

LIGHT ON LIFE'S DUTIES

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Author of

"CHRISTIAN LIFE SERIES," "OLD TESTAMENT
HEROES," ETC., ETC.

WITH INTRODUCTORY NOTICE

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CHICAGO :

THE BIBLE INSTITUTE COLPORTAGE ASSOCIATION,
250 LaSalle Avenue.

EASTERN DEPOT : - - - East Northfield, Mass.

CANADA DEPOT : - - - 140 Yonge St., Toronto.

NEW YORK DEPOT : - - 112 Fifth Ave., New York.

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INTRODUCTORY.

After a ministry of twelve years, and a ministry which God had been pleased in many ways to bless, I was sitting one day doing what a merchant would call "taking an account of stock." I could not but praise the Lord for His goodness to me, but I found that I was without that which many others in whom I had most perfect confidence claimed to have received. There was a feeling of unrest and a longing for God which never can be put in words. The darkness seemed to increase as the days passed on. I felt that there must come some help to me from a source higher than man.

When I was ready to hear and obey, God spoke to me. It was in a singular way. I was reading in a secular paper an extended account of the Northfield Conference, when my eye lighted on the name of the Rev. F. B. Meyer. One sentence of his I shall never forget: "*If you are not willing to forsake all for Christ, then are you simply willing to say, 'I am willing to be made willing' ?*"

That was God's own message to my very soul, and Mr. Meyer brought it to me from Him. It

was the crisis of my life. From that day on I have read all that I could find coming from his pen.

I do not believe that there is a more intensely spiritual, and, at the same time, so helpful and practical a writer in the world to-day as this man, whom I rejoice to call my friend.

These meditations are sweet as honey in the honeycomb. They open up the deep things of God, but in such a helpful way that any one may understand if he is only willing.

I could wish my friends no greater blessing than that Mr. Meyer's message might be to them all that it has been to me.

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THE CHAMBERS OF THE KING.

Christian experience may be compared to a suite of royal apartments, of which the first opens into the second, and that again into the third, and so on. It is of course true that believers enter on a possession of all so soon as they are born into the royal, divine household. But, as a matter of fact, certain truths stand out more clearly to them at different stages of their history, and thus their successive experiences may be compared to the chambers of a palace, through which they pass into the throne-room and presence-chamber of their King.

And the King Himself is waiting at the threshold to act as a guide. The key is in His hand, which opens, and no man shuts; which shuts, and no man opens. Have you entered the first of those chambers? If not, He waits to unlock the first door of all to you at this moment, and to lead you forward from stage to stage, till you have realized all that can be enjoyed by saintly hearts on this side the gates of pearl. Only be sure to follow where Jesus leads the way.

"*Draw me, we will run after Thee.*" (Sol. Song i: 4.)

THE FIRST CHAMBER IN THE KING'S HOLY PALACE
IS THE CHAMBER OF NEW BIRTH

In some cases it is preceded by a portico known as *Conviction for Sin*. But as the portico is not part of the house, and all do not pass through it, we need not stay further to describe it.

Over the door of this chamber are inscribed the words: "*Except a man be born again, he can not enter.*" (John iii: 3, 5.)

By nature we are destitute of life—*dead in trespasses and sins*. We need, therefore, first, not a new creed, but a new life. The prophet's staff is well enough where there is life; but it is useless on the face of a dead babe. The first requisite is *Life*. This is what the Holy Spirit gives us at the moment of conversion. He comes to us through some truth of the incorruptible Word of God, and implants the first spark of the new life; and we who were dead, live. Thus we enter the first room in our Father's palace, where the new-born babes are welcomed and nursed and fed.

We may remember the day and place of our new birth, or we may be as ignorant of them as

of the circumstances of our natural birth. But what does it matter that a man can not recall his birthday, so long as he knows that he is alive?

As an outstretched hand has two sides—the upper, called the back; the under, called the palm—so there two sides and names for the act of entrance into the Chamber of New Birth. Angels, looking at it from the heaven side, call it *being born again*. Men, looking at it from the earth side, call it *trusting Jesus*. “Those that believe in His name are born”; “Those that receive Him have the right to become the sons of God” (John i: 12–13). If you are born again, you will trust. And if you are trusting Jesus, however many your doubts and fears, you are certainly born again, and have entered the palace. If you go no further, you will be saved, but you will miss untold blessedness.

From the chamber of birth, where the new-born ones rejoice together, realizing for the first time the throbbing of the life of God, there is a door leading into a second chamber, which may be called

THE CHAMBER OF ASSURANCE.

And over that door of entrance, where the King awaits us with beckoning hand, these words are engraved: “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God*”

(1 John iii: 2). In many cases, of course, assurance follows immediately on conversion, as a father's kiss on his words of forgiveness to the penitent child. But it is also true that there are some souls, truly saved, who pass through weeks, months and sometimes years without being sure of their standing in Jesus, or deriving any comfort from it.

True assurance comes from the work of the Holy Spirit through the sacred Scriptures. Read the Word, looking for His teaching. Think ten times of Christ for every once of yourself. Dwell much on all references to His finished work. Understand that you are so truly one with Him, that you died in Him, lay with Him in the garden tomb, rose with Him, ascended with Him back to God, and have been already welcomed and accepted in the beloved (Eph. ii: 5, 6). Remember that His Father is your Father; and that you are a son in the Son; and as you dwell in these truths, opening your heart to the Holy Spirit, He will pervade your soul with a blessed conviction that you have eternal life, and that you are a child, not because you feel it, but because God says so (John iii: 36; Rom. viii: 16).

The door at the further end of this apartment leads into another chamber of the King. It is the door of consecration, leading into

THE CHAMBER OF A SURRENDERED WILL.

Above the doorway stand the words: "*From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus; whose I am, and whom I serve*" (Gal. vi: 17, R. V., and Acts xxvii: 23). Consecration is giving Jesus His own. We are His by right, because He bought us with His blood. But, alas! He has not had His money's worth! He paid for all, and He has had but a fragment of our energy, time and earnings. By an act of consecration, let us ask Him to forgive the robbery of the past, and let us profess our desire to be henceforth utterly and only for Him; His slaves, His chattels, owning no master other than Himself.

As soon as we say this, He will test our sincerity, as He did the young ruler's, by asking something of us. He will lay His finger on something within us which He wants us to alter, obeying some command, or abstaining from some indulgence. If we instantly give up our will and way to Him, we pass the narrow doorway into the Chamber of Surrender, which has a southern aspect, and is ever warm and radiant with His presence, because obedience is the condition of manifested love (John xiv: 23).

This doorway is very narrow, and the entrance is only possible for those who will lay aside

weights as well as sins. A weight is anything which, without being essentially wrong or hurtful to others, is yet a hindrance to ourselves. We may always know a weight by three signs: *first*, we are uneasy about it; *second*, we argue for it against our conscience; *third*, we go about asking people's advice, whether we may not keep it without harm. All these things must be laid aside in the strength which Jesus waits to give. Ask Him to deal with them for you, that you may be set in joint *in every good work* to do His will (Heb. xiii: 21).

At the further end of this apartment another door invites us to enter

THE CHAMBER OF THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT.

And above the entrance glisten the words: "*Be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph. v: 18).

We gladly admit that the Holy Spirit is literally in the heart of every true believer (Rom. viii: 9); and that the whole work of grace in our souls is due to Him, from the first desire to be saved to the last prayer breathed on the threshold of heaven. But it is also true that a period comes in our education, when we become more alive to the necessity of the Holy Spirit, and seek for more of His all-pervading, heart-filling presence.

Many of us have been startled to find that we

have been content with too little of the Holy Spirit. There has been enough throne-water to cover the stones in the river-bed, but not to fill its channel. Instead of occupying all, our gracious Guest has been confined to one or two back rooms of our hearts; as a poor housekeeper is sometimes put in to keep a mansion, dwelling in attic or cellar, while the suites of splendid apartments are consigned to dust-sheets and cobwebs, shuttered, dismantled and locked.

Each Christian has the Holy Spirit; but each Christian needs more and more of Him, until the whole nature is filled. Nay, it would be truer to say, the Holy Spirit wants more and more of us. Let us ask our heavenly Father to give us of His Spirit in ever-enlarging measures; and as we ask, let us yield ourselves incessantly to His indwelling and inworking. Then let us believe that we are filled, not because we feel it, but because we are sure that God is keeping His word with us: "*Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water.*"

It is true that the filling of the Spirit involves a separation, a giving up, a going apart, which is keenly bitter to the flesh. The filling of Pentecost is a baptism of fire. But there is joy amid the flames as the bonds shrivel, and the limbs are free, and the Son of God walks beside.

But this chamber leads to another of exceeding blessedness,

THE CHAMBER OF ABIDING IN CHRIST.

Around the doorway a vine is sculptured, with trailing branches and pendent grapes; and, entwined among the foliage, these words appear: "*Abide in Me, and I in you*" (John xv: 4). The Holy Spirit never reveals Himself. Those who have most of His grace, "wist it not." His chosen work is to reveal the Lord. We are not conscious of the Spirit, but of Him who is the Alpha and Omega of our life. Christ's loveliness fills the soul where the Spirit is in full possession, as the odor of the ointment filled the house at Bethany.

Our Lord is with us all the days; but often our eyes are holden, that we do not know Him; and if for a radiant moment we discern Him, He vanishes from our sight. There is an experience in which we do not only *believe* that He is near, but we *perceive* His presence by the instinct of the heart. He becomes a living, bright reality; sitting over our hearth, walking beside us through the crowded streets, sailing with us across the stormy lake, standing beside the graves that hold our dead, sharing our crosses and our burdens, turning the water of common joys into the wine of holy sacraments.

Then the believer leans hard on the ever-present Lord, drawing on His fulness, appropriating His unsearchable riches, claiming for Him grace to turn every temptation into the means of increasing likeness to Himself. And if the branch abide constantly in the Vine, it can not help bearing fruit; nay, the difficulty would be to keep the fruit back.

We have to do with the death and not with the life part of our experience (Rom. viii: 13). The oftener we sow ourselves in the clods of daily self-denial, falling into the furrows to die, the more fruit we bear. It is by always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh. Prune off every bud on the old stock, and all the energy will pass up to the rare flowers and fruits grafted there by Heaven.

But see the King beckons us forward to pass onwards into

THE CHAMBER OF VICTORY OVER SIN.

Above the door are the words: "*Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not*" (I John iii: 6). Around the walls hang various instruments of war (Eph. vi: 13); and frescoes of the overcomers receiving the fair rewards which the King hath promised (Rev. ii, iii). We must be careful of

the order in which we put these things. Many seek victory over sin before yielding themselves entirely to God. But you can never enter this chamber where the palm branch waves unless you have passed through the chamber of consecration.

Give yourself wholly up to Jesus, and He will keep you. Will you dare to say that He can hold the oceans in the hollow of His hand, and sustain the arch of heaven, and fill the sun with light for milleniums, but that He can not keep you from being overcome by sin, or filled with the impetuous rush of unholy passion? Can He not deliver His saints from the sword, His children from the power of the dog? Is all power given Him in heaven and on earth, and must He stand paralyzed before the devils that possess you, unable to cast them out? To ask such questions is to answer them. "*I am persuaded He is able to keep.*" (2 Tim. i: 12; 1 John v: 11.)

We may expect to be tempted till we die. We certainly shall carry about with us an evil nature, which would manifest itself, unless kept in check by the grace of God. But if we abide in Christ, and He abide in us, if we live under the power of the Holy Spirit, temptation will excite no fascination in us, but, on the contrary, horror; the least stirring of our self-life will be instantly noticed, and met by the Name and

Blood and Spirit of Jesus ; the tides of His purity and life will flow so strongly over our being as to sweep away any black drops of ink oozing upward from the sands.

You must, however, irrevocably shut the back door as well as the front door, against sin. You must not dally with it as possible in any form. You must see that you are shut up to saintliness by the purpose of God (Rom. viii: 29). You must definitely and forever elect the cross as the destiny of your self-life. And you will find that He will save you from all that you dare to trust Him with. "*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto thee.*" And His work within is most perfect when it is least apparent, and when the flesh is kept so utterly in abeyance that we begin to think it has been altogether extracted.

Yet another door, at the far end of this chamber, summons us to advance to

THE CHAMBER OF HEART REST.

The King Himself spoke its motto-text : "*Take My yoke, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*" (Matt. xi: 29). Soft strains float on the air ; the peace of God stands sentry against intruding care. Of course the soul learnt something of rest at the very outset. But those words of the

Master indicate that there are at least two kinds of rest. And so the rest of forgiveness passes into the rest of surrender and satisfaction.

We lay our worries and cares where once we only laid our sins. We lose the tumultuous fever and haste of earlier days. We become oblivious to praise on the one hand and censure on the other. Our soul is poised on God, satisfied with God, seeks nothing outside God, regards all things from the standpoint of eternity and of God. The life loses the babble of its earlier course, and sweeps onward to the ocean from which it derived its being, with a stillness which bespeaks its depth, a serenity which foretells its destiny. The very face tells the tale of the sweet, still life within, which is attuned to the everlasting chime of the land where storms come not, nor conflict, nor alarm.

Some say that the door at the end of this chamber leads into

THE CHAMBER OF FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

It may be so. All along the Christian's course there is a great and growing love for the world for which He died. But there are times when that love amounts almost to an agony of compassion and desire; and there come sufferings

caused by the thorn-crown, the sneer, the mockery, the cross, the spear, the baptism of blood and tears. All these fall to the lot of the followers of the King; and perhaps they come most plentifully to the saintliest, the likeliest to the Lord.

But certain it is that those who suffer thus are they who reign. Their sufferings are not for a moment to be compared to the glory revealed in their lives. And out of their bitter griefs, sweetened by the Cross, gush water-springs to refresh the weary heritage of God, like the waters of Exodus (Exod. xi : 25).

Beyond all these, and separated from them by a very slight interval, are the

MANSIONS OF THE FATHER'S HOUSE,

into which the King will lead us presently, chamber after chamber of delight, stretch after stretch of golden glory, until these natures, which are but as an infant's, have developed to the measure of the stature of our full growth, unto the likeness of the Son of God.

O soul! where have you got to? Do not linger inside the first chamber, but press on and forward. If any door seems locked, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Never consider that you have attained, or are already perfect, but follow on to apprehend all that for which Jesus Christ apprehended you.

THE LOST CHORD FOUND.

The story of the lost chord has been told in exquisite verse, and in stately music. We have all heard of the lady, who in the autumn twilight, which softly filled the room, laid her fingers on the open keys of a glorious organ. She knew not what she was playing, or what she was dreaming then; but she struck one chord of music, like the sound of a great amen.

It flooded the crimson twilight,
Like the close of an angel's psalm,
And it lay on her fevered spirit
With the touch of infinite calm;

It quieted pain and sorrow,
Like love overcoming strife;
It seemed the harmonious echo
From our discordant life.

It linked all perplexed meanings
Into one perfect peace,
And trembled away into silence,
As if it were loth to cease.

Something called her away, and when she returned to the organ, she had lost that chord divine. Though she longed for it, and sought it, it was all in vain. It was a lost chord.

Whenever I hear that story, it reminds me of the lost joy, the lost peace, the lost power, of which so many complain. At the beginning of their Christian life, near at hand, or right back in the past, it would seem as if they had struck the chord of a blessed and glorious life. As long as those notes lingered in their lives, they were like the days of heaven upon earth, but alas! they died away soon into silence—and all their life is now filled with regret for the grace of days that are dead.

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?

What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.

These words are written to help all such, and to give them again the sweet lost chord. Take heart! you may again have all, and more than all, that you have ever lost. You have flung your precious stones into the deep; there has been a moment's splash, a tiny ripple, and they have sunk down and down, apparently beyond hope of recovery. Yet the hand of Christ will again place them on your palm. Only henceforth, be wise enough to let Him keep them for you.

These are the steps back—steps that you may take at once :

I.—BE SURE THAT GOD WILL GIVE YOU A
HEARTY WELCOME.

He is not an angry Judge. He has not given you up or ceased to love you. He longs after you. His portrait is drawn by One who could not mislead us, who compares Him to the Father of a loved and prodigal boy, ever watching from His windows the road by which the truant went, eagerly longing for his return, and ready, if He should see him a great way off, to run to meet him, and clasp him, rags and filth and all, to His yearning heart. That is thy God, my friend. Listen to His words, broken by sighs, "*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, my compassions are kindled.*" Read the last chapter of the Book of Hosea, which may be well called the backsliders' gospel. Read the third chapter of Jeremiah, and let the plaintive pleadings to return soak into your spirit. Read the story of Peter's fall and restoration, and let your tears fall thick and fast on John xxi, as you learn how delicately the Lord forgave, and how generously He entrusted the backslider with His sheep and His lambs. Be

sure that though your repeated failures and sins have worn out every one else, they have not exhausted the infinite love of God. He tells us to forgive our offending brother unto four hundred and ninety times: how much oftener will He not forgive us? According to the height of heaven above the earth, so great is His mercy. "*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*" If you go back to God, you are sure of a hearty welcome.

II.—SEEK TO KNOW AND CONFESS WHATEVER HAS COME BETWEEN GOD AND YOU.

You have lost the light of God's face, not because He has arbitrarily withdrawn it, but because your iniquities have come between you and your God; and your sins, like a cloud before the sun, have hid His face from you. Do not spend time by looking at them as a whole. Deal with them one by one. The Boer is a formidable foe to the British soldier because he is trained from boyhood to take a definite aim and bring down his mark, whilst our soldiers fire in volleys. In dealing with sin, we should imitate him in the definiteness and accuracy of his aim.

Ask God to search you and show you what wicked way is in you. Marshal all your life before Him, as Joshua marshalled Israel, sift it through, tribe by tribe, family by family, household by household, man by man, until at last you find the Achan who has robbed you of the blessed smile of God. Do not say: "Lord, I am a great sinner, I have done what I ought not, I have not done what I ought;" but say, "Lord, I have sinned in this, and this, and that, and the other." Call up each rebel sin, by its right name, to receive sentence of death. Your heart is choked with sins; empty it out, as you would empty a box, by handing out first the articles that lie on the surface. When you have removed them, you will see more underneath; hand them out also. When these are removed, you will probably see some more. Never rest till all are gone. Confession is just this process of telling God the unvarnished story—the sad, sad story—of each accursed sin; how it began: how you sinfully permitted it to grow: how you have loved and followed it to your bitter cost.

III.—BELIEVE IN GOD'S INSTANT FORGIVENESS.

How long does it take you to forgive your child when you are sure that it is really sorry and repentant? Not a moment. Time is not

considered in forgiveness. The estrangment of a lifetime, the wrong-doing of years may be forgiven in the twinkling of an eye, in the time that a tear takes to form and fall. So is it with God. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us.

He does sometimes keep us waiting for an answer to other prayers, but He never keeps us waiting one single second for an answer to our prayer for forgiveness. It is hardly possible for the prodigal to stammer out the words: "Father, I have sinned," before the answer flashes upon him, "I have put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." There is not a moment's interval between the humble and sad telling of the story of sin, and God's forgiveness. As soon as a penitent appears in the doorway of God's throne-room, the golden sceptre of His royal forgiveness is stretched out for him to touch. You may not feel forgiven. You may have no ecstasy of joy. But you are forgiven in the thoughts of God. The angels hear Him say: "Child, thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee; go in peace." If we confess, and as soon as we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive. He never says, "Go thy way, and return to-morrow, and I will see whether I can forgive." He hates the sin, and is only too glad to sweep it away. He loves the sinner, and is only too happy to receive him

again to His embrace. And He is able to do all this so quickly and so entirely, because Jesus Christ our Lord bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

IV.—GIVE UP THE CAUSE OF PAST FAILURE.

True repentance shows itself in eager care not to offend again. This care prompts the sinner to go back on his past life to discover how it was that he came to sin, and to avoid the cause.

Is it a friendship? Then he will cut the tender cord, though it were the thread of his life.

Is it an amusement? Then he will forever absent himself from that place, those scenes, and that companionship.

Is it a profitable means of making money? Then he will rather live on a crust than follow it a moment longer.

Is it a study, a pursuit, a book? Then he will rather lose hand, or foot, or eye, than miss the favor of God, which is life.

Is it something that the Church permits? Nevertheless, to him it shall be sin.

If you can not walk on ice without slipping or falling, it is better not to go on at all. If you can not digest certain food, it is better not to put it into the mouth. It may seem impossible to extricate yourself from certain entanglements which have

woven themselves about you. Nevertheless, remember Him who said, "*Let My people go, that they may serve Me.*" He cut the knot for them, and if you trust Him, He will cut it for you. Or if He do not cut it at a single blow, He will untie it by the patient workings of His Providence.

V.—TAKE ANY PUBLIC STEP THAT MAY BE
NECESSARY.

It is not enough to confess to God; you must also confess to man, supposing that you have sinned against him. Leave your gift at the altar and go to be reconciled to thy brother. If you have done him a wrong, go and tell him so. If you have defrauded him, whether he knows or not, send him the amount you have taken or kept back, and add to it something to compensate him for his loss. Under the Levitical law it was enacted that the delinquent should restore that which he took violently away, or that about which he had dealt falsely, and should add one-fifth part thereto, and only then might he come with his trespass offering to the priest, and be forgiven. This principle holds good to-day. You will never be happy till you have made restitution. Write the letter or make the call at once. And if the one whom you defrauded is no longer alive, then make the debt right with his heirs and representatives. You must roll away

this stone from the grave, or the dead joy can never arise, however loudly you may call it to come forth. I do not believe in a repentance which is not noble enough to make amends for the past, so far as they may lie within its reach.

VI.—GIVE YOUR WHOLE HEART ONCE AND FOREVER TO GOD.

You may have done it before, but do it again. You may never have done it, then do it for the first time. Kneel down and give yourself, your life, your interests, your all, to God. Lay the sacrifice on the altar. If you can not *give*, then ask God to come and *take*. Tell Him that you wish to be only, always, all for Him. We might well hesitate to give the Glorious Lord such a handful of withered leaves if He had not expressly asked us each to give Him our heart. It is very wonderful; but He would not make such a request if He did not really mean it. No doubt He can make something out of our poor nature: a vessel for His use; a weapon for His hand; a receptacle for His glory; a crown for His brow.

VII.—TRUST GOD TO KEEP YOU IN ALL THE FUTURE.

The old version of the Bible used to tell us that He was able to keep us from *falling*. The new version, giving a closer rendering of the

Greek, tells us that He is able to guard us from *stumbling*. So He can. So He will. But we must trust Him. Moment by moment we must look into His face and say, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe; keep me as the apple of Thine eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wings." He will never fail thee. He will never fail thee nor forsake thee. He will give His angels charge to keep thee in all thy ways. He will cover thee with His feathers, and under His wing thou shall trust.

But you say, "I fail to look at the moment of temptation." Then do this: Ask the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to bring all things to our remembrance, to remind you to look off to Jesus when you are in danger. Entrust yourself each morning into His hands. Look to Him to keep you looking. Trust in Him to keep you trusting. Do not look at your difficulties or weaknesses. Do not keep thinking that you will some day fall again. Go through life, whispering, saying, singing a thousand times a day, "*Jesus saves me now.*"

A friend once told me that she had been kept from backsliding thus: She always took time at night to consider quietly in the presence of God where she had lost ground during the day, and if she felt that she had done so, she never slept until she had asked to be forgiven and restored,

'Tis a good expedient, dear reader, for thee and me. Let us repair the little rift within the lute, lest by-and-by it spread and make our music mute, and slowly widening, silence all.

If these directions are followed the lost chord will be no longer lost, nor shall we have to wait until God's great Angel sounds it, but it will ring again in our heart, and make sweet music in our life.

THE SECRET OF VICTORY OVER SIN.

The longer I live, and learn the experience of most Christian people, the more I long to help them and unfold glimpses of that Life of Peace, and Power, and Victory over sin, which our heavenly Father has made possible for us. There are blessed secrets in the Bible, hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes; things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, but which God reveals by His Spirit to them that love Him; and if these were once understood and accepted, they would wipe away many a tear, and shed sunshine on many a darkened pathway.

The bitterest experience with most believers is the presence and power of Sin. They long to walk through this grimy world with pure hearts and stainless garments, but when they would do good, evil is present with them. They consent to God's law that it is good; they approve it; they even delight in it after the inward man; they endeavor to keep it; but, notwithstanding all, they seem as helpless to perform it as a man whose brain has been smitten with paralysis, to

walk straight. What rivers of briny tears have fallen upon the open pages of the Penitents' Psalm (51st), shed by those who could repeat it every word from heart ! And what regiments of weary feet have trodden the Bridge of Sighs, if we may so call Romans vii, which sets forth, in vivid force, the experience of a man who has not learnt God's secret !

Surely our God must have provided for all this. It would not have been like Him to fill us with hatred to sin, and longings for holiness, if there were no escape from the tyranny of the one, and no possibility of attaining the other. It would be a small matter to save us from sinning on the other side of the pearly gate; we want to be saved from sinning now, and in this dark world. We want it for the sake of the world, that it may be attracted and convinced. We want it for our own peace, which can not be perfected whilst we groan under a worse than Egyptian bondage. We want it for the Glory of God, which would be then reflected from us, with undimmed brightness, as sunshine from burnished metal.

WHAT, THEN, DOES THE WORD OF GOD LEAD
US TO EXPECT ?

Before Abraham arose to walk through the land of Promise in its length and breadth, God

bade Him "lift up his eyes and look." And before we can enter into the enjoyment of our privileges in Jesus Christ, we must know what they are, in something of their length and breadth, and depth and height.

I.—WE MUST NOT EXPECT TO BE FREE FROM
TEMPTATION.

Our adversary, the devil, is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He tempted our Lord, he will tempt us. He will entice us to do wrong by every avenue of sense, and will pour his evil suggestions through eye, and ear, and touch, and mouth, and mind. If he does not attack us himself, he can set on us any one of his myriad agents who will get behind us and step softly up to us and whisperingly suggest many grievous blasphemies which we shall think have proceeded from our own mind.

But temptation is not sin. A man may ask me to share the spoils of a burglary, but no one can accuse me of receiving stolen property if I indignantly refuse, and keep my doors close shut against him. Our Lord was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. You might go through hell itself, teeming with all manner of awful suggestions, and yet not sin. God would not allow Satan to tempt us if temptation necessarily led to sin; but temptation does not do so. There is

no sin, so long as the will refuses to consent to the solicitation, or catch at the bait.

Temptation may even be a blessing to a man when it reveals to him his weakness and drives him to the Almighty Saviour. Do not be surprised, then, dear child of God, if you are tempted at every step of your earthly journey, and almost beyond endurance. You will not be tempted beyond what you are able to bear, and with every temptation there will be a way of escape.

II.—WE MUST NOT EXPECT TO LOSE OUR SINFUL NATURE.

When we are born again, a new life, the life of God, is put into us by the Holy Spirit. But the old self-life, which is called in Scripture THE FLESH, is not taken away. The two may co-exist in the same heart. "*The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.*" The presence of this old self-life within our heart may be detected by its risings, ruffings, chafings, and movings toward sin, when temptation calls to it from without. It may be as still as death before the increasing power of the new life, but it will still be present in the depths of our nature, as a Samson in the dark dungeons of Philistia; and there will be always a possibility and a fear of its strength growing again to our shame and hurt.

Do not ignore the presence of a sinful nature within you, with its tendencies and possibilities for sin. Many souls have been betrayed into negligence and unwatchfulness by the idea that the root of sin had been plucked from their hearts, and that therefore they could not sin again; and in the face of some sudden uprising of their old nature they have been filled with agony and shame, even if they have not dropped for a moment back into a sea of ink. "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*"

There is a difference between *Sin*, and *sins*. *Sin* is the root-principle of evil, the flesh, the old self-life, the bias and tendency to sin, which may be kept down by the grace of God, but which will remain in us, though in diminishing power, till we leave this world. *Sins* are the outcome of this; the manifestations in act of the sinful nature within. From these we may be daily saved, through the grace of Jesus (Matt. i: 21). To put the matter clearly, *Sin* is not dead in us, but we may be dead to *Sin*, so that it shall not bear the deadly fruits of *sins*.

III.—WE MUST NOT EXPECT TO BE FREE FROM LIABILITY TO SIN.

What is sin? It is the "Yes" of the will to temptation. It is very difficult to express the delicate



workings of our hearts, but does not something like this happen to us when we are tempted? A temptation is suddenly presented to us and makes a strong appeal. Immediately there may be a tremulous movement of the old nature, as the strings of a violin or piano vibrate in answer to any sounds that may be thrilling the air around. Some do not feel this tremulous response; others do, though I believe that it will get fainter and fainter as they treat it with continued neglect, so that at last, in the matured saint, it will become almost inaudible. This response indicates the presence of the evil nature within, which is in itself hateful in the sight of our Holy God, and should be bemoaned and confessed, and ever needs the presence of the Blood of Jesus to counteract and atone; but that tremulous movement has not as yet developed into an actual overt sin, for which we are responsible, and of which we need to repent.

Sin is the act of the will, and is only possible when the will assents to some unholy influence. The tempter presenting his temptation through the senses and emotions, makes an appeal to the will, which is our real self. If that will instantly shudders, as chickens when the hawk is hovering in the sky above them, and cries, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!" and looks at once to Jesus,—there are so far as

I can understand, no sins. If on the other hand the will begins to palter with temptation, to dally with it, and yield to it, then we have stepped out of the light into the dark, we have broken God's Law, splashed our white robes, and brought ourselves into condemnation. To this we are liable as long as we are in this world. We may live a godly, righteous, sober life for years, but if we look away from God for only a moment, our will may be suddenly mastered, as was Louis XVIII, by the mob that invaded his palace; and we may, like David, be hurried into a sin which will blast our peace and blacken our character for all coming time.

Now what are the secrets of victory over sin?

1.—REMEMBER THAT THE BLOOD OF JESUS IS
EVER AT WORK CLEANSING YOU.

It is sweet to notice the present tenses of Scripture. He forgiveth, healeth, redeemeth, crowneth, satisfieth, executeth judgment; but the sweetest of all is "*the Blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin.*" It cleansed us when first we knelt at His cross. It will cleanse away the last remnant of sin as we cross the golden threshold. But it *does* cleanse us every hour; as the brook flows over the stones in its bed, till they glisten with lustrous beauty; and as the tear water, pouring constantly over the eye, keeps it bright and

clean, in spite of all the smuts that darken the air. The possession of a sinful nature is an evil that ever needs an antidote. The risings and stirrings of that nature beneath the appeals of temptation ever need cleansing. The permission of things in our life, which we now count harmless, but which we shall some day, amid increasing light, condemn and put away—all these need forgiveness. But for all these needs there is ample provision for us in the Blood of Jesus, which is always crying to God for us. Even when we do not plead it, or remember it, or realize our need of it, it fulfils for us and in us its unceasing ministry of blessing.

2.—RECKON YOURSELF DEAD TO THE APPEALS OF SIN.

Sin has no power over a dead man. Dress it in its most bewitching guise, yet it stirs him not. Tears and smiles and words and blows alike fail to awaken a response from that cold corpse. No appeal will stir it until it hears the voice of the Son of God.

This is our position in respect to the appeals of sin. God looks on us as having been crucified with Christ, and being dead with Him. In Him we have passed out of the world of sin and death into the world of resurrection glory. This is our position in the mind of God; it is for us to take

it up and make it real by faith. We may not feel any great difference, but we must believe that there is; we must act as if there were. Our children sometimes play at make-believe; we, too, are to make believe, and we shall soon come to feel as we believe. When, then, a temptation solicits you, say, "I am dead to thee. Spend not thine energies on one that is oblivious to thy spells and callous to thy charms. Thou hast no more power over me than over my Lord and Head." "*Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom. vi: 11.)

3.—WALK IN THE SPIRIT; KEEP IN WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

The Holy Spirit is in the heart of every believer (Rom. viii: 9); but alas! too often He is shut up in some mere attic in the back of the house, whilst the world fills the rest. As long as it is so, there is one long weary story of defeat and unrest. But He is not content. *Know ye not that the Spirit, which He hath made to dwell in us, yearneth even unto jealous envy?* (Jas. iv: 5, R. V.) Happy are they who yield to Him. Then He will fill them, as the tide fills the harbor and lifts the barges off the banks of mud; He will dwell in them, shedding abroad the perfume of the love of Jesus; and will reveal the deep things of God.

We can always tell when we are wrong with the Spirit of God; our conscience darkens in a moment when we have grieved Him. If we are aware of such a darkness, we do well never to rest until, beneath His electric light, we have discovered the cause, and confessed it, and put it away. Besides this, if we live and walk in the Spirit, we shall find that He will work against the risings of our old nature, counteracting them as disinfecting power counteracts the germs of disease floating in an infected house, *so that we may do the things that we would.* (Gal. v: 17, R. V.) This is one of the most precious words in the New Testament. If you have never tried it, I entreat you to begin to test it in daily experience. "*Walk in the Spirit,*" hour by hour, by watchful obedience to His slightest promptings, and you will find that "*you will not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*"

4.—AS SOON AS YOU ARE AWARE OF TEMPTATION, LOOK INSTANTLY TO JESUS.

Flee to Him quicker than a chicken runs beneath the shelter of its mother's wing when the kestrel is in the air. In the morning, ere you leave your room, put yourself definitely into His hands, persuaded He is able to keep that which you commit unto Him. Go from your room with the assurance that He will cover you with His

feathers, and under His wings shall you trust. And when the tempter comes, look instantly up and say, "*Jesus, I am trusting Thee to keep me.*"

This is what the Apostle Paul calls using the shield of Faith. The upward glance of faith puts Jesus as a Shield between the tempter and yourself. You may go through life, saying a hundred times a day, *Jesus saves me*, and He will never let those that trust in Him be ashamed. "*He is able to guard you even from stumbling.*" (Jude 24, R. V.) You may be pressed with temptations from without, and may feel the workings of evil within, and yet your will looking earnestly to Jesus, shall remain steadfast, immovable, and unyielding. No weapon that is forged against you in the armory of hell shall prosper.

5.—THERE IS SOMETHING BETTER EVEN THAN
THIS.

It was first taught me by a grey-haired clergyman, in the study of the Deanery, at Southampton. Once, when tempted to feel great irritation, he told us that he looked up and claimed the patience and gentleness of Christ; and since then it had become the practice of his life to claim from Him the virtue of which he felt the deficiency in himself. In hours of un-

rest, "Thy Peace, Lord." In hours of irritation, "Thy Patience, Lord." In hours of temptation, "Thy Purity, Lord." In hours of weakness, "Thy Strength, Lord." It was to me a message straight from the throne. Till then I had been content with ridding myself with burdens; now I began to reach forth to positive blessing, making each temptation the occasion for the new acquisition of gold-leaf. Try it, dear reader.

When I have spoken thus in public, I have sometimes been met by the objection, "Ah, sir, it is quite true that the Lord will keep me if I look to Him, but I often forget to look *in time*." This arises from one of three causes. *Perhaps the heart and life have never been entirely surrendered to Jesus.* Constant defeat always indicates that there has been failure in consecration. You must not expect Christ to keep you unless you have given your heart and life entirely over to Him, so that He is king. Christ can not be keeper if He is not king. And He will not be king at all, unless He is king in all. *Or perhaps there is a want of watchfulness.* Christ will not keep us if we carelessly and wantonly put ourselves into the way of temptation. He will give His angels charge over us in every path of duty, but not to catch us every time we like to throw ourselves from the beetling height. *Watch and*

pray that ye enter not into temptation. *Or perhaps there is a lack of feeding on the Word of God.* No one can live a life of Faith without seasons of prolonged waiting on God in the loving study of the Bible and in prayer. The man who does not make time for private devotion in the early morning can not walk with God all day. And of the two things, the devout meditation on the Word is more important to soul-health than even prayer. It is more needful for you to hear God's words than that God should hear yours, though the one will always lead to the other. Attend to these conditions, and it will become both easy and natural to trust Christ in the hour of trial.

If, notwithstanding all these helps, you should be still betrayed into a sin, and overtaken by a fault, do not lose heart. If a sheep and a sow fall into a ditch, the sow wallows in it, the sheep bleats piteously until she is cleansed. Go at once to your compassionate Saviour; tell Him in the simplest words the story of your fall and sorrow; ask Him to wash you at once and restore your soul, and, whilst you are asking, believe that it is done. Then go to any one against or with whom you have sinned, and confess your faults one to another. Thus the peace of God that passeth all understanding shall return to

roost in your heart, and to guard it like a sentry-angel in shining armor.

And if you thus live, free from the power of sin, you will find that the Master will begin to use you as never before and to tell you His heart-secrets, and to open to you the royal magnificence of a life hidden with Himself in God.

May this be your happy lot, dear reader.

THE FIRST STEP INTO THE BLESSED LIFE.

There is a Christian life, which, in comparison with that experienced by the majority of Christians, is as summer to winter, or as the mature fruitfulness of a golden autumn to the struggling promise of a cold and late spring. It is such a life as Caleb might have lived in Hebron, the city of fellowship; or the Apostle John was living when he wrote his epistles. It may be fitly termed the Blessed Life.

And the Blessedness of the Blessed Life lies in this: that we trust the Lord to do in us and for us what we could not do; and we find that He does not belie His word, but that, according to our faith, so it is done to us. The weary spirit, which has vainly sought to realize its ideal by its own strivings and efforts, now gives itself over to the strong and tender hands of the Lord Jesus; and He accepts the task, and at once begins to work in it to will and to do of His own good pleasure, delivering it from the tyranny of besetting sin, and fulfilling in it His own perfect ideal.

This Blessed Life should be the normal life of every Christian; in work and rest; in the building-up of the inner life, and in the working-out of the life-plan. It is God's thought not for a few, but for all His children. The youngest and weakest may lay claim to it, equally with the strongest and oldest. We should step into it at the moment of conversion, without wandering with blistered feet for forty years in the desert, or lying for thirty-eight years with disappointed hopes in the porch of the House of Mercy.

But since many have long ago passed the moment of conversion, without entering the Blessed Life, it may be well to show clearly what the first step must be, to take us within its golden circle. Better take it late than never.

The first step into the Blessed Life is contained in the one word,

CONSECRATION.

It is enforced by the significant exhortation of the Apostle: "*Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*" (Romans vi: 13.)

It is not enough to give our time, or energy, or money. Many will gladly give anything, rather than *themselves*. None of these will be ac-

counted as a sufficient substitute by Him who gave, not only His possessions, but His very Self for us. As the Lord Jesus was all for us, He asks that we should be all for Him—body, soul and spirit; one reasonable service and gift.

That Consecration is the stepping-stone to Blessedness, is clearly established in the experience of God's children. For instance, Frances Ridley Havergal has left us this record: "It was on Advent Sunday, December, 1873, that I first saw clearly the blessedness of true consecration. I saw it as a flash of electric light, and what you see you can never unsee. *There must be full surrender before there can be full Blessedness. God admits you by the one into the other.* First I was shown that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleaseth from all sin; and then it was made plain to me that He who had thus cleansed me, had power to keep me clean; *so I utterly yielded myself to Him and utterly trusted Him to keep me.*"

The seraphic Whitfield, the brothers Wesley, the great Welsh preacher Christmas Evans, the French pastor Oberlin, and many more, have given the same testimony. And in their mouths surely this truth may be regarded as established, that we must pass through Gilgal to the Land of Rest; and that the strait gate of Consecration alone leads into the Blessed Life.

I.—THE GROUND OF CONSECRATION IS IN THE GREAT SCRIPTURE STATEMENT THAT WE ARE CHRIST'S.

There is a two-fold ground of proprietorship. *We are His by Purchase.* " *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.*" Step into that slave-market where men and women are waiting like chattels to be bought. Yonder comes a wealthy planter, who, after due examination, lays down his money for a number of men and women to stock his estate. From that moment, those persons are absolutely his property, as much so as his cattle or his sheep. All they possess, all they may earn, is absolutely his. So, the Apostles reasoned, they were Christ's; and often they began their epistles by calling themselves, "*the slaves of Jesus Christ.*" Paul went so far as to say that he bore in his body the brand-marks of Jesus. And are not all Christians Christ's, whether they own it and live up to it, or not, because He purchased them by His most precious blood ?

We are His also by Deed of Gift. The Father has given to the Son all who shall come to Him. If ever you have come, or shall come, to Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you show that you have been included in that wonderful donation. "*All*

that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi: 37.) And is it likely that the Father gave only a part of us? Nay, as utterly as He gave His Son for us, so hath He given us to His Son. And our Lord Jesus thinks much of that solemn transaction, though we, alas! often live as if it had never taken place, and were free to live as we pleased.

2.—THE ACT OF CONSECRATION IS TO RECOGNIZE CHRIST'S OWNERSHIP; AND TO ACCEPT IT; AND TO SAY TO HIM, WITH THE WHOLE HEART, "LORD, I AM THINE BY RIGHT, AND I WISH TO BE THINE BY CHOICE."

Of old the mighty men of Israel were willing to swim the rivers at their flood, to come to David, their uncrowned but God-appointed King. And when they met him, they cried, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse." They were his because God had given them to him, but they could not rest content till they were his also by their glad choice. Why then should we not say the same to Jesus Christ? "Lord Jesus, I am Thine by right. Forgive me that I have lived so long as if I were my own. And now I gladly recognize that Thou hast a rightful claim on all I have and am. I want to live as Thine henceforth, and I do solemnly at

this hour give myself to Thee. Thine in life and death. Thine absolutely and for ever."

Do not try to make a covenant with God, lest you should break it and be discouraged. But quietly fall into your right attitude as one who belongs to Christ. Take as your motto the noble confession, "*Whose I am and whom I serve.*" Breathe the grand old simple lines:

"Just as I am,—Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
*Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.*"

3.—CONSECRATION IS NOT THE ACT OF OUR FEELINGS, BUT OF OUR WILL.

Do not try to feel anything. Do not try to make yourself fit or good or earnest enough for Christ. God is working in you to will, whether you feel it or not. He is giving you power, at this moment, to will and do His good pleasure. Believe this, and act upon it at once; and say, "Lord Jesus, I am willing to be Thine"; or, if you can not say as much as that, say, "Lord Jesus, I am willing to be made willing to be Thine for evermore."

Consecration is only possible when we give up our will *about everything*. As soon as we come to the point of giving ourselves to God, we are almost certain to become aware of the pres-

ence of one thing, if not of more, out of harmony with His will; and whilst we feel able to surrender ourselves in all other points, here we exercise reserve. Every room and cupboard in the house, with the exception of this, thrown open to the new occupant. Every limb in the body, but one, submitted to the practised hand of the Good Physician. But that small reserve spoils the whole. To give ninety-nine parts and to withhold the hundredth undoes the whole transaction.

Jesus will have all or none. And He is wise. Who would live in a fever-stricken house, so long as one room was not exposed to disinfectants, air and sun? Who would undertake a case so long as the patient refused to submit one part of his body to examination? Who would become responsible for a bankrupt so long as one ledger was kept back? The reason that so many fail to attain the Blessed Life is that there is some one point in which they hold back from God, and concerning which they prefer to have their own way and will rather than His. In this one thing they will not yield their will and accept God's; and this one little thing mars the whole, robs them of peace, and compels them to wander in the desert.

4.—IF YOU CAN NOT GIVE ALL, ASK THE LORD JESUS TO TAKE ALL, AND ESPECIALLY THAT WHICH SEEMS SO HARD TO GIVE.

Many have been helped by hearing it put thus: Tell them to *give* and they shake their heads despondently. They are like the little child who told her mother that she had been trying to give Jesus her heart, *but it wouldn't go*. But ask them if they are willing for Him to come into their hearts and *take* all, and they will joyfully assent.

Tennyson says: "Our wills are ours to make them Thine." But sometimes it seems impossible to shape them out so as to match every corner and angle of the will of God. What a relief it is at such a moment to hand the will over to Christ, telling Him that *we are willing to be made willing* to have His will in all things, and asking him to melt our stubborn waywardness, to fashion our wills upon His anvil, and to bring us into perfect accord with Himself !

5.—WHEN WE ARE WILLING THAT THE LORD JESUS SHOULD TAKE ALL, WE MUST BELIEVE THAT HE DOES TAKE ALL.

He does not wait for us to free ourselves from evil habits, or to make ourselves good, or to feel glad and happy. His one desire is that we

should put our will on His side in everything. When this is done, He *instantly* enters the surrendered heart and begins His blessed work of renovation and renewal. From the very moment of consecration, though it be done in much feebleness and with slender appreciation of its meaning, the spirit may begin to say with emphasis, "I am His! I am His! Glory to God, I am His!" Directly the gift is laid on the altar, the fire falls on it.

Sometimes there is a rush of holy feeling. It was so with James Brainerd Taylor, who tells: "I felt that I needed something I did not possess. I desired it, not for my benefit only, but for that of the Church and the world. I lifted up my heart that the blessing might descend. At this juncture I was delightfully conscious of giving up all to God. I was enabled in my heart to say: 'Here, Lord, take me, take my whole soul, and seal me Thine now, and Thine for ever. If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' Then there ensued such emotions as I never before experienced. All was calm and tranquil, and a heaven of love prevailed my soul. I had the witness of God's love to me, and of mine to Him. Shortly after I was dissolved in tears of love and gratitude to our blessed Lord, who came as King, and took possession of my heart."

It is very delightful when such emotions are

given to us; but we must not look for them, or depend on them. Our consecration may be accepted, and may excite the liveliest joy in our Saviour's heart, though we are filled with no answering ecstasy. We may know that the great transaction is done, without any glad outburst of song. We may even have to exercise faith, against feeling, as we say, many scores of times each day, "I am His." But the absence of feeling proves nothing. We must pillow our heads on the conviction that Jesus took what we gave, at the moment of our giving it, and that He will keep that which was committed to Him, against that day.

6.—IT IS WELL TO MAKE THE ACT OF CONSECRATION A DEFINITE ONE IN OUR SPIRITUAL HISTORY.

George Whitfield did it in the ordination service: "I can call heaven and earth to witness that when the bishop laid his hands upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me. Known unto Him are all the future events and contingences. I have thrown myself blindfolded, and without reserve, into His Almighty hands."

Christmas Evans did it as he was climbing a lonely and mountainous road toward Cader Idris: "I was weary of a cold heart toward Christ, and

began to pray, and soon felt the fetters loosening. Tears flowed copiously, and I was constrained to cry out for the gracious visits of God. Thus I resigned myself to Christ, body and soul, gifts and labors, all my life, every day and every hour that remained to me; and all my cares I committed to Christ."

Stephen Grellet did in it the woods: "The woods are there of lofty and large pines, and my mind being inwardly retired before the Lord, He was pleased so to reveal His love to me, through His blessed Son, my Saviour, that my fears were removed, my wounds healed, my mourning turned into joy; and He strengthened me to offer up myself freely to Him and to His service, for my whole life."

It matters little when and how we do it; whether by speech or in writing; whether alone or in company; but we must not be content with a general desire. We must come to a definite act, at a given moment of time, when we shall gladly acknowledge and confess Christ's absolute ownership of all we are and have.

7.—WHEN THE ACT OF CONSECRATION IS ONCE TRULY DONE, IT NEED NOT BE REPEATED.

We may review with thankfulness. We may add some new codicils to it. We may learn how much more was involved in it than we ever

dreamed. We may find new departments of our being, constantly demanding to be included. But we can not undo, and need never repeat it; and if we fall away from it, let us go at once to our merciful High-Priest, confessing our sin, and seeking forgiveness and restoration.

8.—THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM THIS ACT CAN NOT BE ENUMERATED HERE.

They pass all count. The first and best is the special filling by the Holy Ghost; and as He fills the heart, He drives before Him the evil things which had held possession there too long; just as mercury, poured into a glass of water, sinks to the bottom, expels the water, and takes its place. Directly we give ourselves to Christ, He seals us by His Spirit. Directly we present Him with a yielded nature, He begins to fill it with the Holy Ghost. Let us not *try* to feel that it is so; let us *believe* that it is so, and reckon on God's faithfulness. Others will soon see a marked difference in us, though we wist it not.

9.—ALL THAT WE HAVE TO DO IS TO MAINTAIN THIS ATTITUDE OF FULL SURRENDER, BY THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Remember that Jesus Christ offered Himself to God, *through the Eternal Spirit*; and He waits to do as much for you. Ask Him to maintain

you in this attitude, and to maintain this attitude in you. Use regularly the means of meditation, private prayer, and Bible study. Seek forgiveness for any failure, directly you are conscious of it; and ask to be restored. Practice the holy habit of the constant recollection of God. Do not be eager to work for God, but let God work through you. Accept everything that happens to you as being permitted, and therefore sent by the will of Him who loves you infinitely. There will roll in upon you wave on wave, tide on tide, ocean on ocean of an experience, fitly called the Blessed Life, because it is full of the Happiness of the ever-blessed God Himself.

Dear reader, will you not take this step? There will be no further difficulty about money, dress or amusements, or similar questions, which perplex some. Your heart will be filled and satisfied with the true riches. As the willing slave of Jesus Christ, you will only seek to do the will of your great and gentle Master. To spend every coin as He directs, to act as His steward, to dress so as to give Him pleasure, to spend the time only as He may approve, to do His will on earth, as it is in heaven; all this will come easy and delightful.

You are perhaps far from this at present, but it is all within your reach. Do not be afraid of Christ. He wants to take nothing from you ex-

cept that which you would give up at once if you could see, as clearly as He does, the harm it is inflicting. He will ask of you nothing inconsistent with the most perfect fitness and tenderness. He will give you grace enough to perform every duty He may demand. His yoke is easy; His burden is light.

Blessed Spirit of God, by whom alone human words can be made to speak to the heart, deign to use these, to point many a longing soul to the First Step into the Blessed Life, for the exceeding Glory of the Lord Jesus, and for the sake of a dying world.

WITH CHRIST IN SEPARATION.

The Bible rings with the cry for separation. Those words, *Divide! Divide!* so often heard in the English House of Commons, compelling every man to take a side, speak through its pages, from those earliest verses which tell how God divided the light from the darkness.

This call came to Abraham, bidding him to get out from country and kindred and father's house; to Moses as the bugle note of the Exodus; to the tribe of Levi, mustering them at the gate of the camp; to the children of Israel, as they languished in Babylon, bidding them return to their fatherland; and along the resounding aisles of the New Testament Church, these words re-echoed: "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you,*" "*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*" (II Cor. vi: 17, and Rev. xviii: 4).

WHAT IS THAT SEPARATION TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED?

There are many counterfeits, against which we do well to be on our guard.

It is not the separation of the monk. This has ever fascinated noble minds. For like-minded men to go off together to some sequestered vale, protected from the storms that sweep across the world; to build for themselves homes and temples, and mingle their toils with holy meditation and prayer; welcoming the daybreak with matins, and greeting with vesper hymns the first couriers of the starry host; such was the dream that stirred the imagination of saintly hearts in the Middle Ages. And something like this filled the *Mayflower* with the Pilgrim Fathers, and peopled the Black Forest with colonies of Moravian settlers.

Such separation, however attractive, can not be the separation of Christ. He solemnly prayed that we might not be taken out of the world; yea, He expressly sent us into the world. And what would become of it if we were all to withdraw from its life? Night without a star; a rock-bound coast without a lighthouse-beam raying out into the murky gloom; a vessel drifting on the rocks without a watch on deck; a

carcass corrupting in midsummer without salt ! No, this can not be the separation to which we are called.

It is not the separation of the Pharisee. The Pharisees held that a man could be religious without being good. He might be full of extortion and excess, if only he washed the outside of cup and platter; full of dead men's bones, if only he appeared clean as a whitewashed sepulchre. In their judgment, therefore, impurity was not a matter of inward evil, but communicated by a touch. To be touched by a man who had not washed since eating would be sufficient to defile the stately Pharisee.

Our Lord forever broke down these unrighteous distinctions. He taught not only by speech, but by action, that impurity is not communicated by contact, but is nurtured in the heart, and bred in act and speech. He did not wash after His meals; He ate with publicans and sinners; He let a fallen woman weep at His feet; He touched the bleared eye of blindness, the tied tongue of dumbness, the polluted flesh of the leper. Repeatedly we are told that He stretched forth His hand and touched.

And is not this what the world wants? It needs hand-help—the touch of the King. We shall never be able to help men by simply looking on them or exhorting them; we must *touch*

them. Those lily-white, delicate, jewelled hands which may turn this page must be yielded to Christ, that He may use them and work through them His miracles of mercy in our weary age. And such contact will not defile. Pitch is a disinfectant; so far from defiling, it will tend to promote our love for purity, when we dare the contact in the name of Christ and for the welfare of a dying world.

It is not the separation of the Stoic. The Puritans were not entirely free from this mistake. For them the world was a great howling wilderness; laughter and mirth, signs of an unregenerate soul; their scheme of life too narrow and severe to admit of those lighter and softer passages which relieve its strain and draw out the tenderer sentiments of human hearts.

Against this, Christ's life was a perpetual protest. He mingled with wedding guests, smiled at the children as they played in the market places and called to their fellows, directed the attention of the crowds to the beauties of the flowers and the habits of the birds, noticed the sunrise hues and evening tints, and lived as a man amongst them. However severe He might be to the formalists of His time, He had ever a warm heart toward what was natural and human. Let us not forget the command, "*Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which*

the Lord thy God giveth thee," and let us cultivate the habit of extracting joy and blessing from all the innocent and beautiful things around us.

THE NECESSITY OF ANSWERING THIS QUESTION
IS REALLY URGENT.

It is a *pressing* question. Hundreds of young Christians are asking what they should do or avoid; and in so many cases, for want of a clear principle, begin to drift; the bloom passes off the basket of summer fruit, and when once gone, can never be replaced. It is a *pertinent* question, especially at those seasons of the year when the dark evenings afford such abundant opportunities for the dance, the ball, the theatre, and the opera.

It is also a *perplexing* question, because good people are found on such opposite sides, and give answers, wide as the poles asunder, to the various questions with which they are plied. Some forbid the theatre, but allow the opera. Some have no objection to the children's pantomime, but are horrified at the proposal to see an ordinary play. Some would go to see Shakspearean plays, but would not go to others. Some distinguish between a dance and a ball.

What is the result? Christian ministers fre-

quent theaters. Professing Christians give dancing-parties not far removed from balls. Funds for religious purposes are raised by private theatricals. Our young people are perpetually loosening the restraints by which they are held, pressing outward the fences which divide them from the world, taking in new lengths of territory, and fretting against restraint.

Are there no self-acting principles, so that each individual soul may decide for itself these difficult, doubtful, and perilous problems which are so incessantly cropping up in all lives, either in one form or another? There are, and the following are surely amongst them: and, like the spear of the seraph Ithuriel, these will indicate by a touch the evil that may lurk under innocent appearances:

(1)—*Beware of anything which is inconsistent with your relationship to the Lord Jesus.* What is that relationship? Of course we are dealing here with the case of those alone who are His, or who are desirous of being identified with Him, both here and hereafter.

We are His servants; bought by His blood, sworn to loyal allegiance. Is it quite consistent, then, to be mingling with the amusements and gaieties of the world, which is of the same spirit to-day as when it cast Him out of its camp and crucified Him? It has an ugly look about it

when loyal soldiers fraternize in the carousals of rebels.

We are His members; bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, whom He nourishes and cherishes. Our Head is already passed through the grave on to resurrection-ground, where He is gathering around Him His own—His kindred. Is it not incongruous for the Head to be on one side of the grave and the members on the other? Is it not altogether unbecoming to pretend to be one with Him in His risen glory, whilst we are practically as close as we dare in our contact with the world which He has left?

We are His bride; He, the Heavenly Bridegroom, is one with us in a union which has no analogy save that of wedlock, where heart locks with heart. Is it consistent with fidelity to Him for us to dally with the world, whose hands were embued with His blood? What did the people of Scotland think of the familiarities of marriage between Mary Queen of Scots and Bothwell, the murderer of her first husband, Darnley?

Surely the Cross, with outstretched arms, bars the bridge between us and the world; and we may cry with the Apostle, "*Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*"

Whenever, then, there is any doubt as to

whether it be right to go to this place or that, bring the question beneath the light that streams from the Cross and from the Throne. Clear your heart and mind of all selfish aims and thoughts of what others may do or say. Let your eye be single to discern the will of the Lord. Ask what He would have you to do. Before long the difficulties will roll up as quickly and noiselessly as the mists which fill the mountain valleys before the touch of the summer sun. Your whole body will be full of light. You will even lose your taste for the things which once you loved. And in the new-found ecstasy of the Living Water, welling up in your heart, you will be prepared to leave behind the water-pot on which you had been relying as the source of your life.

(2)—*Beware of anything which the world itself would deem inconsistent.* Though the world is not religious in our sense, yet it has a very keen appreciation of true Christianity, and a very high ideal of what Christians should be. And we may well arrest our steps when we are met with a surprised interrogation—"What! are you here? We didn't expect to see you!" The very fuss which is made over us when we step over the line may well make us pause and ask whether we have not done something to forfeit the smile and "Well done" of Jesus.

(3)—*Beware of anything which would injure some weaker conscience.* This is one of the most important considerations in Christian living. "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient." And why are they not expedient? It is inexpedient to do things which may be harmless enough in themselves, and which you may feel able to do with impunity, if in doing them you lead others to do them also, not because they feel at ease, but simply because they are emboldened by your example, regarding you as further advanced than themselves in the Christian life, and therefore a trustworthy guide. Estimate every action, not only as it is in itself, but as it is likely to be in its influence on others, lest you break down wholesome barriers, and place them in scenes of temptation which, however harmless to yourself, are perilous in the extreme to them. We have no right to lead our young children up perilous passes, where *we* may clamber with clear head and nimble foot, but where *their* inexperienced steps may slide into the abyss.

(4)—*Beware of scenes and companionships which dull your spiritual life.* Who is there that does not long for a life on fire? But how can we possibly look for such a thing if we are persistently exposing ourselves to influences which choke and repress it and damp it down? There are some

scenes which seem incompatible with earnest prayer and Bible study ere we retire to rest; which lower the inner temperature; which leave an ill-flavor in the mouth; which poison the young life, as the noxious gas-fumes poison the life of flowers and plants. From all such scenes we do well to refrain our feet.

(5)—*Beware of any society in which you feel compelled to put a bushel over your testimony.* We must shine as lights in the world. The most necessary condition in a lighthouse-lamp is its permanence. If it shines at one time and is hidden at another, now flashing afar over the dark seething waves, and then standing sombre and obscure on the beetling cliff, of what use is it? It is worse than useless. And if we are to be of any real use in this world, our testimony for Jesus must be maintained in season and out of season, in storm and sunshine, always and everywhere. But if, before going into any scene or fellowship, you have to remind yourself that you must not touch on any of those subjects which are dearest to your soul, you may well fear lest you are trespassing on forbidden ground. Go nowhere that you can not take Jesus with you, and ask His blessing before going. "*Do all to the glory of God.*"

All this will involve hard fighting, persecution and misunderstanding. It is thus, however, that

we prove our lineage with the noble martyr-spirits of the past. See that young girl, in the days of Diocletian, beautiful and richly dressed, standing before the altar, with the judge on the one side, her lover on the other, her companions grouped around. If she will but throw a few grains of incense on the brazier, she shall be spared from cruel death and given back to love and friends and life. But not a grain is cast upon the expectant flames, and she is ruthlessly led off to die for Him whom she loves better than all. Was she not consistent? Would you not have done the same? Then do the same now, and dare to be consistent to your lover, Christ.

Sometimes we may be placed in such a position, that we have no alternative than to go into scenes which, for ourselves, we would not choose. For instance, when the worldly mother of a Christian girl insists on her accompanying her into society, where there is nothing positively sinful, but much that is light and thoughtless, it would evidently be her duty to go. You may ask to be excused, but if your plea is not allowed, you must go, unless conscience positively forbids, and Christ will go with you, keeping your heart.

THERE ARE MANY COMPENSATIONS.

This is the only *safe* course. The world is so attractive, and so appeals to our weaknesses, that

if we once launch upon its waters, they will insensibly sweep us toward the rush of the whirlpool, and we shall go down into the deep, dark abyss.

It is the only *strong* course., He who would lift me must stand above me. Who did most for Sodom: Lot who went down into it and sat in the gate, or Abraham who got up early to the place where he stood before the Lord? The old heathen games were swept off the world, not because the early Christians went to them, but because they stopped away. The brutal sports of the last century fled away, not because the Methodists patronized them, but because they abstained from them. And the moral pests of modern society will never succumb until good people withdraw both their patronage and support.

This is the only *blessed* course, because God's promise of being a Father and of receiving us is entirely dependent on our complying with His conditions. It is when father and mother forsake that the Lord gathers us; when the synagogue casts us out, that Jesus finds us; when heart and flesh fail, that He is the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

Dare to go outside the camp, at the risk of being counted singular and unfriendly! Let the world treat you as it did your Lord. Why should the servant be fawned on and flattered where the

Master was crucified as a felon? Lie in His grave, and thus you shall know the joys of His Easter life, the sweetness of His love, and the closeness of His friendship, which will compensate for a thousand deaths. To know the King you must share His exile.

Gather ye, gather ye, out to the lone Cave of Adullam, and around the standard of the exiled Prince; and when He comes again in triumph to be crowned with the diadem of universal empire ye shall appear in His train and by His side, confessed and acknowledged as those of whom He has no reason to be ashamed.

HOW TO READ YOUR BIBLE.

The whole of Christian Living, in my opinion, hinges on the way in which Christian people read the Bible for themselves. All sermons and addresses, all Bible-readings and classes, all religious magazines and books, can never take the place of our own quiet study of God's precious Word. We may measure our growth in grace by the growth of our love for private Bible study; and we may be sure that there is something seriously wrong, when we lose our appetite for the Bread of Life. Perhaps we have been eating too many sweets; or taking too little exercise; or breathing too briefly in the bracing air which sweeps over the uplands of Spiritual Communion with God.

Happy are they who have learnt the blessed art of discovering for themselves the treasures of the Bible, which are hidden just a little below the surface, so as to test our real earnestness in finding them! No specimens are so interesting as those which the naturalist has obtained by his own exertions, and each of which has a history.

No flowers are so fragrant as those which we discover for ourselves, nestling in some woodland dell, remote from the eye and step of men. No pearls are so priceless as those which we have sought for ourselves in the calm clear depths of the ocean of Truth. Only those who know it can realize the joy that fills the spirit when one has made a great "find," in some hidden connection, some fresh reference, or some railway lines from verse to verse.

There are a few simple rules which may help many more to acquire this holy art, and I venture to note them down. May the Holy Spirit Himself own and use them!

I.—MAKE TIME FOR BIBLE STUDY.

The Divine Teacher must have fixed and uninterrupted hours for meeting His scholars. His Word must have our freshest and brightest thoughts. We must give Him our best, and the first-fruits of our days. Hence, there is no time for Bible study like the early morning. We can not give such undivided attention to the holy thoughts that glisten like diamonds on its pages after we have opened our letters, glanced through the paper, and joined in the prattle of the breakfast table. The manna had to be gathered by the Israelites of old before the dew

was off and the sun was up; otherwise it melted.

We ought, therefore, to aim at securing at least half an hour before breakfast, for the leisurely and loving study of the Bible. To some this may seem a long time in comparison with what they now give. But it will soon seem all too short. The more you read the Bible, the more you will want to read it. It is an appetite which grows as it is fed.

And you will be well repaid. The Bible seldom speaks, and certainly never its deepest, sweetest words, to those who always read it in a hurry. Nature can only tell her secrets to such as will sit still in her sacred temple till their eyes lose the glare of earthly glory, and their ears are attuned to her voice. And shall Revelation do what Nature can not? Never. The man who shall win the blessedness of hearing her must watch daily at her gates and wait at the posts of her doors. There is no chance for a lad to grow, who only gets an occasional mouthful of food and always swallows that in a hurry!

Of course this season before breakfast is not possible for all. The invalid, the nurse with broken rest, the public servant, whose night is often turned into day—these stand alone, and the Lord Jesus can make it up to them, sitting with them at mid-day, if needs be, beside the well. In the case of such as can only snatch a

few words of Scripture as they hasten to their work, there will be repeated the miracle of the manna. "*He that gathered much had nothing over*"; that is, all we get in our morning reading is not too much for the needs of the day; "*and he that gathered little had no lack*"; that is, when, by force of circumstances, we are unable to do more than snatch up a hasty handful of manna, it will last us all through the day; the cruse of oil shall not waste, and the barrel of meal shall not fail.

It would be impossible to name all who have traced their usefulness and power to this priceless habit. Sir Henry Havelock always spent the first two hours of each day alone with God; and if the encampment was struck at 6 A. M., he would rise at 4. Earl Cairns rose daily at 6 o'clock to secure an hour and a half for the study of the Bible and for prayer, before conducting family worship at a quarter to eight—even when the late hours of the House of Commons left him not more than two hours for his night's rest. It is the practice of a beloved friend, who stands in the front rank of modern missionaries, to spend at least three hours each morning with his Bible; and he has said that he often puts aside pressing engagements that he may not only have time but be fresh for it.

There is no doubt a difficulty in awakening and arising early enough to get time for our Bible

before breakfast. But these difficulties present no barrier to those who must get away early for daily business, or for the appointments of pleasure. If we *mean* to get up, we *can* get up. Of course we must prepare the way for early rising, by retiring early to obtain our needed rest, though it be at the cost of some cosy hours by the fireside in the winter's night. But with due forethought and fixed purpose the thing can surely be done. "*All things are possible to him that believeth.*"

I never shall forget seeing Charles Studd, early one November morning, clothed in flannels to protect him from the cold, and rejoicing that the Lord had awaked him at 4 A. M. to study His commands. He told me then that it was his custom to trust the Lord to call him and enable him to rise. Might not we all do this? The weakest can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth. And though you have failed again and again when you have trusted your own resolutions, you can not fail when you are simply trusting him. "*He wakeneth morning by morning.*" "*He took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.*"

2.—LOOK UP FOR THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

No one can so well explain the meaning of his words as he who wrote them. Tennyson could best explain some of his deeper references in "In Memoriam." If, then, you want to read the Bible as you should, make much of the Holy Ghost, who inspired it through holy men. As you open the book, lift up your hearts, and say: "*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law * * * Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.*"

It is marvelous what slender light commentaries cast on the inner meaning of Scripture. A simple-hearted believer, depending on the aid of the Holy Ghost, will find things in the Bible which the wisest have mistaken or missed. Well might St. John say of such, "*Ye need not that any man should teach you; but the anointing, which ye have received, teacheth you of all things.*" What fire is to sympathetic ink, bringing the colorless fluid out black and clear, that the teaching of the Holy Ghost is to passages in the Bible which had seemed meaningless and bare.

We can never know too much of that literature which throws side-lights on the Bible, and which unfolds the customs of the people, difficult

allusions, historical coincidences, geographical details. Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*; Kitto's *Daily Illustrations*, edited by Dr. Porter; Dr. Smith's *Bible Dictionary*; books like these are invaluable. But we should study them at another time than in the sacred morning hour, which we give to the Holy Ghost alone.

3.—READ THE BIBLE METHODICALLY.

On the whole there is probably no better way than to read the Bible through once every year. There is a very good plan for doing this in the life of the sainted McCheyne, who drew it up for his people. Or it may be done by taking daily, in a Bagster's Bible, three columns of the Old Testament, two of the New Testament, and one of the Psalms. This system will more than do it.

The next best plan to this is that adopted by Mr. Richardson's Bible Reading Union, which consists of tens of thousands of Christians in every part of the world, who read one chapter a day in regular rotation, and thus get through the Book in about three years.*

It is wise to have a good copy of the Scriptures, strongly bound for wear and tear, of good

*Daily Scripture Readings, by D. W. Whittle, a supplement of *The Record of Christian Work*, give a most excellent course, with notes. Fleming H. Revell Company, Chicago, Publishers.

clear print, and with as much space as possible for notes.* A book of which you can make a friend and inseparable companion. But it is above all things wise at first to select one with copious marginal references, so that it may be easy to turn to the parallel passages. For myself, this plan has invested my Bible reading with new interest. I love to have in front of me one of the Paragraph Bibles of the Religious Tract Society, which abound in well-chosen references, and a small pocket Bible in my hand, that I may easily turn to any reference I desire; and very often I get more blessing from the passages to which I refer, and those to which these lead, than from the one I may be reading.

After a while, we shall begin to make references for ourselves; and then we may use a copy of the Revised Bible, that we may not only be able to read God's word in the most approved English rendering, which is an immense advantage, but that we may also be able to fill up the empty margins with the notes of parallel passages.

But whatever system is adopted, *be sure to read the Bible through on some system, as you would any other book.* No one would think of

* Send stamped addressed envelope to publishers of this book for information regarding description and prices of Bibles and books recommended in these pages.

reading a letter, poem, or history, as many read God's Word. What wonder that they are so ignorant of its majestic prose, its exquisite lyric poetry, its massive arguments, its sublime imagery, its spiritual beauty—qualities which combine to make it the King of Books, even though the halo of Inspiration did not shine like a crown about its brow!

It is sometimes well to read a book at a sitting, devoting two or three hours to the sacred task. At other times, it is more profitable to take an epoch, or an episode, or a life, and compare all that is written of it in various parts of Scripture. At other times, again, it is well to follow the plan on which Mr. Moody has so often insisted, of taking one word or thought, as Faith, or Love, or Able, and tracing it, by help of a concordance, from end to end of the inspired volume. But in any case, let the *whole* Bible be your study; because "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.*" Even the rocky places shall gush with water springs. The most barren chapters shall blossom as the rose. "*Out of the eater shall come forth meat, and sweetness out of the strong.*"

Let us never forget that the Bible is one Book; the work of one Infinite Spirit, speaking through prophet and priest, shepherd and king, the old-world patriarch and the apostle who lived to see

Jerusalem leveled to the ground. You may subject its words to the most searching test, but you will find they will always bear the same meaning, and move in the same direction. Let the Bible be its own dictionary, its own interpreter, its own best commentary. It is like a vast buried city, in which every turn of the spade reveals some new marvel, whilst passages branch off in every direction, calling for exploration.

4.—READ YOUR BIBLE WITH YOUR PEN IN HAND.

Writing of F. R. Havergal, her sister says, "She read her Bible at her study table by seven o'clock in the summer, and eight o'clock in winter. Sometimes, on bitterly cold mornings, I begged that she would read with her feet comfortably to the fire, and received the reply: 'But then, Marie, I can't rule my lines neatly; just see what a find I've got!' If only one searches, there are such extraordinary things in the Bible! She resolutely refrained from late hours and frittering talks at night, in place of Bible searching and holy communings. Early rising and early studying were her rule through life."

None, in my judgment, have learnt the secret of enjoying the Bible until they have commenced to mark it, neatly. Underlining and dating special verses, which have cast a light upon their

path on special days. Drawing railway connections, across the pages, between verses which repeat the same message, or ring with the same note. Jotting down new references, or the catchwords of helpful thoughts. All these methods find plenty of employment for the pen, and fix our treasures for us permanently. Our Bible then becomes the precious memento of by-gone hours, and records the history of our inner life.

5.—SEEK EAGERLY YOUR PERSONAL PROFIT.

Do not read the Bible for others, for class or congregation, but for yourself. Bring all its rays to a focus on your own heart. Whilst you are reading, often ask that some verse or verses may start out from the printed page, as God's message to yourself. Never close the book until you feel that you are carrying away your portion of meat from that Hand which satisfieth the desire of every living thing. It is well, sometimes, to stop reading, and seriously ask, "What does the Holy Spirit mean *me* to learn by this? What bearing should this have on *my* life? How can I work this into the fabric of *my* character?"

Let not the Bible be to you simply as a history, a treatise, or a poem, but as your Father's letter to yourself; in which there are some things which you will not understand till you come into the circumstances which require them; but which

is also full of present help. There is a great difference between the way in which an absent child scans the parcel of newspapers, and that in which he devours the home letter, by which the beloved parent speaks. Both are interesting, but the one is general, the other is all to himself. Read the Bible, not as a newspaper, but as a home letter.

6.—ABOVE ALL, TURN FROM THE PRINTED PAGE
TO PRAYER.

If a cluster of heavenly fruit hangs within reach, gather it. If a promise lies upon the page as a blank check, cash it. If a prayer is recorded, appropriate it, and launch it as a feathered arrow from the bow of your desire. If an example of holiness gleams before you, ask God to do as much for you. If a truth is revealed in all its intrinsic splendor, entreat that its brilliance may ever irradiate the hemisphere of your life like a star. Entwine the climbing creepers of holy desire about the lattice work of Scripture. So shall you come to say with the Psalmist, "*Oh, how I love Thy law, it is my meditation all the day!*"

It is sometimes well to read over, on our knees, Psalm cxix, so full of devout love for the Bible. And if any should chide us for spending so much time upon the Old Testament, or the New, let us

remind them of the words of Christ, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" The Old Testament must be worth our study since it was our Saviour's Bible, deeply pondered and often quoted. And the New demands it, since it is so full of what He said and did, not only in His earthly life, but through the medium of His holy apostles and prophets.

ADVANTAGES OF A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE.

The advantages of a deep knowledge of the Bible are more than can be numbered here. It is the Storehouse of the Promises. It is the Sword of the Spirit, before which temptation flees. It is the all-sufficient Equipment for Christian usefulness. It is the believer's Guide-book and Directory in all possible circumstances. Words fail to tell how glad, how strong, how useful shall be the daily life of those, who can say with the Prophet: "*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.*"

PRACTICE WHAT YOU LEARN.

But there is one thing, which may be said last, because it is most important, and should linger in the memory and heart, though all the other

exhortations of this chapter should pass away as a summer brook. It is this. It is useless to dream of making headway in the knowledge of Scripture unless we are prepared to practice each new and clearly-defined duty which looms out before our view. We are taught, not for our pleasure only, *but that we may do*. If we will turn each holy precept or command into instant obedience, through the dear grace of Jesus Christ our Lord, God will keep nothing back from us; He will open to us His deepest and sweetest thoughts. But so long as we refuse obedience to even the least command, we shall find that the light will fade from the page of Scripture, and the zest will die down quickly in our own hearts.

“This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”—Joshua i: 8.

THE COMMON TASK.

A young friend, richly gifted, but who is tied by inexorable necessity to an office stool, has complained to me that his life afforded no outlet for the adequate exercise of his powers.

His groan is a very common one. So many grumble about the monotony of life's dead-level, which the great majority of us have to traverse. The upland paths which give an ecstasy to tread in the bracing air and the expanding glory of the world are for the few. For most of us it is the trivial round, the common task. Each morning the bell calls to the same routine of commonplace toil. Each hour brings the same programme of trifles. There seems no chance for doing anything heroic, which will be worth having lived for, or will shed a light back on all past, and forward on all coming days.

But there are two or three considerations, which, if wrought into the heart, will tend to remove much of this terrible depression.

(1)—ALL LIFE IS PART OF A DIVINE PLAN.

As a mother desires the best possible for her babes, bending over the cradle which each occupies in turn, so does God desire to do His best for us all. He hates nothing that He has made, but has a fair ideal for each, which He desires to accomplish in us with perfect love. But there is no way of transferring it to our actual experience, except by the touch of His Spirit within, and the education of our circumstances without.

He has chosen the circumstances of our life, because they are the shortest path, if only we use them as we should, to reach the goal on which He has set His heart. He might have chosen some other country—China, India, Italy, or Mexico. He might have chosen some other age—that of the Flood, the Exodus, or of the early martyrs. He might have chosen some other lot—a royal court, a senate, a pulpit, or an author's desk. But since he chose this land, this age, and your lot (whatever it may be), we must believe that these presented the likeliest and swiftest way for realizing His purpose.

If, my brother, you could have reached your truest manhood as an emperor or a reformer, as a millionaire or a martyr, you would have been born into one of those positions; but since you

are only a servant, a bank clerk, or an ordinary business man, you will find right beside you the materials and possibilities of a great life.

If, my sister, you could have attained to the loftiest development of your nature by being a mother, or a rich man's wife, or a queen, you would have found yourself placed there; but since your lot is that of a milliner's assistant, factory hand, or toiling mother, you must believe that, somewhere within your reach, if only you will search for them, you will discover the readiest conditions of a noble and useful life.

Who can wonder at the complaints of the aimlessness, the vanity, the weariness of life? People either have no plan, or they have got a wrong one. "What's the fashion?" "What do others do?" "What's the correct thing?" How much better and wiser to believe that God has a perfect plan for each of us, and that He is unfolding it a bit at a time, by the events which He puts into our life each day!

Before Moses built the Tabernacle, he saw the whole pattern of it in prophetic vision. In some secluded spot on Sinai's heights it stood before him, woven out of sunbeams; and he descended to the mountain foot to repeat it in actual curtains, gold, and wood. God does not show us the whole plan of our life at a burst, but unfolds it to us bit by bit. Each day He gives us the

opportunity of weaving a curtain, carving a peg, fashioning the metal. We know not what we do, but at the end of our life the disjointed pieces will suddenly come together, and we shall see the symmetry and beauty of the Divine thought. Then we shall be satisfied. In the meantime let us believe that God's love and wisdom are doing the very best for us. In the morning ask God to show you His plan for the day in the unfolding of its events, and to give you grace to do or bear all that He may have prepared. In the midst of the day's engagements, often look up and say, "Father, is this in the plan?" At night, be still, and match your actual with God's ideal, confessing your sins and shortcomings, and asking that His will may be more perfectly done in you, even as in heaven.

(2)—EVERY LIFE AFFORDS OPPORTUNITIES FOR
BUILDING UP NOBLE CHARACTER.

We are sent into this world to build up characters which will be blessed and useful in that great future for which we are being trained. There is a niche which only we can fill, a crown which only we can wear, music which only we can waken, service which only we can render. God knows what these are, and He is giving us opportunities to prepare for them. Life is our school-house. Its rooms may be bare, but they

are littered with opportunities of becoming fit for our great inheritance.

Knitting needles are cheap and common enough, but on them may be wrought the fairest designs in the richest wools. So the incidents of daily life may be commonplace in the extreme, but on them as the material foundation we may build the unseen but everlasting fabric of a noble and beautiful character. It does not so much matter what we do, but the way in which we do it matters greatly. What we do may or may not live; but the way in which we perform our common tasks becomes an indestructible part of our character, for better or worse, and for ever.

Suppose we meet the daily demands of life in a slovenly and careless spirit, caring only to escape blame, to earn our wage, or to preserve a decent average. Or suppose our one aim in life is to get money for our own enjoyment. Is it not clear that the meanness of the motive will react on the whole character behind it? Will it not be certain and inevitable that the soul which is always bathed in such atmosphere, confronted with such ideals, will become slovenly, careless, mercenary, and selfish? And when some great occasion arises it will call in vain for the high qualities of a noble nature.

Suppose, on the other hand, that we do the little duties of life faithfully, punctually, thought-

fully, reverently—not for the praise of man, but for the “ Well done ” of Christ—not for the payment we may receive, but because God has given us a little piece of work to do in His great world—not because we must, but because we choose—not as the slaves of circumstances, but as Christ’s freed ones—then far down beneath the surge of common life the foundations of a character are laid, more beautiful and enduring than coral, which shall presently rear itself before the eyes of men and angels, and become an emerald islet, green with perennial beauty, and vocal with the songs of Paradise.

We ought, therefore, to be very careful how we fulfil the common tasks of daily life. We are making the character in which we have to spend eternity. We are either building into ourselves wood, hay, and stubble which will have to be burnt out at great cost; or the gold, silver, and precious stones, that shall be things of beauty and joy forever.

(3)—THE GREAT DOING OF LITTLE THINGS WILL
MAKE A GREAT LIFE.

Let it be granted that you are a person of ordinary ability. It is as likely as not that you will never be removed into a wider sphere than the obscure one in which you have been pining, like a wood-bird in its cage. Give up your use-

less regret, your querulous complaint, and begin to meet the call of trivial common-place, with tenderness to each person you encounter, with faith in God, as doing His best for you, with heroic courage and unswerving fidelity, with patience, thoroughness, submission.

Go on acting thus, week in and week out, year by year, with no thought of human notice, determined always to be at your best, eager only to pay out, without stint, the gold of a noble, unselfish heart. At the end of life, though you wist not that your face glistens, others will see you shining like the sun in your Heavenly Father's kingdom. It will be discovered that you have unwittingly lived a great life, and you will be greeted on the threshold of heaven with the "Well done" of your Lord.

Some who are sighing for a great life are unconsciously living it in the eye of God's angels. Those who forego marriage that they may bring up and educate the younger children of their homes; those who deny themselves almost the necessaries of life to add some coals of comfort to the meagre fire at which the chill hands of age warm themselves; those who are not only themselves pure amid temptation, but the centres of purity, shielding others; those who stand to their post of duty, though the fires, as they creep near, are scorching the skin and consuming the

heart; those who meet the incessant demand of monotonous tasks with gentleness, unselfishness, and the wealth of a strong, true heart—these though they know it not, are graduating for the front ranks of heaven's nobility.

"Oh! where is the sea?" the fishes cried,
As they swam the crystal clearness through:
"We've heard from of old of the ocean's tide,
And we long to look on the waters blue.
The wise ones speak of the infinite sea.
Oh! who can tell us if such there be?"

The lark flew up in the morning bright,
And sang and balanced on sunny wings;
And this was its song: "I see the light,
I look o'er the world of beautiful things;
But flying and singing everywhere,
In vain I have searched to find the air."

(4)—IT IS A GREATER THING TO DO LITTLE THINGS WELL, THAN THOSE WHICH SEEM MORE IMPORTANT.

They who daily handle matters which bulk largely before the eyes of their fellows are expected to act from great motives, and to behave worthily of their great and important positions. The statesman is expected to be high-minded; the Christian lady to be virtuous; the minister to be earnest. There is no special credit to any of these for being what they profess, and are expected to be. The current is with them. Their difficulty would be to face it.

But, surely, in God's sight, it is a much greater thing when the soul conquers adverse circumstances, and rises superior to the drift of its associations. To be high-minded, when your companions are mean and degraded; to be chaste, when ease and wealth beckon you to enter the gate of vice; to be devout or zealous, when no one expects it; to do small things from great motives—this is the loftiest attainment of the soul.

It is a greater thing to do an unimportant thing from a great motive, for God, for truth, for others, than to do an important one; greater to suffer patiently each day a thousand stings, than die once as a martyr at the stake. And therefore an obscure life really offers more opportunities for the nurture of the loftiest type of character, just because it is less liable to be visited by those meaner considerations of notoriety, or applause, or money, which intrude themselves into more prominent positions, and scatter their deadly taint.

(5)—LITTLE THINGS GREATLY DONE PREPARE
FOR THE RIGHT DOING OF GREAT THINGS.

We sometimes lay down the story book or the history with a groan. We have been reading of some sudden opportunity which came to a Grace Darling, reared in the obscurity of a fisherman's

home, or to a Florence Nightingale, or a John Brown, living apart from the great world in the heart of the Adirondacks.

“ Oh,” we say, “ if only such a chance would dip down into my life, and lift me out of it ! I’m weary, weary of this dull level.”

Ah ! it is a common mistake. Men think that the occasion makes the hero ; whereas it only reveals him.

The train must have been laid long before, and carefully, else the falling of a single spark would never blast the mighty rocks or shiver the frowning fortress-walls. There must be the fabric of strong and noble character, built up by patient continuance in well-doing, else the sudden appeal of the critical hour will knock vainly at the door of life, and the soul will crouch unanswering and helpless within.

If great opportunities were to come to most, we could make nothing of them. They would pass by us unnoticed or unimproved. They would go from us to those who had more nerve, or grit, or spiritual power than we. You can not, just because you will, speak a foreign language, or dash off a brilliant air upon the piano, or talk easily on the motive of one of Browning’s poems. All these demand long and arduous study. That must be given first in the chamber ; and then, if a sudden summons comes for any of them, on the housetop of observation, you will be ready.

You can not be brave in a crisis if you are habitually a coward. You can not be generous with a fortune if you are a miser with a limited income. You can not be unselfish in some such accident which imperils life if you are always pressing for the one vacant seat in train or omnibus, and elbowing your way to the front on every possible occasion. David must practise with sling and stone through long hours in the wilderness, or he will never bring down Goliath. Joseph must be pure in thought and strong in private self-discipline, or he will never resist the solicitations of the temptress. The Sunday School teacher must be regular, painstaking, faithful in the conduct of his class of little ragged boys, or he will never be promoted to serve his Master as a minister at home, or as a missionary abroad.

(6)—OUR BEHAVIOUR IN LITTLE THINGS IS THE
TRUEST TEST OF WHAT WE ARE.

If I were eager to secure a good employé for a responsible position, I should not attach much importance to the way in which the candidate acted on a set occasion, when he knew that he was being observed. Of course he would be on his best behaviour. But give me a private window so that I can watch him in his least considered actions—how he behaves at home, how

he treats his mother and sisters, how he fulfils the common duties of life. What he is then, he is really.

But if this is man's way, may it not be God's? There are great tasks to be fulfilled in eternity: angels to be judged; cities to be ruled; perhaps worlds to be evangelized. For these, suitable agents will be required: those who can rule, because they have served; those who can command, because they have obeyed; those who can save others, because they never saved themselves. Perhaps, even now our Heavenly Father is engaged in seeking those among us who can fill these posts. And He is seeking them, not amongst such as are filling high positions in the eyes of men, but in the ranks of such as are treading the trivial round and fulfilling the common task.

From the nearest fixed star the inequalities of our earth, whether of Alp or molehill, are alike insignificant. We need to look at our positions from the standpoint of eternity, and probably we shall be startled at the small differences between the lots of men. The one thing for us all is to abide in our calling with God, to count ourselves as His fellow-workers, to do what we can in His Grace and for His glory, never excusing ourselves, never condoning failure or misdoing, never content unless, by the help of

the Blessed Spirit, we have wrought out His promptings and suggestions to the best of our power, whether in the gold of the extraordinary, or the bronze of the cheaper and more ordinary achievement.

Of course there is no saving merit in what we do. Salvation is only by simple trust in our Saviour, Jesus. But when we are saved it gives new zest to Life to do all for Him, as Lord and Master; and to know that He is well pleased in the right doing of the most trivial duties of the home or daily business.

“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” (1 Peter ii: 20.)

May each reader learn this happy art, and go through life offering all to God, as the white-stoled priests in the Temple of old. Indeed, all believers have been made priests unto God; every sphere may be a Holy Temple; and every act done in the name of Jesus may be a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

YOUNG MEN, DON'T DRIFT!

Yes, it is the *drifting* that is most to be feared. Men don't become atheists and swindlers at a leap. For every one who resolutely sets his face against God, there are hundreds who drift from Him.

An illustration occurred once in my own holiday experiences which taught me to estimate fully the power of the tide to drift. We were staying on the coast of North Wales, and were desirous of visiting an island famous for its ruins and traditions. Nothing seemed easier than to cross the narrow straits which lay between it and the beach on which we stood. But as soon as we had got beyond the jutting headland we found ourselves caught by a strong current, which persistently carried us out of our course, and would have drifted us, had we yielded to it, far down the coast. It took four of us four hours and a half of hard rowing to cross the straits which, with a flowing tide, we retraversed at night in about half an hour.

Never since have I ignored the power of the

current, so gentle, so imperceptible, so pleasant to yield to, so difficult to resist. And often have I been reminded of the episode when I have seen young men drifting before the currents of moral influence on the great ocean of life.

Young men come up to our great centers of population from holy and blessed homes, where they have been born and bred. They are nice, amiable, well-meaning fellows, with no intention of going wrong, though perhaps with no very strong resolution to go right. The last words of advice from father or mother ring in their ears, urging them to keep up the good habits in which they have been trained since childhood, and they intend to conform to them.

If they fall in with a strong religious influence, it is not at all unlikely that they will turn out well. But if they go into some establishment or house where there is a fast, gay set, where the Lord's day is unkept, where filthy allusions pollute the talk and gambling fills the leisure hours, after the first momentary shock is over they give themselves up to the strong prevailing current, and begin insensibly, but swiftly, to drift. It is not necessary at first that they should commit some flagrant sin; it is enough that *they cease to resist* the insidious influences around.

Young men, is this a true picture of your condition? If so, heed the advice of an elder

brother, who has himself passed through city life, and who gathers up all the advice which he has to give in the words—*Don't drift.*

DON'T DRIFT INTO A LOOSE WAY OF KEEP-
ING SUNDAY.

When you are away from home, you do not know where to go, what church to attend, what minister to hear. If you enter a place of worship, no one knows and perhaps no one welcomes you. You miss the familiar faces and voices of your childhood's earliest memories. You feel that your absence from that congregation, and indeed from any other, for the rest of the day would not be noticed, and so you stay away. Your pursuits may be quite innocent, and yet your absence from God's house, according to your olden practice, and without sufficient reason, is the first symptom of yielding to the swift current which urges you to drift.

My advice is to go to the several places of worship in the near neighborhood of your residence. Go once or twice to ascertain the character of the ministry and of the work carried on, and then attach yourselves to the one you find most helpful. Make for the minister direct, tell him who you are, whence you have come, and your intention of settling down in his congregation; and if he be a true man, he will be only

too glad to welcome you. If he doesn't, I would advise you to betake yourself to some one who will.

When you settle in a new place, be sure also to find out the nearest Young Men's Christian Association. Ask for the secretary, and he will introduce you to friends, and home, and many things young men want.

DON'T DRIFT INTO LOOSE COMPANIONSHIPS.

A man is made or marred by his friends. As fish take on the mottling of the ground on which they lie, and as the butterflies resemble the flowers over which they hover, so do we become like those whom we choose for our companions. Don't drift into familiarity with any man till you are pretty sure of him, and have asked for God to show you his true character.

Beware of the man who goes in for a lot of showy jewelry, and professes to be able to show you a thing or two about life. He perhaps knows a little too much, and wants to see life at your expense. And when you have spent your last shilling, and he is tired of you, he will cast you off without mercy.

Beware of the man who talks slightingly of mother, father, home, or of women generally. Many men ridicule any allusion to the purity and tenderness of the home circle, and apparently

have no belief that woman can be other than the toy or victim of man—never his equal and confidante and friend. Beware of such men. The probability is that they have only lived to tempt the weaker sex whom they now traduce, and that their vices have necessarily excluded them from the society of the pure and virtuous.

Beware of the man who professes himself too deeply versed in the science of the day to believe in the Bible, and who ridicules those who do. It is an easy thing to ask a question which might take days of teaching and investigation to answer. Destructive criticism is child's play. Any fool can fire a cathedral which would take centuries in building; and any street-arab may smash a window which neither modern wealth nor art can reconstruct. True wisdom is not destructive but constructive. A man has no more right to steal away or spoil your faith than he has to deprive you of your eyesight or rob you of your purse. And if he attempt it, he betrays a dangerous character, of which you do well to beware.

DON'T DRIFT INTO EXTRAVAGANT EXPENDITURE.

Better live on oatmeal porridge and brown bread than spend more than you can afford or drift into debt. The pleasure of a day's outing or of an evening's gaiety has a nasty after-taste,

when for weeks or months you have to avoid certain people because you owe them money which you can not repay.

It is a temptation for us all to imitate the people above us in the social scale, but it is a miserable life to live, and very unsatisfactory, because we generally imitate their weaknesses and vices rather than their virtues. And yet it appears to afford much passing pleasure for the poor clerk to dress and speak with the airs of a young lord. One evening's conquest of the barmaids and barloafers must be a rare luxury! But this kind of thing can not be done without money. You can not throw much money away out of ten dollars per week. The result is that a young man sometimes spends in a single evening money enough to fill his heart with anxiety for many a weary day, and is perhaps tempted to take money which does not belong to him, in order to stay pressing demands, and in hope of the opportunity of repayment, which never comes.

DON'T DRIFT INTO HABITS OF GAMBLING.

There is plenty of it all around us, and a man feels rather lonely when he refuses to join in. I felt so some time ago on board an ocean steamer, when I seemed to be nearly the only one that refused to join in a sweepstakes. The workshops and establishments are comparatively rare which are

not filled with the buzz of excitement on the eve of some great race. And there are places in most large towns, clubs and such like, where men have the opportunity of losing fortunes, if they only are fools enough.

It is not chiefly the love of money that urges men to bet, but the excitement of the chance, which relieves the monotony of their otherwise aimless existence. We can form no concept on of the fascinations of this kind of life as we look on them from without; just as we can not realize the irresistible force of the whirlpool till we are being sucked into its gurgling vortex. But it is surely needless to fling ourselves into them to see what they are like. Once in, we shall probably find it impossible to get out. And we may get in almost imperceptibly. To deposit the first coin in a raffle or sweepstakes, to stake the first shilling on a horse, to lay a bet of a pair of gloves—these things may seem trifles, but they are a yielding to the outer rim of the whirlpool. Of course it is easy to break from them. But they may lead to other things, only removed from them by a single hair's-breadth, which will lead to others, and still others beyond. How much better to put the foot down and refuse the first! You mean to refuse the second; but if you are going to refuse at all, it will be unspeakably easier to refuse at first than afterward.

Betting is a bad thing. It undoes society as the white ant the wooden houses of the tropics. Men who bet care for little else. Love and home are sacrificed to the companions of the betting ring. Business is neglected because they live in the feverish hope of coming in for a windfall, and of getting money without giving an equivalent of any sort.

DON'T DRIFT INTO HABITS OF DRINKING.

Nothing is easier than to do this. The tides of strong drink are running swiftly through our streets, and every corner saloon is a jetty from which men may enter the boats and launch out upon the current. A few may enter it and yet escape; but for an enormous number there is little hope of escape, when once fairly afloat on the fascinating but perilous waters.

They say that smoking leads to drinking. If so, it would be well to avoid the first cigarette. Some of us have so many natural appetites to keep in order that we are thankful never to have awakened the habit of smoking, which seems a very masterful one, and terribly apt to become a tyrant. It would be foreign from my purpose to call smoking a sin. What right have I to add another to the ten commandments? But it certainly is to most people "a weight." In many cases it is the innocent little boy who, when

once in the house, opens the door to a gang of thieves.

You are not specially a sinner, dear young fellow, because you smoke. But is it wise to begin a habit for which you can not plead any good reason except that others do it, and which may lead you into drinking, bad companionships, and other things?

But other things drift a man into drinking habits. Loafing about the streets in the evenings; standing treat to companions, because you want to look large in their esteem, and with the certainty that you will have to drink what they provide in return; doing business over a wine bar; spending your evenings in places like music-halls, where drink passes round, and where the proprietor looks shyly on those who don't patronize the buffet—all these are easy methods of drifting into drink.

No man means to be a drunkard when he starts drinking. Those who are now in the agony of delirium were once as pure and true as you; but they were carried down an almost insensible gradient. Beware of their fate, and don't follow their earlier steps, lest you acquire a momentum you can not arrest, and go down to hell. There is no better safeguard to a young man in life than to take the pledge of total abstinence. He perhaps may not sign a pledge at a meeting, but

he can write one in his own chamber, and resolve, by God's help, never to touch this accursed foe of human hearts and happiness and homes.

DON'T DRIFT INTO HABITS OF IMPURITY.

In all of us there are appetites and desires which are beautiful and innocent enough when kept in their right place; but they are very reluctant to be kept there, and are ever chafing to ascend the throne of the being, and assume the mastership of the life. It is pleasant to allow them thus to ascend; but who shall depict the horrors of the wreckage of all that is bright and beautiful and happy in the life of the miserable victim who has yielded to their first suggestions?

Beware of drifting into secret sins, witnessed by no eye but God's. Beware of the society of those who are familiar with the ways of darkness and impurity. Beware of spectacles and pictures, of amusements and books, that excite the lower passions. Never go to a place to which you could not take your mother or sister. Never get familiar with a girl whom you could not introduce to the purest woman you know. Never treat a girl in another way than you would like a man to treat your own sister.

It is not necessary to yield to temptation. Abstinence from strong drink and excessive animal food; plenty of gymnastics, cycling, and muscular

exercise; hard mattresses, cold bathing, early rising, will answer many of the questions which so often perplex young men. And there is better than all—the power and purity of Jesus, which you may claim and use in all moments of need. One earnest, believing cry for help will bring Him near. And when He enters the soul, impurity can no more stand against His indwelling than straw before fire, or darkness before day.

DON'T DRIFT INTO AN IMPRUDENT MARRIAGE.

It is well when a young man meets a good girl. I never object to an early engagement when the couple are well mated, though I would urge a deferred marriage, until the comforts of a home can be provided either by the love of friends or by the results of united savings. And no home is so sweet as that which has been chosen and furnished by the taste and self-denial of those who are to enter it.

You ought not to choose your life-partner only from seeing her in evening dress or in company. All sweet faces do not tell a perfectly true story of the inner temper. You need a wife who knows something more than how to play one or two set pieces on the piano, or sing half a dozen songs. The girl who understands all the details of household management, who knows how all should be done though she may never have to do

it, who has been good to her parents and younger brothers and sisters, who dresses simply and neatly, who knows how to make a dollar do a dollar's work, who is deeply religious—that is the kind of woman who will make a good wife; and till God sends her to you, don't flirt or play with a girl's affections, or lead any to think you care for them when you don't.

DON'T DRIFT INTO A MERE MONEY-MAKING MACHINE.

Some seem to live for nothing else than to add a few more coins to their rising pile; and to do this, they sacrifice all that makes life sweet and noble and honorable. Have a lofty aim. Spend your life for the best results. Be more eager to get *up* than to get *on*. There is no harm in ambition, when it is directed to doing the best you can to make the world better and those around you happier; but it is a detestable passion to seek money for money's sake. Your aim must be to seek first the things that make for righteousness and peace, for God's glory and man's good. Be faithful in these, in your small sphere, and it will be almost certain that you will be put in a position where you will have the chance of being faithful also in much.

You tell me that you can not resist the strong current on which you are already launched, and that you have already commenced to drift. But it is not too late. Send up a cry of distress to the Lord Jesus, asking Him to come on board your boat. He is stronger than the mightiest current. And then if you like to put it so, give Him the towing-line, that He may take it in His hand, and tow you up the strong stream to His own bright Home.

There is no better policy, dear young brother, than to give your heart to Jesus. Take Him as your Saviour, Master, and Friend. Ask Him to live in your soul, making you pure and sweet and strong. Follow Him in His footsteps of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Go to no place where you can not take Him also. Let His friends be yours, and see that yours are His. Ask Him to put you into that position where you can please and glorify Him best. Remember that prayer and waiting will untie the stoutest knots and unravel the greatest difficulties.

WORDS OF HELP FOR CHRISTIAN GIRLS

DEAR FRIENDS:—

I have many things to say to you (suggested by the experiences of our own Church-Life and Bible-Classes), which I want you to think over quietly; so I will put them all into a letter, which you can keep and read again and again. And as you read it, try to think of me as an elder brother, who is eager to help you.

In all this world, there is nothing fairer than the young life which God has given you, with its sunny laughter, its high spirits, its hopes and golden dreams, its wealth of pure affection. You can enrich the poorest home as no money could. You can lighten the hardest lot. You can cheer the roughest path, making the weary feet forget the sharp flints. You can find the blue flowers blooming amid Arctic snows. And by doing so, you may give and get untold blessings.

I am glad that you have given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus. You will never regret that step, by which Jesus has become your Brother. Remember how He said, "*Whoso-*

*ever shall do the will of God, the same is * * * My sister."* And no one knows better than He does, how much is meant by the tie between a strong and noble Brother and the sisters who shelter beneath His care. He grew up with sisters in that village home under the blue Syrian skies; and, as the shadows of death gathered round His path, He made much of the love of His adopted sisters in the home in Bethany.

Words fail me to tell you all that the Lord Jesus will do for you. He will keep your hearts whiter than snow, removing each stain of sin by His own precious blood. He will put Himself as a shield between you and all manner of hurt. He will make you His special charge. He will quench your thirst from the brimming chalice of His own love. In perplexity He will guide; in peril He will protect; in necessity He will supply all your need. He will give you—what all women long for—the sense of belonging to some one, good enough, wise enough, and strong enough, to trust without misgiving or fear.

But I do hope you will be ALL for Him. This is the only path on which the sunbeams always play. There are many professing Christians who have just enough religion to make them miserable; and they might as well be without any. They take a good drink of the sweets of the world, and they try to quiet their conscience

by a pilgrimage to the living well. But though they rattle the chains, and let down their buckets, they never get one pure crystal drop for their poor parched lips, because they do not seek the Lord with *all* their hearts. And so, after a little while, they rush off again to the gilded pleasures of the world. Do not make their mistake. As Jesus gave all for you, so give all to Him; and He will give you back one-hundred fold.

Directly you are right with Christ, other things will right themselves.

DRESS.

Dress perplexes some, and takes up much time and thought. It is a difficult subject, and yet there are several clear rules to guide a Christian girl.

Do not dress showily, or extravagantly, or beyond your means.

Do not dress in such a way as to call attention to any part of your figure, or to distort or alter it.

Do not dress so that people shall notice your dress more than yourselves.

There is no reason why the general style of your dress should not be like that of others. To be totally out of the fashion would make you needlessly singular, and attract as much attention as if you were dressed in the height of fashion; and whatever makes others think of us, or

us think of ourselves, turns our thoughts away from Jesus, and from better things. I think that there is no higher art for a Christian girl than to dress simply, quietly, and tastefully; as one who is careful of the body which Christ has given, but who is mindful also of the Apostle's words: "*Let the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety.*"

ORNAMENTS.

The use of ornaments is also a matter of great heart-questioning. It is not an essential matter, and it should be settled between yourselves and Christ. Where there are doubts, the little trinkets should be laid aside till the great Owner tells His servants what He would like them to do.

It does seem strange that so much money should be locked up in articles of personal adornment when the Lord's cause is suffering for want of help! A Chinese Christian lady brought her jewels one morning to her husband, to build an Opium-refuge; and when he expressed surprise, she said, "I have taken Christ for my adornment, and surely that is enough for any Christian woman."

Put on the Lord Jesus, dear sisters, and you will lose your taste for many things you now hold dear, as most girls would throw away glass jew-

elry, if offered real gems. *"Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."* The woman who loads herself with jewels confesses herself wanting in the jewels of the heart; but she who has got these, troubles little about the diamonds or pearls of earthly mines.

AMUSEMENTS.

Amusements also exercise many. We must have rest and change in these busy eager times; but we must watch our leisure hours, lest they do us more harm than good. Some ways of spending them simply increases the exhaustion of the jaded mind and tired body, rendering us unfit for quiet prayer or daily work.

For these reasons, and for others, you must keep clear of the Theatre, the Concert Hall, and the Dancing Saloon. You can not go to these places, and keep the fulness of the Spirit, or the love of Jesus. You can not go to them without hearing or seeing things which should bring a blush to the face. You can not go to them without putting yourselves into the way of men with whom you should have no dealings whatever.

The atmosphere of such places will blight the fairest life, as gas blights tender plants. You will soon cease to care for them if you live near Christ, just as people put out their fires when the summer sun is shining. Remember the duties and calls of home, the necessity for elder sisters to throw themselves into the amusements of younger children, the many social and educational meetings held at Churches and Chapels, Y. W. C. A's., and other institutions, and I am sure that you will find that there is no need for you to seek pleasure in things which leave a sting behind.

DANCING.

Dancing is a matter to be settled between you and Christ.

I have often wondered how girls who have any self-respect can yield themselves, especially when attired in the flimsy costume of a ball-room, to the embrace of strange men; whose morals may be worse than doubtful. It does not seem fit that the body of a Christian, meant to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, should be whirled through the maze of a waltz by one whose linen may be spotless, but whose soul is dark with the ruin of some of your sisters, who, though fallen now, were once "white as the beautiful snow."

Young men are rather careful that the girls they love should not go to these promiscuous dances, and a straw will show the drift of the stream. No sensible man will choose his wife in a ball-room, nor a wise woman her husband. On the other hand, a young Christian girl told me the other day that, since she had given this up for Christ, He had filled her with unspeakable joy.

NOVELS.

Beware of *novel-reading*. Many a noble tree has been eaten through by minute insects, and many a promising character has been inwardly rotted by certain kinds of Novels and Novelettes, especially those issued in cheap weekly issues. Some young friends of mine, when once bitten by this fever, have done nothing else but read trashy and sentimental stories. They will rob themselves of food and sleep to read them. And then a great change takes place. They are so absorbed with the joys and sorrows of imaginary people that they overlook those of their immediate circle. Their appetite is so cloyed by sweets that they have no interest in the Bread of Life. They talk to you as those who are living in a dreamland of unreality.

I entreat you to guard against the insidious growth of this appetite. If you find it increasing on

you, break it off. Lay it aside in the strength of Christ, as the runner lays aside "every weight." If you must read stories, read only those by the best story-tellers. Remember that there are many books of travel, and history, and biography equal in interest to any fiction that was ever spun in the brain of man or woman.

PURITY.

It is of the utmost importance to keep absolutely pure. All around you are impure books, and men, and works; ready to soil you, as smuts do the clean linen put out to dry in some poor court yard.

You must guard against their first approach. Many a young girl has dated her ruin from her first smile at an indecent allusion. The other day I heard of a married woman who said, as a young girl entered the work-room for the first time: "Let her sit by me; I will soon shock her." Shame on her! say I. Alas! how much of this is going on everywhere. But, so long as you are pure, you will find that Christ-like chastity is an armor from which all these poisoned darts will glance aside. Depend upon it, a woman may pass unhurt through the foulest atmosphere, if only her heart is pure, and she is living in touch with Christ. And many a time she will be able

to frown down some indecent and unseemly jest, or to screen some young life.

MARRIAGE.

Every woman looks forward, as Ruth did, to be at rest in the home of her husband. Alas! how terrible, in many cases, has been the process of disenchantment. The shores of time are strewn with the wrecks of women's loves and hopes; and all because they have forgotten that true human love must be grounded on the love and choice and will of God. Human love can not satisfy, apart from the love of God.

Make Jesus your Counsellor about your future lot.

And now, as I say farewell, please accept my sincerest wishes for your happiness in this world and the next. Be ready for the Bridegroom's coming, and see that the lamp of your love is well supplied with the precious oil of the Holy Ghost, that so you may be ready to go in at once to the marriage feast.

Your sincere friend and brother,

F. B. MEYER.

SEVEN RULES FOR DAILY LIVING.

These brief and simple words are intended for many earnest Christians who are dissatisfied with their present life, and long to enter that more blessed state of rest and peace of which they catch occasional glimpses; as white-plumaged sea-birds flash for a moment, far away over the breakers, and then are lost to sight.

Now out of my own experience I would suggest these Seven Rules to my fellow-Christians:

I. MAKE A DEFINITE CONSECRATION OF YOURSELVES TO GOD.

Dr. Doddridge has left in his diary a very beautiful form of self-consecration. With most it would be sufficient to write out Miss Havergal's hymn, and to sign their names at the foot.

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
Always—only—for my King.

Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

But in any case it is well to write down some record of the act, to keep for future reference.

Of course when we have really given ourselves once, we can not give ourselves a second time. We may renew the consecration vows, we may review the deed of gift, we may insert any new clauses we like; and if we have gone astray, we may ask the Lord to forgive the foul wrong and robbery which we have done Him, and to restore our souls into the position from which we have fallen. Oh, how sweet the promise, "*He restoreth my soul!*" Dear Christian reader, seek

some quiet spot, some still hour, and yield yourself to God.

II. TELL GOD THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO BE MADE WILLING ABOUT ALL.

A lady was once in great difficulties about certain things which she felt eager to keep under her own control. Her friend, wishful to press her into the better life of consecration, placed before her a blank sheet of paper, and pressed her to write her name at the foot, and then to lay it before God in prayer. She did so, and at once entered this blessed life.

Are you willing to do this? Are you prepared to sign your name to a blank sheet of paper and then hand it over to God, for Him to fill in as He please? If not, ask Him to make you willing and able to do this and all things else. You never will be happy until you let the Lord Jesus keep the house of your nature, closely scrutinizing every visitor and admitting only His friends. He must reign. He must have all or none. He must have the key of every closet, of every cupboard, and of every room. Do not try to make them fit for Him. Simply give Him the key. He will cleanse and renovate and make beautiful.

III. RECKON ON CHRIST TO DO HIS PART PERFECTLY.

Directly you give, He takes. Directly you open the door, He enters. Directly you roll back the floodgates, He pours in a glorious tide of fulness; fulness of wealth, of power, of joy. The clay has only to be plastic to the hand of a Palissy. The marble has only to be pliant to the chisel of a Michael Angelo. The organ has only to be responsive to the slightest touch of a Handel. The student has only to follow the least hint of a Faraday or a Whewell. And there will be no failure in results. Oh, to be equally susceptible to the molding influences of Christ! We shall not fail in realizing the highest ideal of which we are capable, if only we will let Him do His work unhindered.

IV. CONFESS SIN INSTANTLY.

If you allow acid to drop and remain on your steel fenders, it will corrode them; and if you allow sin to remain on your hearts unconfessed, it will eat out all peace and rest.

Do not wait for the evening to come, or until you can get alone, but *there* in the midst of the crowd, in the very rush of life, with the foot-prints of sin still fresh, lift up your heart to your

merciful and ever-present Saviour, and say, "Lord Jesus, wash me now from that sin, in thy precious blood, and I shall be whiter than snow." The blood of Jesus is ever at work, cleansing us from unconscious sin; but it is our part to apply for it to cleanse from conscious and known sins so soon as we are aware of their presence in our lives.

V. HAND OVER TO CHRIST EVERY TEMPTATION AND CARE.

When you feel temptation approaching you, as a bird by some quick instinct is aware that the hawk is hovering near, then instantly lift your heart to Christ for deliverance. He can not rebuff or fail you. "*He will gather you under His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust.*" And when any petty annoyance or heavier worry threatens to mar your peace, in the flash of a moment, hand it over to Jesus, saying, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake this for me."

"Ah!" you sigh, "I wish indeed I could live like this, but in the moment of need I forget to look." Then do this: trust in Christ to keep you trusting. Look to Him so to abide in you as to keep you abiding. In the early morning entrust to Him the keeping of your soul, and then as hour succeeds to hour expect Him to keep that which you have committed unto Him.

VI. KEEP IN TOUCH WITH CHRIST.

Avoid the spirit of fault-finding, criticism, uncharitableness, and anything inconsistent with His perfect love. Go where He is most likely to be found, either where two or three of His children are gathered, or where the lost sheep is straying. Ask Him to wake you morning by morning for communion and Bible-study. Make other time in the day, especially in the still hour of the evening twilight, between the work of the day and the avocations of the evening, when you shall get alone with Him, telling Him all things, and reviewing the past under the gentle light which streams from His eyes.

VII. EXPECT THE HOLY GHOST TO WORK IN,
WITH, AND FOR YOU.

When a man is right with God, God will freely use him. There will rise up within him impulses, inspirations, strong strivings, strange resolves. These must be tested by Scripture and prayer, and if evidently of God they must be obeyed.

But there is this perennial source of comfort: God's commands are enablings. He will never give us a work to do without showing exactly how and when to do it, and without giving us the

precise strength and wisdom we need. Do not dread to enter this life because you fear that God will ask you to do something you can not do. He will never do that. If He lays aught on your heart, He will do so irresistibly; and as you pray about it, the impression will continue to grow, so that presently, as you look up to know what He wills you to say or do, the way will suddenly open, and you will probably have said the word, or done the deed, almost unconsciously.

There may be failures in this life, but they will arise on the human side, not the Divine. Well will it be if we can instantly discover the cause of failure, and confess it, and seek restoration to the old peace and joy. After all, the sheep does not keep the shepherd. The shepherd keeps the sheep, and feeds it, and leads it, and make it to lie down. What then may we not expect from our Good Shepherd? and who can paint the verdure of the green pastures, or the crystal beauty of those unfailing springs, to which He will lead the docile and trustful spirit?

Be that spirit thine, dear reader, and mine.