Annie of the shop understood by a fine moral instinct what respect was due to her, and what respect she ought to show, and was, therefore, in the truest sense well-bred. There are women whom no change of circumstances would cause to alter even their manner by a hair's-breadth; such are God's ladies; there are others in whom any outward change will reveal the vulgarity of a nature more conscious of claim than of obligation. Sercombe, though a man of what is called education, was but conventionally a gentleman. *If in doubt whether a man be a gentleman or not, hear him speak to a woman he regards as his inferior; his very tone will probably betray him. A true gentleman, that is a true man, will be the more carefully respectful.*"

The same distinction makes itself felt as you listen to two men or two women addressing a railway porter. You can tell in a moment whether a member of the aristocracy of true gentle-folk is speaking, or one who is seeking

to be taken for pure gold but can never be anything better than tinsel.

In one of his letters Lord Chesterfield says, truly enough; "Low people, in good circumstances, fine clothes, and equipages, will show contempt for all those who cannot afford as fine clothes, as good an equipage, and who have not (as their term is) as much money in their pockets."

Especially in behaviour to our household servants our right to be numbered among the true gentle-folk is discovered. We should always wish our servants "good-morning," and take an interest in any ailment from which they may be suffering, or home anxiety which may be lying heavily on their hearts. If one is leaving, we should be careful to know that she has a situation or a friend to go to—the circumstances in which we would turn a girl out into the streets at a moment's notice are almost inconceivable, for if the girl has done wrong, we are still responsible to keep her from taking further steps on the wrong path—that she will have to leave us may be clear, but that she should have some respectable place to go to is no less so. If we are men, we should never let a servant-girl stand at the front door whistling

for a cab on a wintry or stormy night, or send her to the post with letters under similar circumstances, unless there is urgent necessity, and then we should apologise to her for sending her out, and explain the need, which she will as readily recognise. If we are women, we should never ring the bell, especially if there be a downstairs kitchen in our home, unless it is necessary; and where it is possible to save young legs an errand we should be glad of it for Christ's sake, and our own. Be sure to leave some of your fresh peas and new strawberries for your kitchen-maid. She likes them as well as you do. This is royal manners. I am at a loss to understand the rightness of keeping one's coachman and horses out on wintry and stormy nights, merely for pleasure: but as I am never likely to be troubled with this matter, I will not pronounce on it, for it is a contemptible thing for a man to condemn in others faults to which he is not likely to have personal temptation. When you are to be out late, do not forget to let your servants go to bed. Be firm, insistent on duty being properly performed, and that all things should be done decently and in order; but with all this let there be consideration, cheerfulness, sweet reasonableness, and on your lips the law of kindness.

If one of the true gentle-folk has lost his temper with a servant or inferior, he is frank and generous enough to confess his fault and ask forgiveness. But one of your veneer-gentry is much too particular to maintain his pasteboard dignity to stoop to anything, in his eyes, so humiliating. Yet, of course, as the servants say in the servants' hall, "What can you expect of him? there's no sense in looking for gold-nuggets in a stone-quarry."

I had an amusing experience with one of my vergers once. He was good-hearted but very rough of speech, and much offended my dignity by never calling me Sir. Of course, I was too proud to correct him, but cured him in a fortnight by always calling him *Mr.* Robinson, with a good deal of emphasis on the "*Mr.*" My friend caught the accent after awhile. I suppose that *like master, like servant* means that we get very much as we give !

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One of my ideals for many years has been Augustus Hare, of whom his wife said that "perfect contentment with what was appointed him and deep thankfulness for all the good things given him marked his whole being. With him it seemed to be the most natural feeling to seek

first the welfare of others, and to consider his own interest in the matter to have comparatively nothing to do with it. He was never weary in well-doing, never thought he had done enough, never feared doing too much. Those small things which by others are esteemed as unnecessary, as not worth while, were the very things he took care not to leave undone. It was not rendering a service, when it came *in* his way, when it came in the natural course of things that he should do it; it was going *out* of his way to help others, taking every degree of trouble, and incurring personal inconvenience for the sake of doing good, and of giving pleasure even in slight things, that distinguished *his* benevolent activity from the common forms of it. The love that dwelt in him was ready to be poured forth on whomsoever needed it, and being a free-will offering it looked for no return, and felt no obligation conferred. In society he did not choose out the persons most congenial to his own tastes to converse with. If there were any person more uninviting and dull than others, he would direct his attentions to that one; and whilst he raised the tone of conversation by leading such persons to subjects of interest, it was done in so gentle and unobtrusive a manner,

that it seemed as though the good came from them; and instead of being repelled or disheartened by his superior knowledge, they would be amazed to find themselves less ignorant than they had supposed themselves to be. How often has the stiffness, the restraint of a small party, been dispelled by the loving words with which he would seem to draw all together, and endeavour to elicit the good in all: and though by nature excitable, and more than many dependent on outward circumstances, there was ever an inward spring of active thought, which made his conversation quite as lively and energetic when alone with his family as when called into play by the exertion of entertaining guests."

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At this point, gentle reader, my high ideals were put to a searching test, and in this way. I had written thus far sitting on the green lawn of a house I love in Kent. The air is heavy with fragrance, and making music in the woods below. The white clouds, floating lazily, form an exquisite contrast to the blue of the sky (there is no blue in the world so lovely as that which overarches rural England in April and September). I can resist nature's sweet wooings no longer. Editors and printers are out of reach. I will

risk everything for a walk. Such a walk, through lanes, lined with beech and hazel, where the trees meet overhead, through fields where the cattle browse, through farms where the out-houses smell fragrant with the hops, through woods where the flickering sunlight makes a chequered carpet; and to the beauty of the scenery is added the pleasure of exploring a new walk, which leads us down on the old moated Grange—in ruins now, alas!—but we suddenly discover that it is already the hour for early dinner, and there is a mile to make ere we reach the house. At this unlucky moment my gentle companion suggests a short cut through the woods, and I, nothing loth, follow: but as usual our short cut lands us in another direction, still further from the house, and after retracing our steps we arrive disgracefully late, to find dinner waiting and every one endeavouring to look sweet. Now, here is the test of my gentle manners. As I walk through the last beech-wood I reason thus: “I am at home; I can humorously expose my sister as a false guide; she is too good and sweet to resent it; it is only doing what Adam did before me; and I shall stand absolved in the eyes of the whole family; it will be clear that I at least was not the cause of spoiling the dinner.”

But to save myself thus at her expense will be mean in the extreme, and forfeit my claim to be one of the genus I am describing, and therefore, for the sake of consistency, I must resist the temptation and be silent, simply expressing my profound regret. And yet the effort to hold my peace proves, to my sad self-knowledge, that I am, after all, not mahogany but grained and varnished deal.

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This leads me back to the same point to which that glimpse of Augustus Hare had conducted us, that the supreme test of gentle manners is the Home. The real gentleman will be as polite to his wife after marriage as before, will still rise to open the door when she leaves the room, will still see that she has the best of everything, and will contrive to give her little mementoes of his love. The real gentlewoman will put on her best dress and little ornaments when they sit down together to their evening meal ; and be as entertaining and loving and happy-making as in the old courting days.

What higher type of the home life of a true and lovely soul—true to God's ideal and lovely with His beauty—has in these modern days been given to the world than Charles Kingsley's?

"Home," writes his wife, "was to him the sweetest, fairest, most romantic thing in life; and there all that was best and brightest in him shone with steady and purest lustre. I would speak of his chivalry—for I can call it nothing else—in daily life—a chivalry which clothed the most ordinary and commonplace duties with freshness and pleasantness. No fatigue was too great to make him forget the courtesy of less wearied moments, no business too engrossing to deprive him of his readiness to show kindness and sympathy. To school himself to this code of unfaltering high and noble living was the great work of a self-discipline so constant that to many people, even of noble temperament, it might appear Quixotic. He always seemed content with the society he was in, because he educated himself to draw out the best of every one, and touch on their stronger, and not weaker, points. Justice and mercy, and that self-control which kept him from speaking a hasty word or harbouring a mean suspicion, combined with a divine tenderness, were his governing principles in all his home relationship."

Compared with a life like this, what bathos to speak of George IV., or Beau Brummel, as "the first gentleman in Europe"! Why talk

of the rich of a parish as *the quality*? Quality is the attribute of character, not of the purse.

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There is a close connection between the true gentility and Christianity. Indeed, it is said, that a poor man being asked to define "a gentleman" said that it was "the devil's imitation of a Christian." But I question whether you can have a gentleman, or gentlewoman, whose character is not based on Jesus Christ. "There never was but one perfect gentleman since the world began, and He was the Son of God." When the woman taken in an act of sin was brought to Him, He stooped down as though he wrote on the ground (the late Professor Seeley said to hide the burning shame on His face), and when He did this He showed that the new order of God's gentle-folk was inaugurated in our world; and the more like Christ men and women are the more perfectly do they approximate to the ideal which we have endeavoured to depict.

Only, be consistent with yourself. Do not endeavour to be what you are not. When Dr. Carey sat at the table of the Viceroy of India he overheard one of the guests indicating him to another as having been a shoemaker. "No,"

said that true gentleman and saint, "only a cobbler." Never hesitate to own your humble parentage, or wear your native home-spun, but be like Jesus Christ, and through all dresses and disguises there will be manifested the character of one of God Almighty's gentle-folk.

But remember that there is nothing in all this which is inconsistent with strength, courage, bravery, fortitude. Indeed, to be always thoughtful for others and resolute in the pursuit of a great ideal demands a strength which is only possible for the greatest and noblest souls. It is only the finest mechanism that can steady a Nasmyth hammer to crack a nut.

"When," cries St. Francis de Sales, "shall we all be steeped in gentleness and sweetness towards our neighbours? for gentleness in its highest quality is maintained by self-abnegation and the heroism of little virtues, such as toleration of another's imperfections, sweetness of temper, and affability."

However simple and humble you are, you can suffer long and be kind, you can refrain from proud and unseemly behaviour, you need never be rude or overbearing, you may always be careful not to hurt people's feelings by hard words or reckless deeds, you can refuse to entertain

unjust suspicions or circulate unkind stories, you can make fair allowances for the tempted and fallen, you can do something every day to brighten the lot of others, you may make it your business to unite yourself with the love of God in Jesus Christ which is ever going forth to conquer evil, and in so doing you will acquire and propagate the temper and manner of God's own and true gentle-folk.

So we will finish with the words of an old-time prayer (A.D. 1220). "Then, sweet Jesu, upon what higher man may I my love set? Where may I a gentler man choose than Thee, thou art the King's Son, that this world wieldest, and art King and equal with thy Father, King of kings, and Lord over lords, Child of royal birth, of David's kin, the King of Abraham's race. Higher birth than this there is not under sun. Love I will Thee, then, sweet Jesu, as the gentlest life that ever lived on earth."

THE END