

onward from its hidden source, remains untainted by the impurities around it.

Is not such a stream a fitting emblem of one of God's true children and servants, who guards the heart "above all that has to be guarded?" Of one who, conscious of weakness and inability to keep the citadel unaided, has gone to the Giver with the cry "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." The margin of our Bible gives the words "Constant," or "Stedfast," as alternative readings to right, and they seem to make the verse stronger. We want not only the right spirit, but we want it all the time, so that our heart's devotion may not vary.

God, the great and generous Giver of all good, condescends to ask just one gift from each of us. "Give Me thine heart." "Let thine heart keep My commandments."

Oh, my dear ones. The All Wise Creator "of whom are all things," knows our weaknesses, our temptations, our sins which most easily beset us. So, whilst bidding us guard the stronghold of our hearts above all that He has entrusted to our keeping, He also says "Give them to Me. Let Me be the tenant and the habitation will be safe. Give Me possession and there will be no room for aught that would pollute or destroy. My Spirit shall preserve the heart's purity, and it shall be the abode of holy thoughts, holy desires, of love, peace and goodwill towards all mankind." These, though not the exact words of the Bible, convey what it teaches in many places.

I think I hear you say, "The picture is very beautiful. Would that it were real in my case! Oh, that I were a true child and servant of God, happy in doing His will from my inmost heart! But what He asks is so difficult and hardest of all to yield. Have I not tried to do right, and yet the close of each day shows a record of things omitted that I had resolved to do, and others done which conscience told me were wrong."

My object this evening is to try and help you to find out the cause of your failures. We will not spend our time in brooding over or vainly lamenting our mistakes and misdoings. We will go straight to the cause of them, and see what can be done.

Were an architect called in to inspect a building the walls of which were sinking, would he be justified by examining them only and certifying that the bricks were good and well held together by the mortar? No; he would say at once that the danger lay below the surface, and did not arise from what could be seen.

"There is something wrong with the founda-

tations," he would say. "The walls are sound, but the supports have given way."

So with the cleansing of a stream. If the source be pure, there is hope. Outward contaminating substances can be cleared away and the banks guarded against their renewal; but if it springs from a foul source, vain will it be to attempt to cleanse the bed along which it flows.

You and I must be in earnest in our searchings of hearts. We know that our thoughts are the spring whence words and actions flow. Very early in the history of the world, as the Bible tells it, this great truth is summed up, Gen. vi. 5. The prophet Isaiah repeated, and Christ Himself quoted the inspired teaching, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."

How hateful mere empty words and professions of love and friendship are to us when the speaker's acts contradict them! Silence and estrangement can be endured, or even pass unnoticed; but want of truth and sincerity are always contemptible in our human eyes. What, then, must many of our words and acts be like in the eyes of Him to whom our thoughts are as an open book?

If we want to serve God we must begin at the beginning. Give Him our hearts and ask Him to take possession of the source, so that the stream of our lives may be a pure one.

"Will God do this?" you ask.

I answer your question with another—"What did Jesus say when teaching His disciples?" "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

If we want God's presence dwelling in our hearts we must ask for it, and ask earnestly, wanting to have it. Then there is our own share to be considered. God will work in and with us, but we are not to be idle. You have the control of your bodily senses. Do not let them be the channels by which evil thoughts are brought into the heart. If your eye sees what is wrong or impure, turn it away; do not continue to look on. If your ear is offended by the sound of foolish, slanderous, profane, or obscene words, do not listen; get out of hearing as soon as possible and strive to put them out of your mind, otherwise memory will repeat them at intervals to your hurt.

If you find yourself in the company of those who make light of sacred things or turn passages of God's word into idle jests, leave it as soon as possible and avoid such for the future. "The foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient," are specially named in God's word as things to be avoided. So,

too, is the society of those who are likely to lead us astray. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

We can all to some extent choose our advisers and our intimates. I know that there are some of you, my dear girl friends, who are associated by your daily work with those who rather hinder than help you in the right way. This you cannot avoid, but you need not make them your advisers and confidants.

Try to use all outside influences for the good of your inner selves by shunning whatever suggests wrong ideas or stores up evil memories. Your inner self is the source of your visible life. All outside of and around the latter, re-acts on the mind. Endeavour to dwell on what is holy and Christ-like, so as to occupy your thoughts with what will be pleasing to God.

"Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, think on these things."

We can only really occupy our minds with one thing at once. Let us resolve that the one thing shall be such as to make us feel glad that God sees and reads it.

Perhaps you are thinking to yourselves, "This is a high standard which demands that my heart shall keep God's commandments, and that I am to guard it above all that I have to guard. How shall I attain to this?"

It is a high standard; but it is God's standard, and with every commandment will give the power to obey. He bids us "work out our own salvation." We are to do all that in us lies, but He adds by the mouth of His apostle, "It is God that worketh in you; both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

As to these senses of ours that are so apt to lead us astray. Is the tongue the offender? Pray "Keep Thou the door of my lips that I offend not with my tongue." Are you straying from the right way? "Lord, deliver my feet from falling?" and so on.

The Bible will furnish you with words of prayer for every need, and promises of strength, help and blessing, and gracious answers are sown broadcast over its pages. Let us be very thorough in looking at our inner selves, our "hidden selves" to all but God.

The surgeon who has been watching a wound which will not heal is not contented to look only at the outside, but probes to find how deep the mischief lies.

So, dear ones, you and I must search our hidden selves, and be contented with nothing less than giving to our Father, God, the loving, whole-hearted service, which it is alike our duty and privilege to render.

"THE GOLDEN HEART."

CHAPTER III.



ON the fourth day after Allison's flight from home came a letter to Mrs. Carne from her married daughter Lizzie to the effect that her sister was with her and very ill. The doctor said she had brain fever.

"Ally came here three days ago," wrote Lizzie. "She seemed quite dazed and broken down, and complained of her head. She wouldn't say anything about herself, only that she had been somewhere on business and felt ill and tired.

There's something I don't understand, but perhaps you will; so please come quickly, as she's very bad, poor dear."

Mrs. Carne needed no second call, but repaired without delay to her daughter's house, leaving the ferryman to manage for himself, with injunctions that neither he nor Dan should venture to come till they were sent for. The good woman was greatly troubled and alarmed, for, where had Allison been during the first day and night of her absence from home and what could have caused this sudden illness?

She was not destined to discover, for Allison lay dangerously ill during three anxious weeks, unconscious that the dear mother towards whom she had so grievously failed in duty was her constant and devoted nurse.

At the end of that time she was on the road to recovery, but as weak as a baby. Moreover, the illness appeared to have obliterated the memory of the unhappy incidents which had been its forerunner. Allison's mind was a blank as regarded everything, and a fortunate thing that was.

No questions were asked by Mrs. Carne, no painful recollections called into being. The girl was very quiet, very submissive, that was the most marked change in her. She would sit for hours saying nothing, but watching her mother about the room with a look of wistful content upon her face. The only remark she made that showed she had been inwardly questioning herself was—

"I can't remember how I came to be here at Lizzie's."