

she added musingly, "I've had as much time as ever for reading. I guess it's because I took the time when I wouldn't have been doing anything."

And so Gertrude found that the secret for which she had been searching was a very simple one, after all, just the seizing of the moments as they fly, the odd moments, which we are so apt to throw away.

#### When God Takes Us at Our Word.

When God takes us at our word, what then? Are we greatly surprised? Are we sincerely and heartily glad?

The monthly consecration meeting of young people's societies is a place where vows and pledges are made and longing desires are expressed. Such words as these are often heard: "I long to be more like my Saviour." "I wish to serve my Master more earnestly than ever before." "If God will give me opportunity, I will do more for Him than in time past." "I desire a deeper experience of the love of Jesus, I want to know no will but His."

In the stillness of God's house, when hearts are drawn together in sympathy and melted by hymn and prayer, when the enthusiasm of numbers is felt, and the electric current of thought passes from heart to heart, as voice after voice is heard, these promises are sincerely and earnestly made. It should never be forgotten that they are registered on high, and that they are just as binding in the midst of the week-day business, the fret and worry of daily life, as in the quiet hour and the holy place.

How is it on Monday when God takes us at our word and gives us the finest opportunities to show our love and zeal, to give up our own way and take His, to do good to others, and learn more of our Master? It is a little harder to do it then, isn't it, than to promise it at first?

And when we say earnestly that we wish to be better Christians, and better fitted for service, how is it when our Father takes us at our word in this, and sends the sharp discipline, the hard experience, the difficult task that tries and tests every power? These are the very things needed to fulfil the desire to "be better." Is it not a surprise after all, when they come? Perhaps we did not mean these hard things, but the wish could not be granted without them, and God took us at our word.

But surely we will not take back the word that has gone from our lips, after we have "opened our mouth to the Lord." We want Him to take us at our word, and then to help us to keep it faithfully, no matter what it costs. When we take Him at His word, He never fails us, and we may well let Him have His own way with us. Only, it is a serious thing to give one's word, especially to the Father of all; and while the heart may not know all that it may mean, it should at least be perfectly sincere, and should be willing to find out what the will of the Lord is, and then, having found it, to do it, "in the fear of the Lord, faithfully."

#### Young but Once.

Time rolls onward, but never backward. It is like the stream in this regard. It bears the youth onward to manhood, and those in manhood to old age. Such is the order, and it is never reversed. Those that have passed out of the season of youth never

return to it again. A person may wish that he could begin his life anew and live it over again, that he may shun the mistakes that he has made; but it is a vain wish. It cannot be gratified.

Hence the importance of improving the season of youth wisely and well. This has been characterized as the spring season of life. The spring of the year is the sowing season; and every wise husbandman is careful to improve it well. He is diligent in casting in his seed, and in making timely preparation for a harvest, for he well knows that if he neglects this season for doing its appropriate work, he shall not reap in the autumn.

And in like manner should the youth improve the springtime of life. He should then sow with reference to a harvest in the autumn of life. Neglect thus to do will be sure to be followed with unhappy results. He should improve his precious time in the acquisition of that knowledge that will be of use to him in after years. Unless he does he will vainly regret his ignorance in middle life and in old age. Then shall he have cause to mourn and to say, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! Neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!"

And the young should not only be careful to sow in due season, but they should be not less careful what kind of seed they sow, for "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." So it is in the natural world, nor less so in the moral world. A young man that sows wild oats will reap the same. The youth that forms evil habits will experience the unhappy results in the later periods of life. He may make light of it when kindly warned of the consequences, but he may see the time when he will sadly regret that he did not heed the friendly admonition. With rare exceptions the men that are now honored and esteemed are the men that well improved the golden season of their youth. They then diligently sowed the seed that has matured in a golden harvest.

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#### The Four Captains.

"Oh, mamma," cried little Fred, coming in from Sunday-school one day like a brisk winter breeze, "I'm one of the captains. Miss Lee made four captains and I'm one."

"Tell me all about it," said mamma, looking as if she thought it a very interesting story.

"You see," said Fred, "we've had helpers in our class ever so long, but they were all girls. Two took turns

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every Sunday and they counted the scholars and the money and passed papers and all that. That began long ago. But to-day Miss Lee said the boys ought to have a chance to help, and she would make the four biggest ones captains, and I was one. The captains sit in different places, at the beginning of a row, and we each one have two rows of children for our companies. We're to sort of look out for them, and to pass the papers, and I s'pect we'll make 'em behave when they are bad, too."

"Miss Lee can attend to that, I am sure," said mamma, smiling. "The best way for you to keep order will be to be orderly yourself and set a good example."

"Well, that's what Miss Lee said, only I forgot to put it in," said Fred. "But I mean to be a good captain, anyhow."

"That is right. I hope you will be the best possible sort," said mamma.

The plan of having captains seemed to promise well in the beginning, and it kept on turning out well for some time.

But one day the very spirit of mischief seemed to be abroad in the classroom. The children were all restless and squirmed about in their seats, and crumpled papers, and crowded against those near them, and things were generally uncomfortable, as sometimes happens even in the best regulated classes.

Now was the time of all times for the four captains to set a good example, but, if you will believe me, they set a very bad one instead. It seems a pity to tell it, but indeed the captains behaved worse than some of the rest who sat in the companies and had nothing special to do.

Miss Lee spoke to the captains quietly several times, and at last told them to do certain things that she wished them to do. She did not say "Don't, don't," forbidding this or that, but she did say: "Do this, do

that," and those naughty captains did not obey. If they had been willing to do what they were told, it would have kept them busy doing right and they would have had no time to do wrong, or tease and tempt others. But they wouldn't.

"I want to see the captains after school," said the teacher in a low voice to each of the four, before the class was dismissed. "I want to say something about the right kind of drill." The boys felt interested and curious and readily waited.

"I think," said Miss Lee pleasantly, looking into their faces, when the rest of the boys were gone, "that I have very good captains, but they are not as well drilled as I wish they were. To drill means to train as soldiers, and of course the thing that is most important should come first. Do you not think so?"

The boys agreed that this was true, of course.

"The first thing that a soldier should be trained or drilled in," said Miss Lee, "is obedience. A soldier that cannot obey well, cannot make others follow or obey him. I want my little captains to practice obedience to orders. A captain must obey the colonel, and I am your colonel. Jesus is the Great Commander, and we must all obey Him. I am sure that my captains wish to be good ones, so I tell them of the first lesson of all and beg them to learn it."

And four sober little captains went home to think about it.

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