

## Texts That Have Strengthened Me From Boyhood On.

(Extract from an article by the Rev. F. B. Meyer, in the 'Sunday Magazine'.)

Most of us could write an epitome of our autobiography in the texts which have influenced our lives. Reviewing the past, we can discern the promises which, like stepping-stones, have borne our feet from bank to brae. At one time we were warned by a startling admonition, at another directed along a difficult pathway by a word of direction and guidance. This verse was as a danger-signal, and this as a clarion, and that as a cool hand put on a fevered brow. By one passage our soul was restored, by another we were made wise, by another our heart was rejoiced, and by yet another our eyes were enlightened, and we gladly endorse the Psalmist's verdict:

More to be desired are they than gold,  
Yea, than much fine gold:  
Sweeter also than honey or the honeycomb.

Psalm 121.—Years ago, one Sunday evening, as a boy of thirteen, I was sitting on a chair in the dining-room, where, I think, my mother, who was an invalid, was lying on the sofa, and my sisters were reading quietly. I had been for a week at the Brighton College, and had somehow attracted the notice of the elder lads, who, because I was timid and sensitive, set on me, and made my life a burden. How glad I had been when Saturday came with its half-holiday, how I clung on the skirts of the hours to make them tarry, that the dreaded morrow might not come too soon, I was turning over the leaves of my Bible, and suddenly discovered this Psalm. How voraciously I devoured it! How I read it again and again, and wrapped it round me! How I took it as my shield! And the next day I walked into the great green expanse in front of the college so serene and strong. It was my first act of appropriating the promises of God. The trials seem pin-pricks now, as I review them, but they left me for evermore richer.

Jer. i. 7.—From an early age I had desired to become a minister of Christ's gospel, but was perpetually haunted by the fear that I should not be able to speak. At sixteen, the secret was still locked in my breast, but a matter of very serious and incessant debate. I had been pleading with tears and cries that God would show me his will, and especially that he would give me some assurance as to my powers of speech. Again that room in Streatham, near London, to which we had removed, is before me, with its window toward the sun, and the leathern-covered chair at which I knelt. Turning to my Bible, it fell open at this passage, which I had never seen before. With indescribable feelings I read it again and again, and even now never come on it without a thrill of emotion. It was the answer to all my perplexing questionings. Yes, I was the child; I was to go to those to whom He sent me, and speak what he bade me; and he would be with me, and touch my lips. . .

Matt. xiv. 29.—Another incident stands out clear cut before me as I write. It was in the train between Chester and Llandudno, whither I was travelling from Leicester to spend a few days with some dear friends. Some twelve months before I had been led to take up the work at the prison-gate, stationing myself there each morning to receive and greet the prisoners as they came out, taking them to breakfast with me, and afterwards helping them to determine on their future life. The great need had constantly presented itself to me of establishing an industrial home, where they might reside under Christian influences, whilst, at the same time, they maintained themselves, and paid their way by their work. In a small way, I had already commenced wood-chopping, but the need for larger premises was very urgent. A large disused yard, shedding, and dwelling-house had recently come under my notice, the rent of which was £100 per annum, besides all the outlay consequent on preparing it for my purpose. It was offered me under a three years' agreement, and I very much hesitated. I did not like to ask the help of others, being assured that, if my heavenly Father wanted me to undertake it, he would be sufficient. The question, however, was, What did He wish and intend?

With my heart opened to him, that he might

impress it with his will, as of old the Urim and Thummim stone shone or dimmed with his Yea and Nay, I turned to my Bible, and was led to this verse, which burnt itself into my innermost soul. 'Peter answered, and said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the water." And he said, "Come!"' It seemed as though Jesus himself were in the heart of the new difficulties and responsibilities to which he was calling me, and as though in answer to my repeated challenge, 'Lord, is it thou, and, if it be, bid me come,' he was perpetually replying with the sublime, all-inclusive answer, 'Come.' It is told of David Livingstone that on one occasion his way was barred by a gathering of natives—a way that he must traverse. He went to his tent, opened his Testament at the words 'I will never fail nor forsake,' and closed it with the remark, 'I can trust the honor of my heavenly Father to carry me through, as to the honor of a perfect gentleman'; and next morning the opposition had vanished, and the way was clear! So it seemed to me at the moment. I took the place, signed the agreement, carried on the firewood business for three years, though amid continued opposition, and finally came out of it, on my removal to London, without a halfpenny loss, but with invaluable experience, and a consciousness of a wealth of blessing and help that had accrued to scores of men, some of whom keep in touch with me to this very day.

## A Little Candle.

The first time that Ellen Mayberry entered the dining-room at Mrs. Balcomb's boarding-house she was oppressed by a pervading atmosphere of gloom. Ellen was the product of a country life, and she had come to the city straight from a farming community of more than ordinary wealth and culture. Her cheeks had the rose-tint of perfect health, her eyes were brave and bright under level brows, and her figure had the grace and erectness of a palm tree.

Ellen was the first girl in her family who had broken loose from old moorings and in defiance of traditions, had started out independently on a business career. She had taken a cashier's place, and was ready to accept the limitations of the office and to do the best work of which she was capable during business hours. At home there were circumstances that made it comfortable and possible for Ellen to leave, although there was no positive need for her to earn money, and her father, when she left home, filled her purse and told her she might rely on him for funds at any time, and that if she grew tired or homesick she knew where to come. The stirring and somewhat aggressive stepmother, only a year or two older than Ellen, had said nothing. The year the two women had passed under one roof had been a trying experience for both, and Mrs. Mayberry was secretly pleased to see Ellen's departure.

The boarding house was a four-story building, three rooms deep, situated on a side street and as boarding houses go it was cheerful enough.

To a country girl it wore an aspect stiff and formal, and the middle rooms were so sunless that she marvelled how any one could endure their darkness. Accustomed as she was to floods of sunlight on every side, the city rooms with windows at either end and blank spaces of wall broken here and there by a door, opening into a dark entry, seemed far from inviting.

The dining-room was extremely neat, and a tidy maid, deft-handed and light-footed, dressed in black with the orthodox cap and apron, served the guests expeditiously. The guests were the mournful facts to Ellen's amazed comprehension, women were in the majority, most of them old, most of them in dreary black, and all looking as if they had seen better days, or lost dear friends. Two or three gentlemen wore an air of aloofness and detachment that added to the impression of melancholy. Ellen's appearance in a fresh-looking, dove-colored gown with white ruching at neck and wrists, had brought a distinct sense of pleasure to her predecessors in the boarding house. One and another regarded with approval the slight, trim figure, so evidently full of health and vigor, and her 'vis a vis' at the table, who was a dyspeptic, stared with envy as he observed her excellent appetite. Nobody spoke to her, and she was pre-

sented to no one, Mrs. Balcomb's rule being to let people make friends for themselves, and Ellen went to her room feeling that she had indeed reached a desert of brick and stone in which she was likely to be very lonely.

Two or three days passed. Mrs. Balcomb tapping at Ellen's door one evening exclaimed with delight as she saw on Ellen's table a slender vase in which were sprays of English ivy. 'They remind me of home,' she said.

'Yes,' said Ellen, 'I am fond of them, but as I am away all day I thought I would ask you whether you would not like to have me bring this vase down and set it on the table between Miss Rose Ambler and myself. It would look so cheerful, I think.'

Mrs. Balcomb laughed. 'I suppose Miss Rose does look old to you, child,' she said, 'but she is far from suspecting it. Yes, take the ivy with you when you go to breakfast and leave it there. It will be very lovely in you to add something to the table.'

The ivy was made a subject of conversation at Ellen's end of the table, and before long others joined in and the unwonted sound of pleasant talk was heard in the usually solemn room. It was on a Sunday morning that Ellen carried the ivy down with her, and she fastened a little bit of it in her coat when she went to church. Coming in at noon, she went to the piano in the big empty parlor, sat down, ran her fingers over the keys, and began to play one of the hymns they had been singing in church. Her voice was a clear contralto, not very well trained, but full of sweet cadences, and she sang,

My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary,  
Saviour divine.  
Now hear me while I pray,  
Take all my guilt away,  
And may I from this day  
Be wholly Thine.'

Unconscious of listeners Ellen continued to sing, going from one familiar hymn to another, and presently she discovered that she was not singing alone. Others had entered the parlor and joined in the strains of praise. When they descended to the basement dining-room, they were a group of friends, not an assemblage of indifferent strangers.

As days passed, something new took possession of Mrs. Balcomb's house. Light had drifted into the shadows, insensibly as the light does, for one dear child had brought in her little candle and set it where rays could shine, and it was a little candle burning on the altar of the Lord.—'Christian Intelligencer.'

## The Power of an Open Life.

Live lived in the light has nothing to fear.  
Tennyson said of the Duke of Wellington,

'Whatever record leaps to light, he never shall be shamed.'

Morley, after looking over all Gladstone's private journals and correspondence, writes, 'No man ever had fewer secrets.' Such men are great because of the openness of their lives. They have courage and power that those trained in intrigue never can know. Let us have no dark chambers. Let us have no personal 'skeletons.' Let us do nothing in the darkest moment of the night we should be ashamed to have published in the morning papers. But in order to live so that all our affairs will bear the full light of day, we must have a secret life; only hidden hours with our Lord will save us from the necessity of concealment.—'S. S. Times.'

## Do it Yourself, My Boy.

'Why do you ask the teacher or some classmate to solve that hard problem? Do it yourself. You might as well let some one else eat your dinner as to 'do your sums' for you.

Do not ask your teacher to parse all the difficult words or assist you in the performance of any of your duties. Do it yourself. Do not ask for even a hint from anybody. Try again.

Every trial increases your ability and you will finally succeed by dint of the very wis-