

(says the Apostle) that men pray everywhere, lifting up *holy hands*. And another Apostle tells us that the great secret of obtaining our petitions is to *ask obediently* with God: 'Whoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.'

5. *Pray in faith.* Why are our prayers oftentimes so poor, and cold, and languid? It is because we do not really believe that the Lord is able to give us, and also *willing* to give us, what we ask for. Therefore we approach the throne with wavering, doubting, undecided hearts.

Now, this dishonors God. It is very displeasing to Him. Would it not displease a fellow-creature if we were to go and ask him for something, and at the same time were to tell him that we mistrusted him? And remember, God reads our hearts.

Here then is a reason why we so often get up from our knees so little refreshed and comforted. What! shall we doubt God when He so graciously promised to receive us? How abundant are the promises to *believing* prayer! Does not our Lord Himself give us plenteous encouragement, when He says 'All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive'; and again, 'What things soever ye desire when you pray, *believe* that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'

Every time you drop a letter into the letter-box, you do it *by faith*. You believe that the letter which contains your words will be carried to its destination, and that in due time the reply will come. You cannot see the postman put it into his bag and carry it off. You cannot follow it, as it travels mile after mile, from one part of the country to the other. But yet you trust, and believe, and expect that all will be well, and that your writing will not be in vain.

Exercise the same faith in higher things. Believe that the words uttered in your private chamber will mount up to the throne of God, and bring down blessings from above.

God has an abundant supply. Only ask in faith, and that supply is open to you. Prayer is the golden Key which unlocks the heavenly treasure; and no one can use that key too often. It is the Pitcher that we let down into the well which is never dry. Go again and again, and be assured you will never come away empty. God loves to 'fill the hungry with good things,' whilst 'the rich' and those who fancy they have need of nothing, 'are sent empty away.'

6. *Ask earnestly.* Our prayers must be fervent; they should come from a burning, glowing soul. The whole inner man should go up in secret cries. Surely, if we feel our wants deeply, we cannot express them coldly. If the fire really burns within us, there will be heat. Need I tell you that prayers without earnestness are like a bird without wings? The eagle soars away towards heaven, but these never leave the ground.

Did you ever go into a court of justice, and hear a prisoner tried for his life? When he is found guilty and condemned to death, have you not heard him cry for mercy? Did you not notice his pale and anxious face, which so plainly told you of the bitter agony of his mind? Ah, his was an earnest cry; for he dreaded his punishment, and longed for pardon.

Again, was not the Prodigal Son in earnest, when he ran to his father and said 'Father, I have sinned'? Was not drowning Peter in earnest, when he cried 'Lord, save me'? Was not the Publican's a fervent prayer, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner'?

Do you know what such prayer as this is? I do not ask if you pray thus at *all* times, but do you *ever* offer up such earnest, hearty supplications to God? Depend upon it, this is the prayer which prevails. It is the bow fully bent that speeds the arrow, and sends it straight home to the mark. It is when the wrestler puts forth his whole strength into the struggle that he wins the day. The cry that will take no denial is that which pierces to the throne of heaven.

O then, be earnest with God; for your wants are many, your need is great, and His delight is to give. And it is to the urgent, pressing petitioner that He loves to hearken. From such an one the Lord will never turn away.

7. *Ask all in the name of Christ.* And why not in our own name? It is because we have sinned, and our sins have separated us from God. But it is not a hopeless separation. There is a way by which we may draw near to Him. Christ says 'I am the way, . . . no man cometh unto the Father but *by Me*.' There is this way, and no other, by which we may come to God. And this is the reason why, in all our Church prayers especially, we use some such words as these—'Through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ'; or, 'For Jesus Christ's sake'; or, 'For the honor of our Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ.'

What a blessing it is that we, who are so unworthy to speak to God, have One who allows us to use His name, and who Himself speaks to His heavenly Father for us!

But let us not merely go through the form of mentioning Christ our Saviour's name. Let us earnestly plead His merits; and let us believe His gracious promise, 'Whoever ye shall ask the Father *in My name*, He will give it you.'

I might give you many more directions; but it is hoped that these few will be useful to you. Try to act upon them. It may be well to examine yourself on each of these heads, and see what is your weak point, and where you fail. The word of God tells us that we 'ask and receive not, *because we ask amiss*.'

It is a blessed thing if God has taught you *this* lesson—that you have naturally no power to pray. There was a time, perhaps, when you could say prayers fluently enough; but now at times you find yourself scarcely able to pray at all. You now realize what it is to be in the presence of God. You feel that it is a very solemn thing to speak to Him. You cannot do it until the spirit loosens your tongue, and teaches you to cry 'Abba, Father.'

Among other petitions, then, do not forget to ask for the power to pray. And may the Lord give you 'the spirit of grace and of supplication!' May He teach you how to ask! And may the act of prayer be one of real comfort and joy to your soul!—*Bishop Orendan*.

## MABEL'S VOCATION.

BY MARY ASHTON.

'Beautiful! noble!' murmured Mabel Horne as she closed the book she had been reading, and leaning back in her low seat by the fire, began to think over the story that had so interested her. It was a tale of thrilling interest, of high purposes and noble acts wrought by a young, weak girl, amidst uncongenial surroundings; and was, as Mabel said, a noble and beautiful life. And it aroused in Mabel a desire for some similar career; a longing to do some great deed, to suffer some great sorrow, if need be, so that it might be a path rather elevated above the ordinary way of life—something 'out of the common,' as she put it to herself.

And as she dreamed on, imagining herself the heroine of a hundred unlikely and impossible incidents, the short winter afternoon closed in, the fire burnt low, and yet Mabel sat still in her comfortable seat, unconscious of all her surroundings, until the opening of the door, and a great flood of light from the hall, broke up her reverie, followed as it was by the reproving voice of Aunt Anna.

'The fire nearly out, the room cold and miserable; and you were too indolent to ring the bell, Mabel, I suppose.' And in a few minutes the energetic lady had coaxed out a bright blaze, had ordered in tea things, and had shutters shut, curtains drawn, and a general transformation in the room; while Mabel, coloring high, partly from shame and partly from vexation, had picked up her book and hurried to her room, to smooth her disordered hair before she joined the family meal.

Mabel Horne was a quiet, dreamy girl of fourteen. For a few months she had been living with her Aunt, since the death of her father. Her mother had died when Mabel was but an infant, and perhaps growing up as her father's constant companion, and with no one to control her but her indulgent maid—who had nursed her all her life—was the cause, as Aunt Anna said, of the girl's want of energy, and many indolent and disorderly habits.

Certainly, Mabel was a very great trial to Aunt Anna, who was an active lady, fond of her housekeeping, very rigid in her notions of neatness and order, and who prided herself on the punctual and orderly arrangements of her household.

But Mabel was a frequent offender. It began in the morning, when lingering until the last moment in bed, she found to her dismay that there was not time to dress and present herself at the breakfast table at the proper hour; and day after day she came down to find cold coffee, and cold, disapproving looks, as might well be expected from punctual, orderly Aunt Anna. Then through the day, Mabel preparing her lessons in a listless, absent manner, and lounging by the fire, absorbed in a book, or deep in some day-dream, all these things were great trials to Mrs. Spicer, and were the source of much discomfort between Aunt and niece. Yet Mabel truly loved her aunt and uncle, loved them for their warm welcome to the comfortable home which was now hers; and constantly she made promises of amendment, which, alas! were never kept. And so Mabel dreamed on of some impossible career of usefulness, while she disregarded the many duties and pleasures of the life that was hers.

On this particular evening Mabel saw, as she took her seat at the tea table, her uncle half-hidden behind his outspread 'Times' newspaper, her Aunt sitting erect before the tea-tray, while the kettle hissed and sputtered and boiled away on the fire—Mabel saw, as I say, that she was in disgrace, and that a reproof was impending.

Presently, when the meal was in progress, Aunt Anna spoke.

'I should be sorry to say anything harsh, Mabel; I only speak for your good; but it is best to speak out. You must turn over a fresh leaf, for I can do with these careless, indolent ways no longer.'

Mabel looked down, and her Uncle looked up for the explanation his wife was quite ready to give: How Mabel idled in bed half the morning, came down when the breakfast-table ought to have been cleared, was late for dinner, tea and supper, upset all the order of the house; in fact, did not one single useful thing from morning to night, as Mrs. Spicer observed, but rather increased people's work by her laziness, letting out fires, and sitting dreaming over books, when she should see the room was comfortable for other people. Here Aunt Anna paused and took breath.

Mabel had no excuse to offer. She could only say, as she had said before, that she was 'very sorry'; but she felt her Aunt's reproof more keenly, as there was an unusual listener to it in the person of a lady; who had come on a visit to Mrs. Spicer that very day. This lady was very pleasing in Mabel's eyes; there was something so sweet and calm in her face and quiet movements, so different to bustling Aunt Anna; and yet there was energy and life in her expression, and a bright manner, which made her very attractive, although she was long past middle life.

This lady looked rather pityingly at Mabel that evening. She read something of the girl's dreamy, imaginative nature, and guessed at her ambitious longings for a different life; and Miss Bruce determined that before her visit ended she would try and rouse Mabel from her romantic imaginings, and see a better state of things between Aunt and Niece. So for several of the short afternoons, Miss Bruce drew Mabel into conversation, as the daylight waned, and they sat by the fireside in the 'dark hour' when even Aunt Anna's busy fingers dropped the knitting-needles, and she subsided into a quiet doze. Then Margaret Bruce and young Mabel Horne talked of books, of history, of biography, of great deeds and noble names, and Mabel's heart throbbed with pleasure, as she found some one to listen to her who did not condemn all her fanciful notions as 'trash,' and bid her rather darn stockings or learn to make pastry.

And as the two grew friendly and communicative, Mabel confided to her patient listener some of her own dreams of life, some of her wild longings. 'I wish, O how I wish I could find out my vocation!' she said. 'It

seems such a beautiful idea that we all have a vocation, something which we are made to do, and one just suited for, and which we must strive to find out. Do you know, Miss Bruce, I think I could be Florence Nightingale, or a Grace Darling, or like one of those many women who do great, glorious things.' And the tears glistened in Mabel Horne's eyes, and the face flushed with the excitement of her feelings.

'Perhaps your vocation is nearer home, dear Mabel; perhaps it is closer to you than you think,' said Miss Bruce, quietly.

Mabel looked at her incredulously. 'O no,' she said, with a half smile, 'there is nothing for me to do at home. Aunt does all that is to be done, and there is no need for any one else; besides, that kind of work is not in my way. I don't like it.'

'But, Mabel, it seems to me that our vocation may not lie in just what we like to do; it may be in pursuits which are naturally uncongenial, but which by use we come to find pleasant. The great thing is to do that which lies nearest, and at a future time God may make the path plainer.'

'But what work is there for me here, Miss Bruce?' argued Mabel. 'I have my studies, and I love them. Then when they are done I have only myself to please; and I read, and think, and so pass the time away.'

'Well, if I may speak plainly, Mabel, I think you are neglecting your vocation, putting aside the work which is set in your way. God has taken away your parents, and disposed of your Aunt to take you into her home as a daughter, and so it would seem that there is work for you here, at any rate for the present.'

'But what can I do?' said Mabel. 'I can't see one single thing to be done, excepting, perhaps, poking the fire at the right time; or watering Aunt's flowers, or reading the paper to Uncle, and those common sort of things,' and Mabel smiled scornfully.

'There is the mistake, Mabel,' said Miss Bruce, 'those little things are not common.' In doing them faithfully, one by one as they come, many a woman lives a noble life, a life of more true self-denial than one whose name is before the world. It may be great and glorious to be a writer, or a public worker and benefactor, one whose work is seen and valued by all; but a woman's truest life is passed in her home, and in the little details you call common—which make that life happy.'

Mabel sat silently. It was a new and not agreeable suggestion to her. What, was it possible that all her sudden ideas and glowing fancies could subside into a quiet domestic life resembling her Aunt Anna's?

After a time she spoke again, but her voice was gentler, the scornful smile was gone. 'But my life, Miss Bruce—you see just what it is; tell me what am I to do with it?'

'Let us take one day, just a solitary day, Mabel. Now suppose to-morrow you were to rise ten minutes sooner, come down as soon as Aunt Anna, or perhaps a minute sooner, and see if the fire is burning brightly, and the table spread as she likes to see it. Suppose, instead of sitting over a book, you joined in talking, listened to the little bits your uncle reads from the paper—'

'But I don't want to hear them. I read a book because I hate to know what is to be for dinner, and who is married or dead, or what the Queen did yesterday,' interrupted Mabel.

'But we are talking of what *they* like,' resumed Miss Bruce; 'of your power of giving them pleasure. Then, suppose when the hours for your study are over, how you would please your aunt by sitting down with a little needlework, to chat with her. Never mind if her talk is about her household; it will be good information for you, and will also be a lesson in self-denial. And then, dear Mabel, if we add punctuality at every meal, a little reading aloud to your uncle in the evening, joining him in his favorite game of chess, and other little things which will arise themselves, I don't think you will fret that your day has been so aimless, so selfish, as it now is.'

'And you think that is the work I am called to do?' asked Mabel sadly.

'I do not know what it may be in the future,' said her friend; 'but I feel sure your work, now you are a young girl in your aunt's house, lies in the faithful observance of just these little duties which would make you and others happier.'

'Not me,' said Mabel. 'Such things would not give me happiness, unless indeed it makes one happy to deny our own selves. However, I will try it; I do want to find my vocation.'

And Mabel kept her word. Day by day there was a struggle, an effort to subdue her imaginings, and go steadily through the round of little duties which had appeared to her so worthless, but which grew in importance as she realized the happiness and comfort which discharging them faithfully will bring.

A year after, and Miss Bruce was again a visitor at Mrs. Spicer's house.

But what a change was there. The clouds between aunt and niece seemed smoothed away. Aunt Anna was growing quite placid and calm, while Mabel had a ring in her voice, an energy in her manner, that were great improvements to her. And Miss Bruce noticed with pleasure how Mabel's quick eye was the first to detect and set right any little household affair that might ruffle her aunt; how her place was always filled at the right time; how she seemed to anticipate the wants of others, and had become, as her aunt delightedly told, her 'right hand.'

And that first night, as Miss Bruce sat by her bedroom fire, musing on the change in the house, and the bright, healthful face of her young friend, she felt the touch of a soft hand, and Mabel took her old seat at her feet.

'And you are happy now?' asked Miss Bruce, after listening to the girl's account of how good aunt was, how nicely they got on together, and how pleased her uncle was if she sat and read to him.

'You are happy now, then, Mabel? Have you found your vocation?'

And Mabel blushed and smiled as she whispered 'You have not forgotten my old silly fancies and ideas, then. But I think I have found my vocation, and it is, as you told me, very close to home.'—*Kind Words*.