

more than two hours' sleep. An eminent business man testified to the value and strength of spending thus the first waking hour, and said that his wife felt unequal, spiritually, to the duties of a large household unless she spent the time from six to eight in her own room, *alone with God*.

All this was as enchanting and inviting to me as the land of promise to the Israelites. And why should I not go in and possess the land? Why not? There was the inevitable Jordan, in the form of the insuperable difficulty of getting up early; but just as the living God led His people through the river, so, the writer assured us, God could and would awaken all who would trust Him to do it for them. So, without debating or delaying, I committed, that very night, my soul and body to the Lord, praying Him to arouse me; and, to my infinite joy, His invisible hand touched me punctually at six o'clock the next morning. How literally true became the ancient passage, "*He wakeneth morning by morning*," he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isaiah l. 4). How real the fellowship in prayer! How bright the sunrise in the soul! Shall I ever forget that red-letter day, that new chapter in my spiritual history! Alas! because of weariness through overwork, or because of unfaithfulness and unwatchfulness, there have been omissions, pages utterly blank, days without sunshine, missing links in the chain of gold; but, on the whole, I have kept, by God's grace, to the new habit, and I can humbly testify that these latter days have had a glory and a joy unknown before, and this I owe to the fact that I then heard the revivals of the departing missionary, "Watch the morning watch!"

The Rev. Webb-Peploe once said: "All great saints have been early risers." That is a bold statement; but I am surprised how much it is being confirmed by my reading and observation. It was so with Wesley and Whitefield. That seraphic soul, Joseph Alling, whose powerful preaching in the seventeenth century was blessed to thousands, and whose book, "*An Alarm to the Unconverted*," became the most popular book of its day, made a practice of spending the hours between four and eight o'clock in the morning praising God, and listening to the oracles of His Word. If he heard any smith at his work before he had got to his knees, he would exclaim, "How this noise shames me! Doth not my Master deserve more than theirs?" Frances Ridley Havergal could not have filled the earth with so much of the music of heaven had she

not enjoyed what she calls "*the one hour with Jesus*." Hudson Taylor, whose China Inland Mission is such a startling work of faith in this nineteenth century; George Muller, whose answered prayers have vindicated the faithfulness of God in this unbelieving age; Handley Moule, whose books on the spiritual life, and lectures at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, are sending "rivers of living water" through the land; F. B. Meyer, who with golden pen and glowing tongue is bringing home to thousands of Christians the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" and others whom I know, find their secret of abiding strength in *beginning every day* with God, and in being *filled afresh with the Holy Spirit*.

Can any of us dispense with this morning watch? Mistresses and maids, with the besetting cares of the household; toilers, having to listen to the blasphemies of fellow-workmen; men of business, finding it hard to live out the pure ethics of Christ in the midst of worldly maxims, what time is there to hear God's still small voice, unless in the hush of morn? "Early in the morning (Hebrew) will I seek thee" Psalm lxxiii. 1). "Those that seek me early in the morning (Hebrew) shall find me" (Prov. viii. 17). God's voice is heard oftenest in the rush of the day by those who have heard it first in the secret place. What time is there to gather manna for the soul, unless, like the Israelites, we do it before the sunrise? (Exodus xvi. 19-21.) What time to *steal a march upon the enemy*, as Dr. Stead reminds us in his Mile-stone Papers, or to throw down the battlements of unbelief, except, like Joshua, we awake right early? (Joshua vi. 12).

Few have many opportunities during the day for communion with God; but those who have the most say that, after all, there is no such time for looking into the face of the King as the morning hour, when the mind is fresh and disengaged from worldly cares. Thankfully do I here testify to the value of the morning watch in giving me opportunity to study the Scripture, whereby the Word of God has become such a delight that my last and happiest thought at night has been, "How blessed will it be when God wakes me in the morning, and *calls me to His holy Word!*" This is the point on which all turns: *God will do it, if you are really anxious to meet with Him*. I once resolved desperately to rise early in order to study theology, and failed, and when I did rise for years at college it was generally by the help of an alarm. But now it is easy to

follow the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Let us be filled with the Holy Ghost, then we shall not care to ask a servant to do what the Spirit of God has so graciously undertaken to do. Three young men, home from India on a tour, told me, on the top of the Keswick coach, that a friend decided to follow their example of keeping the morning watch, and gave his servants orders to call him up. The servant failed once and again. "I will have no more of this," said he, "*I will now turn to God*." The next morning he was awake between four and five. God *never* fails. Try Him and trust Him. But if you are to keep the morning watch, you must keep the self watch. Do not burn the candles at both ends. I used to knock up a fellow-student at five; but he seldom arose, because he would persist in sitting up late. We may have to be at late meetings, but when we get home let us sternly refuse to sit long at the supper table or the fire, or linger over the fascinating book. God waits; keep your appointment with Him. Be punctual. *It is the soul's business*. It is the King's wish. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Let your last resolve at night be, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up"; and the first word you shall hear will be "Rise up, my love, and come away into the garden of delights, up to the mountains of myrrh," and *then* you will be ready to go down to the desert, the valley, and the plain, carrying Christ's pitying smile, healing touch, and heavenly calm. Try it, dear friend. Many have tried it and found it good. Do likewise; do it quickly. Begin this at once, and each day will be to you as a day of heaven upon earth.

PART II.

Soon after the appearance of the article on "The Morning Watch" in "Out and Out," one of the members of the band wrote to the secretaries, saying: "I have read 'The Morning Watch,' and I have made my vow unto the Lord, who is my keeper, to wake early in the morning. Thank God for this answer to my prayer. The last three mornings His hand has touched me early. Oh, how different life has been during the day! There has been so much brightness, and little things do not trouble me now."

Nor does this letter express an isolated experience. There are many who have recently found this treasure hid in a field, and their joy is unspeakable. Anxious