

Another of you tells me the usual story of the soul's first awaking, followed by alternate happiness and almost despair at the little progress made; the falling back into old ways and of the temper which "becomes unbearable" when daily tasks press too heavily upon you. "Temper and day-dreams are my greatest troubles. I am not earnest enough in prayer, and I do not love my Bible as I ought. I have a brother and I am leading him anything but a good example. I have tried lots of times to get help in various ways and have failed. The Twilight Talks from time to time have helped me. I hope you will not mind me writing, but I feel sure you can help me, if you will."

Let us listen together to one or two others before we answer or comment on what we have already heard.

"I have never seen you or even known your dwelling-place," writes another, "but I feel in you a very dear friend, helping me by your 'talks' to live more and more Christlike. I am sure a good many more like me have the same help. It will be encouraging to you to think that some of us 'dear girls' are being influenced for higher things."

"It is a grand thing to feel you are influencing somebody for good; because there are so many bad influences for us young girls especially."

"I have been brought up to attend church regularly, and have had plenty of outside Christian influences; but until your talks began, I never really felt the need of God; but I will never regret that I have come to Jesus and asked Him to take me for His service. My chief fault that causes me often a great deal of sorrow, is my want of courage in speaking a word for Jesus. I am naturally nervous and sensitive, and too much afraid that my companions will think that I am calling myself a saint and scoff at me. I am longing and praying earnestly that I may be made strong and not afraid to speak of Christ to any one."

"I would like you to take this subject next month, as it may help others as well as me."

I am almost bewildered with the number of such confidences as I have quoted from, and I feel quite anxious that each of you should speak to all the rest through your written words to me. Here one tells me:—

"It is quite true what you say about passages from God's word coming to mind just at the time we need them most, and I will tell you of one instance of mine. I had been an unusually trying day. I felt very tired when I found there was more to be done than I had thought, and the idea came into my mind 'It is too bad.' I had not given expression to it, when I thought I heard the words 'Do all things without murmuring. . . .'"

The dear writer realised that the passage of Scripture committed to memory, perhaps long before, had been brought home to her just when she wanted it, by the unseen power of the Holy Spirit.

Only bits here and there can be quoted, but as I glance from letter to letter I see a sentence in one which bears a Jamaica post-mark, telling how the writer, a married lady, is always with us in spirit as we sit "In the Twilight Side by Side," and how she rejoiced that the talks, which she calls "To me helpful and loving bits of counsel," were to be continued.

The Antipodes has furnished its contribution towards this open night, in sweet words of thankfulness from one who writes that when joining in our Twilight Talks she seemed to hear again the voice and words of her own beloved mother.

Could any testimony be more precious than this? It was a sweet answer to the desire of my heart when we began our gatherings, that in speaking to you, dear girl-friends, I might be regarded as a sort of deputy mother; that thoughts of home and of the real mothers who

loved you and cared for you, might make you the more willing to listen to me and to believe that, because I had daughters of my own, you would think it possible I could sympathise with you.

One, who in writing to me, said, "I am a motherless bairn, and I have no one down here to tell my secret thoughts to," hardly realised how that word "motherless" impelled me to sit down and straightway answer the letter which gave her real name and address—a very rare thing for my correspondents to do.

My heart fairly glows with happiness as I recall the words of another amongst you, not an English girl, but the writer of a letter which I shall treasure always, and the contents of which call forth a thanksgiving whenever they recur to my mind. She will forgive my quoting a portion of them and calling upon you all to join me in thanking God for this and every other instance of blessings which have resulted from our talks together.

"Allow me to tell you that amongst your many girl friends whom you gladden every month with your 'Twilight Talks,' there is an Austrian girl too, who is ever so much thankful. . . . I cannot tell you how intensely grateful I feel for your motherly advice, and I am indebted to you for some progress in my poor, weak character, and much sweet comfort in a great cross which our Lord has put upon my shoulders."

The dear writer adds words that are a little poem—a song from a pure and loving heart—written in what is to her a foreign tongue, but charmingly expressed.

"I am," she adds, "a Roman Catholic, but we are nevertheless brothers in the love for our Saviour Jesus Christ; we are equals in the essentials of our faith in His goodness. May He grant us the same love in work and deed."

By a further expression the dear writer shows that she considers English girls have special opportunities for usefulness. I trust that all of you to whom I speak will justify, by your lives, the good opinion formed by her of my young countrywomen, and endeavour to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

So far we have listened to the words of those, who, despite discouragements and failures, have had something to say which has suggested a feeling of thankfulness that we were ever led to confide in each other.

The last letter from which I shall quote has no bright side to it. It is a cry for help, a sort of despairing cry, and a confession of faults, so serious and so many, that it is pitiful to read. The writer says:—

"I am selfish, vain, self-conscious in every act, look and thought, indolent gluttonous, with no strength of will and not a particle of honest, unselfish love in my heart for anybody. I know the fault is in myself, and the remedy is to have love—which is one of the fruits of the Spirit—in my heart, but how shall I get it? I have prayed for it for three years, but I am no better. Once I started to be a Christian, and was happier for a little while, but—" I will not quote the rest. It is one list of self-accusations and petitions for help, soon, for "One who is miserable."

What can we do to help this despairing member of our meeting? Her whole appeal, of which I have given only a short extract, shows that she knows where the only true help is to be found, as well as any of us do. She is only twenty-three years of age, and lest we should imagine that illness has to do with her unsatisfactory condition, she says that she is in perfect health.

If only any of us knew her personally, and could induce her to throw off her indolence, and share in some useful work, that would be a good beginning and take her off the perpetual self-seeking of which she complains. Nothing helps us to forget self like work for others. Failing the ability to aid her by

example, partnership in good doing and cheering, spoken words, we can only send her a united message, begging her to put forth the strength that is in her, to try and look at the brighter side of things, to read persistently the invitations, promises and encouragements contained in God's word, and to pray, not hopelessly and despairingly as she seems to have done, but trustingly and as if expecting to get the help she needs.

All we can do, is to ask God to answer, strengthen and guide her into paths of usefulness, happiness, and spiritual peace. Dear girls, whom God has blessed and whose lives are brightened by the thought of His love in Christ, His faithfulness and the words, "Lo I am with you always," ask like gifts for this despairing sister. "It is not the will of your Father, which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Before we part, I must say a few words to these whose words we listened to early in the evening. To you who grieve over failures, efforts at self-conquest and poor results, victories at one time and defeats at another, let me answer, "Yours is the experience of every one who wishes to be a true servant of God. Our spiritual life here is one of warfare and we have to fight the same enemies, again and again, and not always successfully. But what would you think of a soldier who had fought under a great leader and shared his triumphs again and again, yet ran away when called upon to face the foe once more? His would be a poor record to leave. How much more would it be so for the soldier who follows the great "Captain of our Salvation, Jesus Christ"?

In one of our earliest talks, December 26, 1890, we entered into this subject of good resolutions, failures and new beginnings. I should like you to recall it to mind, as I think it will be helpful, especially to those of you who did not meet with us at that time. Better still, read the testimony of St. Paul as to the Christian warfare. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. When I would do good, evil is present with me."

From the heart of that brave, strong soldier of Christ went up the cry to God, "Who shall deliver me?" and the answer follows instantly, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Later he says, "I can do all through Christ which strengtheneth me."

St. Paul did not fight in vain. A prisoner at Rome, and daily expecting a martyr's death, he wrote to his young friend, Timothy, whom he had known from a child, "I am now ready to be offered. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Do you ask "How can a weak girl's strength be compared to that of the great apostle—so strong, so brave, so wise?" In a sense it cannot, but neither can your needs be compared to his. He lived and worked amidst distress, persecution, tribulation, famine, and with the sword of martyrdom hanging over his head at all times.

You have just to meet and battle with the common difficulties and temptations of daily life, in a land where Christ's name is honoured; and you can worship and serve Him in public and private, none making you afraid. Best of all, you have the same God who is as ready to hear and answer you as St. Paul found Him to be, and of whom you can say with confidence, if you are a disciple of Christ, He is "a very present help in trouble."

When we next meet, I hope we shall be able to talk of some of the other subjects you have named in your letters.