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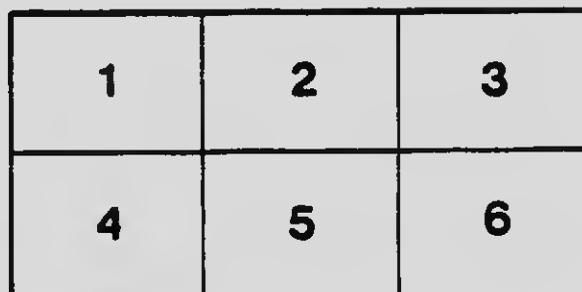
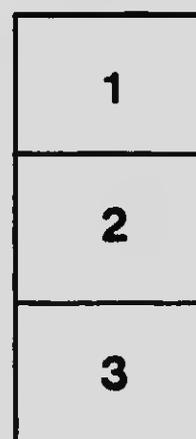
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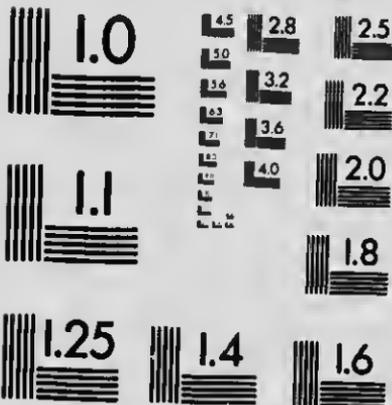
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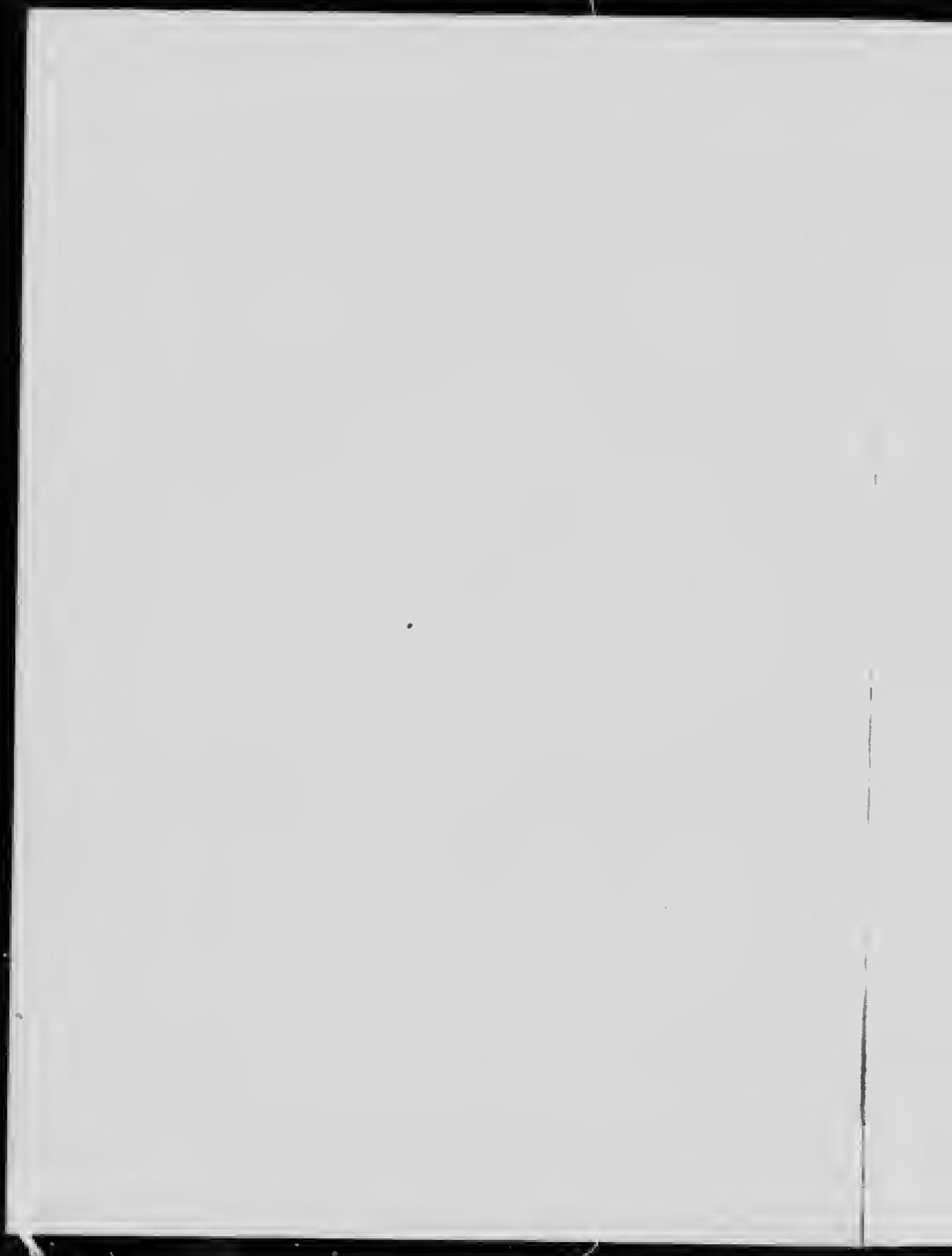
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THE VISION OF HIS FACE

TO
MY TRUE AND LOYAL FRIEND,
MARY WELD,
WITHOUT WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT
I SHOULD NOT HAVE VENTURED INTO
THE GREAT SEA OF LITERATURE.
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

THE VISION OF HIS FACE

BY

DORA FARNCOMB,

Author of "The Quiet Hour."



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Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada,
at the Department of Agriculture, by Dora Farncomb, of
Newcastle, Ontario, in the year of our Lord, one thousand
nine hundred and nine.

PREFACE

My only apology for writing this book is that I really could not help it. Month after month the opportunity was pressed upon me; I did not seize it, for it seized me; I did not possess the idea, it possessed me.

On the Resurrection Day, the women who had seen their Risen Master received from Him this command: "Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me." Surely this command was also a permission to tell the wonderful news which they could not have kept to themselves if they had tried. Their faces had been sad enough for some days; now their joyful looks would tell all who knew them that the Master, who was all the world to them, was living and very near. But the gracious permission was also a command. It would have been very wrong to have been careless or indifferent in delivering the message entrusted to them. Christ's brethren must not be allowed to think themselves orphaned and desolate. They must hear the cheering promise that if they seek Him in "Galilee"—in the familiar, commonplace, home-atmosphere—they shall see Him there.

Have things changed to-day? Surely men and women everywhere echo the desire of certain Greeks,

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who approached one of the Lord's disciples with the touching appeal: "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Henry Van Dyke declares that "no man in the world to-day has such power as he who can make his fellow-men feel that Christ is a reality."

I can hardly doubt this statement when I am constantly receiving letters similar to one that reached me yesterday. The writer says: "I never seem to feel that Jesus is near me, as some seem to, and have such close communion with Him or seem to live in His very presence. And yet, how much I long to! My heart fairly yearns for that Peace, perfect Peace, and that my soul should rest in Jesus. Can you help me?"

Is it possible for one who knows the King as a living Master, to receive such appeals in silence, when the opportunity to speak—which is also a solemn responsibility—stands invitingly in the path? Words are all too cold and lifeless to express the wonderful tidings that the King of our hearts is living and always close beside us, and that He wants to reveal Himself to His brethren in their daily life at home. The message is old, and yet it is always fresh and new, and cannot be repeated too

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often. How can we keep silence about it, as though we cared little for our Master or for His brethren ?

I pray that this may be a book of joy, trusting God to answer my prayer. It has not all been written lately, parts of it having already appeared in the " Quiet Hour " column of " The Farmer's Advocate." I send it out now in more permanent form, praying that it may help some who are weary and heartsick to see more clearly the Face of the King.

DORA FARNCOMB.

52 Victor Ave.,
Toronto, Canada,
March 13, 1909.

When Thou saidst,
"SEEK YE MY FACE!"
My heart said unto Thee,
"THY FACE, LORD, WILL I SEEK. HIDE
NOT THY FACE FAR FROM ME."
—Psalm xxxvii: 8, 9.

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INTRODUCTION

St. Paul declares that the secret which can transform "affliction" into "glory" is the habit of looking "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." That habit is worth cultivating to-day, for still—as always—"the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." To struggle for earthly ends, as though they were of vital importance, and give no thought to the two great realities—God and the immortal spirit of man—is to find one's self a bankrupt when death quietly sweeps the "things which are seen" aside.

Chesterton says :

"The one created thing which we cannot look at is the one thing in the light of which we look at everything."

If this is true in the physical world it is also true in the spiritual world. We cannot see God's Face and live, the awfulness of His Infinite Holiness would overwhelm our weak human spirits.

St. Paul says that He dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see." Moses daringly pleaded that God would show him His glory, and received the

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merciful answer, "Thou canst not see My face : for there shall no man see Me and live." And yet his prayer was well-pleasing to God, Who said : "Behold there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock : and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by." Under the shadow of the Rock—and that Rock is Christ—we also may gaze at the glory of God, Who has given us for everyday use "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," Who says of Himself : "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." We are able to see the light from God's Throne, because it shines through the softened medium of a rainbow. "in sight like unto an emerald." We look at the holiness of Jesus and we see in Him the holiness of God. The ever-present JESUS is the Great Reality to those who love Him. The people whose eyes are holden may say that He was only a great Teacher, who died nearly two thousand years ago. We can say with Le Gallienne :

"I hear, and to myself I smile,
For Christ talks with me all the while."

"Invisible things are clearly seen."

--Rom., i. : 20.

THE VISION OF HIS FACE

CHAPTER I.

THE VISION OF HIS FACE.

"Have you and I to-day
Stood silent as with Christ, apart from joy, or
Tray of life, to see His face ;
To look, if but a moment, in its grace,
And grow, by brief companionship, more true,
More nerved to lead, to dare, to do
For Him at any cost ? Have we to-day
Found time, in thought, our hand to lay
In His, and thus compare
His will with ours, and wear
The impress of His wish ? Be sure
Such contact will endure
Throughout the day ; will help us walk erect
Through storm and flood ; detect
Within the hidden life sin's dross, its stain ;
Revive a thought of love for Him again ;
Steady the steps which waver ; help us see
The loopath meant for you, and me."

The night before He died for His Bride, the King gave her a precious promise, of which loyal hearts in all the ages since have proved the truth. It was the promise of the "Vision of His Face," to cheer and comfort the waiting Church: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me," He said. Let us open our eyes each morning

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to the vision of our loved Master's face; let us say to Him, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do, to-day?" Then let us go gladly to work under His direction, doing the duty He has put into our hands, even though some other work may seem grander or more important.

But, before the rush of the day begins, let us take time to gaze for a space into the face of the King; for one whose eyes are open to the invisible, who sees with clear spiritual sight the angels and the angels' Lord beside him, can go on his way with high courage and perfect peace, sure that all is well.

A poor shoemaker once dreamed that the Lord Jesus would visit him on a certain day. He lived in a dark basement room, below the level of the street, and could only see the feet of those who passed by. Several times during the day he saw shabby boots moving wearily past his window, and hurried out to invite the tired wayfarers in for rest and food. All day he watched and waited for the promised Guest, and went sadly to bed at last, thinking that his dream had not come true.

But he dreamed again, and the tired strangers he had cheered and helped stood beside his bed, saying: "Martin, dost thou not know Me?" Then he saw

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in each face a look of the King, and knew that his loved Master had really visited that poor little home many times during the day.

This is not a parable; it is a glorious fact. Christ, in the person of some of His brethren, will surely visit us this day. Are our eyes opened so that we may recognize Him?

And He is with us when we seem to be alone. We, like Enoch, may walk with God. Surely the thought of His Presence has power to "thrill us with solemn gladness." He is close beside you now. Lay down the book and drink in that wonderful thought: Close beside you, ready to give you all the help and encouragement you need; loving you always, though you may be weak and cowardly and forgetful of Him, stands the King. Will you not slip your hand in His, with the trustful confidence of a happy child, and say: "Dear Master, I gladly accept Thy ordering of my life, give me what Thou wilt?"

How strange it is that we, who know by experience the gladness of an upward look into our dear Lord's face, and the sense of renewed strength it never fails to bring, should drag along so wearily without it, hour after hour—perhaps day after day.

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Baring Gould says that Noah had a window in the roof of the ark, so that when he got troubled and discouraged he could look up towards Heaven. He could not see the waves, or the drowning people he was so powerless to help, but his thoughts naturally followed his eyes up to the heavens — up to God. Should we not also keep a window through which we can look up to God? I always find it easier to make my prayer a real speaking to a listening God when, like Daniel, I am looking through a window — looking up, up into infinite space. It is often easier to see God's face when gazing up into the wonderful depths of the sky than when the head is hurried in the hands.

"I fear not Thy withdrawal; more I fear,
Seeing, to know Thee not—hoodwinked with dreams
Of signs and wonders—while, unnoticed, Thou,
Walking Thy garden still, commun'st with men,
Missed in the commonplace of Miracle!"

Certainly there is little fear that God will hide Himself longer than is necessary from a soul that seeks to walk consciously in the light of His Presence. But the visible too often crowds out the invisible. Too often we forget that God is with

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us; then we are weak in temptation, because relying on our own strength instead of looking to Him for help. And yet we reach out with a real heart-hunger for that Infinite Love. Perhaps the last waking thought at night is the sweet peace of resting on the Divine Heart, without a shadow of care,—like the good soldier of Christ who lately fell asleep murmuring the great "Holy, Holy, Holy." Perhaps our first waking thought may be the joy of being in the service of the Master of the World. But what of the hours when we are immersed in the work or pleasure of the Day, do we always walk with God joyously and bravely? Do we not often forget His very existence, and act or speak or think as though we had no Heavenly Father, no Master to lean on and to obey?

Ever: though the great Vision may be only seen indistinctly, still it has wonderful power to help and strengthen a soul that is bent on climbing, a soul that longs to reflect the beauty of holiness, which makes the Face of the King so wondrously attractive.

It is impossible to dwell constantly on the thought of Christ's presence without growing more and more like Him. St. John seems to think that when we

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see Him face to face the sight itself will change us into the same image : " When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

Let us think for a little while about our King. What is He like ? The world may ask, in careless wonder or anxious doubt, " What is thy Beloved more than another beloved ?" and all who have seen the Vision of the King in His beauty, should be able to reply with unhesitating certainty :

" He is the chiefest among ten thousand; yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

It is said that in the little Village of Nazareth, long ago, when people were in any trouble they would say, " Let us go and look on Mary's Son." How wonderful is the attractiveness of the holy Jesus of Nazareth ! Little children loved to climb into His arms and cheer His aching heart with their innocent caresses—and little children love Him still. Good women, like the sisters of Bethany, felt it a high privilege to minister to their noble Guest, or to listen to His quiet talk. Sinful women pressed close to His purity, in desperate longing and eager hope that their lost beauty of soul might in some way be restored to them. And, in all the world,

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wherever the Vision of His Face is revealed, women still joyously devote their lives to His service. Men are attracted too. Rough fishermen turned their backs on their means of livelihood at His simple word of command, "Follow Me." The man of business started up to follow this Man who held out no hope of earthly advancement. The hardened publican, Zaccheus, climbed into a tree that he might see the face of this Stranger who was drawing the common people after Him in multitudes, and came down with a new ideal, which made him ready to give instead of grasp.

Christ's fearless and open opposition to the favorite sins of those in power, could not fail to bring down a storm on His own head ; but even the rulers recognized His attractiveness, and were afraid that the world would go after Him. And, for simple love of Him, multitudes have dared and are ready to dare anything.

Bishop Brent, in "Leadership," says :

"I believe that when we meet Jesus He will be distinguished not by His state or by outward marks,—none of us know what His human face looks like ; for years I have felt that His traditional portrait has nothing especial to commend it as extraordinarily winsome,—but by the attractive power of His friendliness, reaching after us and drawing us to Him."

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The King is our Friend ! Can anyone who has tried to sound the depths of the great mystery of friendly fellowship ask for a richer or sweeter gift than friendship with One whose Face is radiant with the beauty of holiness ? Henry Van Dyke's first thought on reaching the sacred soil of Palestine, was the desire to meet the friends who were to enjoy the Holy Land with him. When he saw them he found a surprising joy in the mere "wonder of getting together," in the "happy assurance that personality is not a dream. The touch of warm hands is a sudden proof that friendship is a reality."

No wonder he cried out with joy :

" Happy is the man that seeth the face of a friend
in a far country :
The darkness of his heart is melted in the rising of
an inward joy."

And when that Friend is both God and Man, when He is able to understand without a word the depths of a human heart, and also able to draw it up after Him to infinite heights of Divine beauty, surely we who possess such a Friend are rich beyond the power of imagination to conceive. " Our dearest thoughts

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are out of reach " of any other friend, and we who prize the holy gift of friendship may well say :

" I count that friendship little worth
Which has not many things untold;
Great longings that no words can hold,
And passion-secrets waiting birth."

We may well look forward with eager longing to a time which will surely come to all true and loyal hearts, when we can really meet our friends heart to heart and "hold converse soul to soul."

But our longings for perfect fellowship, the heart-hunger which we all know, need not be crushed or allowed to wither. God offers Himself to us, and only Divine Fellowship can really satisfy our hungry hearts. The Son of Man showed that He had full knowledge of the infinite craving of the human soul—a craving that must and will be satisfied—when He made His great promi

" If a man love Me, he will keep My words : and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

No mind of man could have conceived that perfect ideal of God in Man which we find in the Bible, and which meets and fulfils our highest aspirations. It

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is as natural for the soul of man to reach out toward God as for a plant to climb up toward the sun. Health, wealth, fame, even earthly love, can never meet its infinite craving after the Infinite. But when we grasp even the hem of Christ's Garment we know that at last we have found what we hunger for. Even then we must hunger on—hunger for the full vision of His face, for the sound of His voice and the touch of His hand—for hunger is a sign of life and health. It gives pleasure rather than pain when it is being constantly fed with the true Manna, the Bread which came down—and is constantly coming down—from heaven.

“ 'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my
flesh that I seek
In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it.”

The soul must go on seeking until it does find the Christ—the Man who is also God—and, when He is found, it must cry out in its joy to other seeking souls : “ We have found the Christ ! Come and see ! ”

THE VISION IS AN ASSURANCE OF SYMPATHY.

CHAPTER II.

THE VISION IS AN ASSURANCE OF SYMPATHY.

" Oh, Heart, omnipotent to bless,
Most human in Thy tenderness;
In Thee, as in none else beside,
Most fully, safely, I confide;
Yet never can too closely press :
For Thou, in sympathy divine,
Hast stooped to lift my heart to Thine."

It is natural and right to desire sympathy, to feel intuitively that our joys and sorrows are of deepest interest to another soul. We reach out instinctively for human fellowship, as our Master did in that terrible ordeal in Gethsemane. He was evidently cut to the heart when the disciples, who had declared themselves willing to die with Him, cared so little for His awful agony that they fell asleep instead of strengthening Him by their prayers.

The human heart is not intended to stand alone; we are not naturally stoical. If you see one who stands aloof from his fellows, keeping his hopes and fears locked coldly within his own soul, you may

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feel pretty certain that he has at one time or another reached out to someone for sympathetic fellowship and been bitterly disappointed.

Friends, like David and Jonathan, pour new strength and courage each into the heart of the other. Men, in all ages, have been conquerors because they were sure that nothing could cut them off from living, throbbing, quickening fellowship with loving, loyal hearts. If this wonderful, secret bond, which binds heart to heart, were taken away, then human life would be a pale, flavorless existence; and we should long for death, from a sense of boredom. Robert W. Service describes a white-robed woman, who lingers in a garden "where the lilies glean"; and a man who "toils with tireless pen" in a dark, cold garret. Then, in one sentence, he explains the woman's gladness and the man's dauntless courage :

" And, ah, it's strange, for desolate and dim
Between these two there rolls an ocean wide ;
Yet he is in the garden by her side,
And she is in the garret there with him."

But,—there are often heartbreaking "buts" in a

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life's history,—one who leans in unfaltering confidence on another weak, human heart will surely find some disappointment there. That comrade-heart may be loyal and true; and yet, sooner or later, the fellowship which seemed ideally perfect will fail to satisfy. Only Christ can meet us at every point, can understand us through and through, and fully satisfy our craving for Perfect Sympathy. Our spirits are so infinite in their longings that only the Infinite God can fully satisfy our demands; and yet the human differs from the Divine so essentially that —I say it reverently—it hardly seems possible that even God could have given us the perfect fellowship we needed without assuming our human nature. Surely it is true that "man is naturally Christian"; for, unless God had found the way to bridge the gulf between Himself and our hungry hearts, which can never be satisfied with anything but perfect love and holiness and the most absolute sympathy, we should have been in despair.

"The King is near of kin to us." He is the only Friend who fully understands our inmost soul; the only Friend to whom we can tell everything and be sure of unfailing, tender, strengthening sympathy.

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" O God, O Kinsman, loved but not enough !
O MAN, with eyes majestic after death,
Whose feet have toiled along our pathway rough,
Whose lips drawn human breath ;
By that one likeness which is ours and Thine,
By that one nature which doth hold us kin,
By that high heaven, where sinless, Thou dost shine
To draw us sinners in.
Come ! lest this heart should, cold and cast away,
Die ere the Guest adored she entertain—
Lest eyes which never saw Thy earthly day
Should miss Thy heavenly reign."

Sometimes the Vision of our dear Master's face may be very dim, and He may seem to care nothing for our prayers. We may feel inclined to echo the cry of one who exclaimed despairingly :

" I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. . . . I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer."

If such has been your experience, now is the time to prove your unswerving confidence in Him. His tender sympathy is unailing; He is far more ready to hear than we to speak; He never leaves us nor forsakes us; but sometimes He is " silent in His love"—surely we can trust His silence a little while. Why, the worth of sympathy can only be tested by silence. The friends who only understand us when

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we have tried to explain our thoughts in words, never really understand us at all. Those who are really "in touch" with us do not need to speak, do not wait for our labored explanations.

Henry Van Dyke has beautifully expressed this well-known fact, in his "Psalm of the Distant Road":

"I was slowly reading a book that was written in a
strange language:
And suddenly I came upon a page in mine own familiar
tongue.
This was the heart of my friend that quietly under-
stood me:
The open heart whose meaning was clear without a
word.
O, my God, whose love followeth all Thy pilgrims and
strangers:
I praise Thee for the comfort of comrades on a distant
road."

The Comradeship of Christ is the great romance of life. We can, if we will, walk with our unseen Lord, listening to His quiet talk, or trusting Him when He tests our confidence by His silence.

When He clasps your hand in His own, saying simply "Come!" you are glad at heart as you walk along life's road; for you can lean in happy

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confidence on His tender sympathy, not expecting Him to explain all His dealings with your soul.

And it is a wonderful thing to remember that the sympathy is not all on one side. We must give as well as take. He who looked for the prayerful fellowship of disciples in Gethsemane—and was disappointed—surely cares for our fellowship now. Are we also disappointing Him? Does He knock at the door of our hearts, hoping to find us mindful of His presence, and find us careless, indifferent and forgetful. True fellowship is never one-sided. How can our Friend keep in quickening touch with us, when we are not trying to keep in touch with Him?

It is a great mistake to wait for what are called "important" occasions, before claiming our Friend's attentive sympathy. He is careful to explain that He is interested in everything that concerns us, even the very hairs of our head are numbered. Unless we form the daily habit of looking up to Him, whenever we are glad or sorry or interested in anything, He may be crowded out of the busy days where "important" occasions are scarce. The truth is that every day is important, for each day our characters are being slowly but surely formed. Each day we are preparing for eternity, preparing for our

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real life with God in Heaven. Everything can help us to be ready, if we are careful to use it as He expects.

To gain the whole world, and stunt or starve one's spirit, is to fail miserably. Where there's a will there's a way. If we care to cultivate fellowship with Christ we can do it, and our souls will insensibly grow stronger and more radiant because, constantly looking into His face, we cannot help reflecting His beauty more and more. Let us spend God's holy day with God, then we can store up sunshine which will brighten the whole week with a hidden spring of gladness.

See how many throng into our churches, pressing close to their Lord in His own House. Some go because it is the common custom, some because they have nothing else to do, others to meet their friends—but only those who, with earnest purpose, are reaching out to touch their unseen Master, come away strengthened and refreshed for the battle of life. It is the same way when we approach Him in private prayer. One earnest sentence really spoken to Him brings a swift and glad answer; and we can go away feeling that He has helped us, that prayer is not speaking only into blank space. It is the

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same with hymn singing. You may sing hymn after hymn—and enjoy the singing, too—and yet never give a thought to the listening Lord. Then, perhaps, you rouse yourself and send a strong "Abide with me," straight up to the Throne, and you are thrilled through and through with the wonderful thought that you have touched the hem of Christ's garment, that His glorious quickening power has been poured afresh into you.

"I lean upon no broken reed,
Nor trust an untried guide.
I know Him, and He knoweth me,
He walketh by my side.
I hold His hand as on we walk,
And He still holdeth mine.
It is a human hand I hold;
It is a hand Divine."

THE VISION WHITENS THE GARMENTS.

CHAPTER III.

THE VISION WHITENS THE GARMENTS.

A terrible message was sent to the church in Sardis long ago, the message that, in God's sight, she was "dead." But, even in Sardis, a few saints were found who had not defiled their garments, and to them the King gave a gracious promise: "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." What would we not give for that assurance? Surely the desire for purity—perfect stainlessness—lies deep in every human heart.

How does the sight of the one absolutely spotless Life affect us? It can hardly fail to sweep away pride and vanity; for our best actions and our holiest hours are too often stained and disfigured by low motives. We do not love God with all the heart and mind and soul and strength—even the bare remembrance of His Presence is too often crowded out by the trifling cares and pleasures which absorb us each day. As for the command to love our neighbors as ourselves, I think we generally find that a very small pain of our own seems far more

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important than the great sorrows of others. And absolute purity of motive is like a mountain peak with slippery sides. We want to consecrate ourselves, with our time, money and opportunities, seeking no reward but the Master's "Well done!" but how often the searching words of the Sermon on the Mount reveal low motives at the root of our best actions?

Yes, if we are to "walk with Christ in white," we need not only the one bath which cleanses a soul from sin, but also the daily washing of the feet to purify us from the defilements of the way.

The pure in heart have their eyes opened to see the Vision of God, and in the glory of that Vision they grow daily more pure. They keep their garments white, or continually come to Christ to have the stains of sin washed away. It has been beautifully said that "as the garment whitens in sunlight, so the spirit must whiten before the Sun of Righteousness."

One day we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. In this life of probation we are ever struggling upward, and surely we shall not cease to struggle after perfection when we see our dear Lord face to face. Shall we not rather bound

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forward after Him with new energy, drinking in more and more of His Spirit, striving still after the infinite perfection of God?

But, whether here or there, those who desire to walk with Christ must try to wear the white robes of a purity that goes down to the depths of the heart, must seek to bring into captivity every thought to His obedience. How can this be done? We aim at a perfect mark, and always fail to reach it. But God will not allow us to be satisfied with anything lower than perfect holiness, so we continue our efforts in spite of failure. The Word of God is severe in its demands; but, though it is a sharp sword, that cuts down and lays bare the deepest motives hidden in the heart, it is with the "merciless severity of merciful love." Sinful motives must not be allowed to lie hidden, poisoning the whole nature. An act is good or evil according to the motive from which it springs, and sin must be brought to the light and repented of, that it may be forgiven and blotted out of existence. If God were less severe He would be less merciful. He is like a skilful surgeon who cuts down very deeply into the quivering flesh, so that he may remove all

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the roots of a cancerous growth. If he were not wise and kind, he would not go down so far.

Let us keep the heart "above all keeping," for it is the spring from which all our life is drawn. The secret thoughts of men, women and children should always be white and shining and beautiful; the heart should be like a glorious temple in which the Holy One can dwell, the King's daughter should be determined to be "all glorious within"—then the outside will develop naturally into beauty of conduct and expression. I heard a clergyman say, in preaching to children about the Seventh Commandment, "We are Christ's bodyguard, and should rather die than let one evil thought through to hurt His heart."

What a wonderful union there is between our Lord and His members. A thought of evil not only injures us—in body as well as in soul—but also hurts Him. Those who "walk with Him in white" give as well as receive joy, for "so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty."

"And He hath need of thee, thy love is dear,—
Thine uttered love,—old waiting at His feet;
And hurry not to service till prepared.
By quiet waiting in His presence sweet."

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There are many religions in the world, and most of them make some attempt to minister to man's hunger after holiness ; but the glory of Christ's Gospel is that it offers purity to those who are in despair over their stained garments. " Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," through Him who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The great multitude "clothed in white robes" wear "washed" robes. We cannot keep our garments white. The Master says to each disciple every day : " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." He is able and willing to give purity to those who desire it with all their heart. Glorious indeed is a Gospel which proclaims the "forgiveness of sins !" A story is told of a dying robber who had done nothing good in his whole life, but his repentance was deep and true. Evil spirits declared that his soul belonged to them, and the black record of his evil life seemed to support their claim. The angels could not produce one good deed to bear witness in his favor, but one angel took up a handkerchief which was heavy with his tears and cast it into the scales. It weighed down all his sins. Surely, in God's sight, a repentance strong enough to result in a

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thoroughly reformed life, if it were given the opportunity, is accepted. But a repentance which is weak enough to fade away when the danger of death is averted, is not sorrow for sin at all, but only fear of consequences. Such so-called penitence is simply selfish cowardice, though the sight of one's sins' blackness may startle an awakened soul into horror of them, and open the way to repentance and God's healing.

The Good Physician really heals the leprosy of sin. He does not only salve the wound, but the flesh is restored as the flesh of a little child. The prodigal son hopes for a servant's place in his Father's household; and finds, to his astonishment, that he is clothed with the "best robe" and given a royal welcome.

"I have a message—I have more to say!
Shall Sorrow win His pity and not Sin—
That burden ten times heavier to be borne?
What think you? Shall the virtuous have His care
Alone! O ye good Women! it is hard to leave
The paths of virtue and return again!
What if this sinner wept and none of you
Comforted her? And what if she did strive
To mend, and none of you believed her strife,
Nor looked upon her? Mark, I do not say,
Though it was hard, you, therefore, were to blame.

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But I beseech
Your patience!—Once in old Jerusalem
A woman kneeled at consecrated feet,
Kissed them and washed them with her tears. What then?
I think that yet our Lord is pitiful."

"The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." It is useless to make a show of giving to the poor, or to "make long prayers" in the attempt to appear religious. Christ's blessings are poured out on the meek, the merciful, the pure-hearted; not necessarily on those who do great deeds which call forth the praise of the world. It is useless to tell God we love Him, if we don't. It is useless to ask forgiveness and plead for righteousness, unless we really hate our sins and desire to be holy with a real heart-hunger. Don't let us rest in easy satisfaction if the outside conduct is fair and apparently virtuous, without troubling ourselves to go below the surface. God looks at the heart, and it is a small matter in His sight if the outside is clean and respectable, when sin is allowed to reign unchecked in the temple of the soul.

And the rule holds good the other way, too. Our Lord's Divine clear-sightedness showed Him treasures of the soul, sometimes, hidden beneath an

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outside that was far from fair. He saw the germs of a saint in the sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears, in the publican who sat, driving his worldly business, and in the other who climbed a tree to see Him pass. He saw grand possibilities of glorious manhood in the persecutor who was making "havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women . . . breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." What an irreparable loss the Church would have sustained if Christ had judged by outside appearance only, and had not put out His hand to change Saul of Tarsus into Paul the apostle.

We have not the Divine power of looking at the heart, or of seeing invisible beginnings of sainthood, so, perhaps, we had better try to be more careful than we usually are in passing judgment on our fellow-servants. It may be that they are, in His sight, far ahead of us, even though their outside behavior may as yet show few signs of saintliness.

But, though there may be a big heart hidden beneath a rough exterior, our business is to keep both outside and inside fair and beautiful. Holy thoughts must infallibly—sooner or later—blossom out into righteous acts and courteous speech. And unholy

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thoughts cannot long be hidden, either, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things : and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." He cannot help himself. We are continually telling our friends and neighbors the thoughts and desires of our hearts. They generally know pretty well whether we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or whether our highest ambitions are bounded by the horizon of the world. Only—they can't see either the evil or the good within a heart when it is only in the embryo state. God can. And with wonderful tenderness He cares for each flower and insect and bird ; surely we can trust Him to send just the training needed to develop the precious soul of each of His own dear children, for we are of infinitely more value in His sight than many sparrows.

The Bible is a Book bringing the glad tidings that sin can be blotted out, that it may be removed as far as the east is from the west. But let no one imagine that, because forgiveness is full and free, sin is a matter of small consequence. Christ, on the Cross, shows us the awfulness of a disease which

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required so tremendous a remedy—God did not find it easy to cure the leprosy of sin. And we cannot fail to see for ourselves that transgression of God's law brings punishment on the offender. David's confession : " I have sinned against the Lord," was instantly answered by God's full absolution : " The LORD also hath put away thy sin." And yet the promise of punishment came with the declaration of pardon : " Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." And the death of his child was only a small part of the terrible punishment of his pardoned sin. I speak of the "promise" of punishment, because sin would be far more terrible if it were allowed to prosper without check or danger of consequences :

" That punishment's the best to bear
That follows soonest on the sin ;
And guilt's a game where losers fare
Better than those who seem to win."

People dare to treat lightly the "sowing of wild oats," as though the white robe of innocence were not unspeakably precious. David was forgiven, his

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lost purity was restored, and yet he would have given everything he possessed if only the awful stain on his life and character had never been. And countless souls, weeping over the innocence they have thrown away, cry out to the young to treasure their priceless possession. Only God can measure the harm that sin does. Bad habits are formed and evil thoughts are admitted as guests in the heart, and are not easy to banish ; there is the sorrow for the sin, the active harm done to others and the loss of opportunity of helping them by the power of a holy personality ; there is the sad loss of self-respect and of the respect of good people ; there is the weakening of character, and the lost ground to be regained by one who feels that a lifetime of perfect holiness is none too long for the attainment of his high ideal. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth," and we may well be thankful that God cares so much for us that He has made the path of sin a road of misery.

And white robes should be worn for the sake of others. Even the Holy One of God said : "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." God wants to reach other souls through us, and only those who are earnestly trying to keep their secret thoughts pure.

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and their outward lives holy, can expect to see His face or hear the messages He wants to deliver through them. If a thick cloud of unforgiven sin . . . as Christ's Face from our sight, we cannot reflect His beauty, we cannot tell others what He is like.

And it is not only true that unrepented sin will hide God's Face from our spiritual vision, it separates us from Him in another respect, too, for while we are cherishing any favorite sin we don't want to seek His Face.

Think how Adam and his wife tried to hide themselves from God when they felt too guilty to enjoy the consciousness of His presence. Have not guilty souls in all ages made the same vain attempt? Because they do not see God, they believe—or try to believe—that God does not see them: "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: He hideth His face; He will never see it." The sin, committed so secretly that the sinner feels secure from detection, is naked and open to the eyes of God. Isaiah proclaims the woe of those who "seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, who seeth us? and who knoweth us. . . . Shall the thing framed

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say of Him that framed it, He hath no understanding?" God shows very plainly that He does see and punish sin, even in this world. Those who yield themselves up to the service of Satan, the world or the flesh, are courting certain misery. Go inside the gloomy walls of prisons and see that word, "Misery," written on face after face. You can hear its harsh ring in the noisy laugh of the woman who has thrown away the precious pearl of her womanhood, or the man who has trampled the holiness of his God-given manhood beneath his feet. It is seen in the lines of anxiety, peevishness, greed, disappointment or despair, which write on the face the nature of the secret thoughts within the heart. God is too loving to allow a soul that is wandering away from holiness to find his path too easy and pleasant. Every sin is known of God, and its punishment will surely follow, because God always loves the sinner and continually tries to win him back to righteousness. He often lets men gain what they are making their idol: then, when they see how powerless an earthly idol is to give real gladness, they may seek a surer way of finding it.

Job takes a wide view of God's omniscience when he says: "He looketh to the ends of the earth, and

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seeth under the whole heaven." But he also realizes the searching, personal knowledge which comes closer home: "Doth He not see my ways, and count all my steps," anticipating our Lord's words: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

But, if it is a solemn and awful thing to realize God's intimate knowledge of secret sins, secret desires for earthly praise or gain, secret thoughts which are degrading and debasing, there is another and a brighter side to our subject: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." The thought of prayer, or remembrance of His presence, going up from field or kitchen or bedroom, meet His ready and glad response. He pours peace and rest into the soul that looks up even for an instant into His eyes, or leans in quiet confidence upon His strength. We may forget Him, but He never forgets us. Any hour of the day, or night, we may gain instant admittance to the audience-chamber of our King, and He is never too busy to give us His whole attention. Sometimes He lets us feel through our whole being that He is very near. Those are precious moments, and should be treasured in the memory. The times when the veil is partly lifted, and—

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" The feeble hands and helpless, reaching blindly through
the darkness,
Touch God's Right Hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened."

But it is not always so. Sometimes we pray mechanically, because it is a duty, and feel as if God were not listening—perhaps we may almost doubt, in dark hours, whether there is a God to listen. Well, what of that? We are surely not going to be like the ostrich which is reported to have buried its head in the sand, thinking that no one could see it because it could see no one. God always sees us, and sometimes He lets us have glimpses of His beauty that we may follow after Him, and learn to know Him better. If we always had our eyes open to the Vision of His Face, this would be no longer earth, but heaven, and our time of probation would be over. God does not give us heaven yet; but, if we try to remember His nearness, even when we cannot feel it, constant practice will form a priceless habit; and, when the strain of attending to work is lifted for a space and the mind is free, it will gravitate to Him naturally and instantly, as the needle of the compass swings round to the north.

Let us thank God because He is able to restore the

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lost whiteness of our garments; because "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We, who have stained our white robes of innocence, may hear the words which Zechariah heard in his vision: "Take away the filthy garments from him." And unto Joshua the high priest He said: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." But let no one imagine that the confession which is able to win absolution is an easy thing—a matter of words alone. We dare not approach God with a lie on our lips, or ask Him to free us from a sin that we are not really fighting against; a sin that we secretly love, and have every intention of willingly committing again. Confession is worthless unless it is a sincere expression of deep repentance.

"And," as Bishop Ingram says, "besides sorrow, we must face restitution. If you have told a lie, you must untell it; and if you have stolen something, you must give it back; if you have taken away someone's character, you must do something to restore it. There must be no unreality in our repentance, and you must do it with a strong

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determination never to commit that sin again. I think there is something terribly depraving to the character in a person coming to confess and confess and confess the same thing (as if the confessing it were quite enough) over and over again to God, but confessing it without making any real effort to get rid of it. Forgiveness means restoration. We are forgiven when we confess honestly, but on the understanding that we will do our very best to get rid of the sin, and be really restored."

Most people find it much less humiliating to confess their sins to God, than to say to one whom they have injured, or wronged in any way: "I have done wrong. Will you forgive me?" Yet this humiliation is often necessary.

The Gospel of Christ's atonement for sin is, indeed, a revelation of great joy to those who hate sin, and hunger and thirst after righteousness. We may not be able to understand the mystery, but it is the one hope for souls who long to walk in white robes, and who feel their own helplessness to wash out the stains of past sins. We cling, like S. Peter, to the strong hand held out in answer to our despairing cry of "Lord, save me!" We need mercy for the past, strength for the present, and hope for the

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future. To whom shall we go for these if not to Christ? Looking into His kind eyes we learn to accept the painful results which follow in the steps of our sins, not only patiently but joyfully. We see that He can and will make use of them for the refining and purifying of our souls. He can make "all things"—surely our sins are included—work together for our perfecting. The Atonement is not a mere theory, it is a solid fact, on which we can stand and say, with the contrition of happy souls that are cleansed from the weight and misery of guilt :

" Between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy SON, our LORD."

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CHAPTER IV.

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"I would my gift were worthier!" sighed the Greek,
As on he goaded to the temple-door
His spotted bullock. "Ever of our store
Doth Zeus require the best; and fat and sleek
The ox I vowed to him (no brindled streak,
No fleck of dun) when through the breaker's roar
He bore me safe that day, to Naxos' shore;
And now, my gratitude, how seeming weak!
But here be chalk-pits. What if I should white
The blotches, hiding all unfitness so?
The victim in the people's eyes would show
Better therefor;—the sacrificial rite
Be quicker granted at thus fair a sight,
And the great Zeus himself might never know."

We have a God who knows. And yet we dare
On His consuming altar-coals to lay
(Driven by the prick of conscience to obey)
The whited sacrifice, the hollow prayer,
In place of what we vowed, in our despair,
Of best and holiest;—glad no mortal may
Pierce through the cheat, and hoping half to stay
That Eye before whose search all souls are bare!

Nay, rather;—let us bring the victim-heart,
Defiled, unworthy, blemished though it be,
And fling it on the flame, entreating,—“See,
I blush to know how vile in every part
Is this my gift, through sin's delusive art,
Yet 'tis the best that I can offer Thee!”

—Margaret J. Preston.

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The message sent through St. John to the church in Thyatira began : " These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire. . . . I know thy works." That message is still ringing in our ears. His eyes, like a flame of fire, are looking through and through the service and works we offer each day. Will they stand such searching scrutiny ? Will He say sadly of us : " Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water ?" In severest faithfulness of love He says : " I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross." Will there be any pure metal left after that refining fire has done its work on us ?

Some people seem to think that the requirements of the Law of Moses were stern and hard, while the Gospel commands are gentle and mild; but in reality the obedience which Christ demands is far greater than that of the Law.

The Good Physician looks below the outside appearance, and cuts ruthlessly away the covering which hides a festering wound. A man may be honest in his business and moral in his life; he may go regularly to church and give liberally to the support of many charities, and feel quite satisfied that he is a righteous man; and yet he may utterly fail

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to pass the searching tests of the Sermon on the Mount. The scribes and Pharisees were religious men, respected by their neighbors, and quite satisfied with their spiritual condition, and yet our Lord says to His disciples: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It is so easy to deceive one's self. It is so pleasant to feel that one's actions are approved by others, and self-esteem is apt to increase rapidly if we look at ourselves from the world's point of view—for the world's ideal is not a very high one. But when we view our actions in the white light of God's pure requirements, they look very poor, and instead of self-approval we are forced low on our knees with the publican's cry: "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

How many gifts are presented at God's altar which He cannot accept. There are meaningless prayers, coming only from the lips; there are outward signs of reverence which may be merely formal acts with no corresponding lowliness of soul. Then there are the good deeds which would not be done if only God knew about them, the righteousness that

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is like a theatre performance—done “before men to be seen of them”—and which fails to win the lasting reward of our Heavenly Father's approval. There is the money that is contributed in church with the underlying feeling, too indefinite to be called a thought, that others will see how liberally we give or how small our offering is. How can God accept our money if we do not think of Him at all, nor care that it should do real good to our brothers and sisters; if all we are thinking and caring about is the good opinion of our friends and acquaintances? Then there is the subscription paper for some charity. Perhaps we ask, “How much are people giving?” Perhaps a large sum is put down, with the pleased thought that such unusual generosity will be known to many, or a small sum is given grudgingly and unwillingly, not from love to God or man, but only for fear of being thought stingy. Can God accept such a blemished offering? No plausible outside appearance can hide the blotches from His sight. Is such a sacrifice offered to Him at all? Is it not rather done “before men to be seen of them?” Then there is the surface “charity” (falsely so called) which gives money to a beggar to get rid of his importunity—regardless of the harm

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the money may do him—or which works for a charitable association just because it is "the correct thing to do."

But, even righteousness which is not done to be seen of men, may fail to be a pure offering. The taint of sin creeps in through an unguarded opening only too easily. A bargaining spirit may destroy the beauty of righteous acts which are not done for display. This is shown in St. Peter's question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee : what shall we have therefore." Our Lord answered that businesslike question with the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Those laborers who began work early in the day bargained with their master first, and received exactly the hire they had demanded for their services. Those who came later made no bargain, but left the matter of their reward entirely in the hands of the householder, and lost nothing but rather gained by their confidence in his generosity. There was a Jewish saying which brought out strongly this bargaining spirit : "If you afford alms out of your purse, God will keep you from all damage and harm." How gently our Lord warns us against trying to buy God's favor, telling us that we are not working for a hard

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master, who must be propitiated with gifts, but for a Father who only cares for our gifts if they are an evidence of love. What need is there for children to bargain with their Heavenly Father, who knows what things they have need of before they ask Him? The Father who seeth the secret righteousness which is the pure fruit of love, will indeed "reward it openly,"—reward it by bringing out ever more and more perfectly the Likeness of Himself in the child, and at the same time adding to him all things that are really for his good and happiness.

But how deep the probe goes; how searching is the intense light which leaves no corner of the heart unexplored! The actions which appear beautiful outwardly must not only be free from all ostentatious display and from the bargaining spirit which seeks to sell gifts for an equivalent, they must also provoke no self-applause. "When thou doest alms," says the Holy Master, "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Our offering is no longer pure if, like the Pharisee in the parable, we look admiringly at our own righteousness. It is indeed a difficult thing to keep one's motives perfectly holy. It might be less difficult if the "righteousness" could be entirely hidden from public

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view, but that also is forbidden. Our Lord says to His disciples that they have been set as lights to enlighten the darkness of the earth, and that their light must not be hidden. "Let your light so shine before men," He says, "that they may see your good works." The good actions must not be altogether hidden from sight, but the motive which prompts them must be unceasingly guarded. Christians are required to let the world see plainly that the power of God is working through them: but this must be done that men may glorify their Father which is in heaven, not in order to win praise and admiration for themselves.

Our hearts require constant watching, lest our offerings of praise, service or money be stained and spoiled by selfishness and worldliness, and contain no real love to God or man, to make them of value. How can He accept an offering if it is not really given for anything but to feed our own vanity and self-complacency? We may well pray constantly that the Holy Spirit may "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts," for our best actions are often so mixed with sin that they are not worth offering to Him who searcheth the thoughts and intents of the heart.

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And an apparently good action becomes sinful if it is entirely inspired by a wrong motive.

" Not for our sins alone
Thy mercy, Lord, we sue ;
Let fall Thy pitying glance
On our devotions too;
What we have done for Thee,
And what we think to do."

It is very hard to keep our motives pure and free from deceit. We may, at the day's close, kneel at the Master's feet, intending to offer to Him as an acceptable gift the praise and work of the day. But, as we kneel there, is it not often true that we dare not meet the searching gaze of His eyes; for we feel that love, which should have been the inspiring motive of all we have said or done, has been crowded out by pride, vanity and selfishness. Our righteousness has not exceeded the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees; perhaps it has even fallen below theirs. At least, a higher standard is demanded of us, who have Christ's example and teaching to inspire us with grand ideals.

But the Vision is not intended to discourage us by destroying all hope of pleasing our Master, but rather to burn away all that is evil so that the gold

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may be purified. When St. John saw the Vision of the Son of Man, whose eyes were as a flame of fire and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength, he says: "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." But he was raised, and reassured by the cheering words: "Fear Not!"

And we, too, may lift our eyes again to our Master's Face, if we can say with the contrite Apostle: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." If He, who can see through any disguise or pretence, gazing deep down into our hearts, sees love shining there, He will not quench it by severity. Only it is well that we should see ourselves in the intense light of His radiant beauty of holiness, not that we should be crushed or disheartened by our own failures, but so that we may be attracted to follow in His steps.

And, though under His severe yet tender scrutiny, our best offerings look poor and unworthy, and we feel that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," quite unfit to lay on the altar of our Most Holy God, yet we need not despair of having something to offer that is worthy of His acceptance.

One Offering of a pure and stainless Righteousness we may present to God, the Sacrifice once offered on

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the altar of the Cross. That Offering alone is perfectly pure and undefiled, and, as we gaze more and more on the spotless beauty of the one perfect human Life, we are inspired to purify ourselves more and more, so that we may dare to offer and present our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice, acceptable unto the Lord because purified through union with the pure Offering of Christ's Body.

" And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us, once for all, on Calvary's Tree,
And having with us Him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to Thee
That only Offering perfect in Thine eyes,
The one true, pure, immortal Sacrifice.

" Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him ;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim ;
For lo ! between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy SON our LORD."

THE VISION TRANSFORMS INTO CHRIST'S IMAGE.

CHAPTER V.

THE VISION TRANSFORMS INTO CHRIST'S IMAGE.

We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.—2 Cor., 3: 18 (R. V.).

It is a truism that we grow, slowly but surely, into the likeness of the people we admire and deliberately associate with. Even physical nearness seems to have the effect of making two people look alike, but those who are living in close spiritual fellowship cannot fail to grow in similarity of soul. And of course the stronger nature draws the weaker into ever closer touch with it. That is the reason why it is very important to be particular in one's choice of friends. As Moberly says, we gain unspeakably from friendship with those who are "exceptionally and conspicuously beautiful."

One who lives continually in the sunshine of God's presence cannot fail to reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord. To choose Christ as one's dearest Friend is to mould the whole life—not only consciously, but unconsciously—into His image. The

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transformation is slow but sure; working, as every life does, from within outwards. No one can deliberately and consciously lean back on God for years, without being transformed by His Spirit. He pours Love, Joy and Peace into a soul that is careful to keep the avenues of communication open. One who keeps in touch with God can go out into the world and inspire his fellows, for the very Life of God is pouring through him into them. No one can walk with God, eagerly and persistently, without helping others to see His Face more clearly.

" We do not always know it when we have
The privilege to be God's messengers,
Nor who shall be His messengers to us."

Those who always see the King in His beauty of holiness cannot fail to gain some of His radiance, even as Moses came down with shining face from his long communion with God in the Mount. We read in the forty-fifth Psalm that the King shall "greatly desire" thy beauty—a beauty which is not only "skin-deep," for the King's daughter is "all glorious within."

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If the King cares to have us beautiful, surely we cannot care little about it ourselves. Let us pray very earnestly : " Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us ! " for before each of us lies the opportunity of obtaining a loveliness which will not fade with age, but will increase and be a valuable possession in time and in eternity. Probably the outward glory of the resurrection body will be dependent on the way soul-beauty has been persistently cultivated. Even here, before our eyes, the soul is slowly but surely moulding the body, and a holy, joyous spirit continually adds attractiveness to the tabernacle it is inhabiting.

The thief on the cross grew swiftly in beauty of soul as he gazed on the face of the King, recognizing Him as the Royal Master of a Kingdom, even though there were no outward marks of a ruler's authority. The patience and calm serenity, the loving words and looks of that Kingly Sufferer, not only won the admiration and allegiance of the criminal at His side, but also helped him to be brave, patient, humble and trustful.

Behold your KING !

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" Light above light and Bliss above bliss,
Whom words cannot utter, lo ! Who is this ?
As a King with many crowns He stands,
And our names are graven on His hands ;
As a Priest, with God-uplifted eyes,
He offers for us His sacrifice ;
As the Lamb of God for sinners slain,
That we too may live He lives again."

See how the world bows down before this Man. Determined infidels and degraded criminals, men of the world and little children respect the invincible might of holiness. The most learned arguments may make absolutely no impression on men, but stainless purity of soul and unselfish kindness of life never fail to reach and touch all witnesses, making them want to do better. The Man, Who was great enough in His own character to change the shameful Cross into a glorious Throne, has inspired the world with a new and magnificent ideal. No one now can be satisfied to be merely rich or famous, or to have a pleasant, easy time, doing nothing for other people. We all want to help our fellows, and we also want to feel that the help we give has cost us something. The more costly the sacrifice, the more joy there is in offering it. He Who was noble enough to reign as a King on the Cross, has taught

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His brethren and inspired "to suffer and to die," as no words could have inspired men. This is a glorious object-lesson, and one that goes home to every heart. We are all hero-worshippers by nature, and we all want to be heroic ourselves, though we may be too cowardly or lazy to pay the price.

If we want to be kingly we will face the pain God sends, and learn to thank Him for it. Some pain we are forced to submit to; but dogged submission to the inevitable, and heroic acceptance of God's will, are very different things. The one is kingly and the other is not. Then there is another pain of body or soul which might be avoided by refusing to bear the burdens of others. Christ might have avoided the insults, the agony and the Cross; if He had devoted His life to becoming rich or successful in the world, and allowed other people to battle with their sins and endure their troubles without offering help. Those who set out to follow a crucified Leader can hardly expect to have a path of easy self-indulgence provided for them. Peace and joy He gives, and love sweetens the hardest tasks, but the daily taking up of the cross is not a vague,

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beautiful idea. No, it implies a daily renunciation of one's own will for God's will, a daily self-sacrifice in small things or in great, a daily laying down of life in the service of God and man.

Let us choose to follow the King, though He may lead us straight to a cross—some pain that is not at all romantic or grand, not easy to endure without complaining, but just commonplace, petty and uninteresting. The most ordinary life—ordinary in its surroundings—may be lived serenely, grandly, enthusiastically. One that is so lived will be, in its measure, a kingly life, awakening high and noble aspirations in other souls; as the patient endurance of Christ won the homage of the thief and the admiration of the centurion who watched it. God has given to each of us a treasure—even a life to be poured out, as Christ's was, in glad, willing service and self-sacrifice for the good of our fellows. Shall we refuse our glorious vocation because it involves pain? Rather let us behold our King, keeping our eyes steadily fixed on Him who is the Inspiration and the Life of the world, daily drinking in more and more of His Kingly Spirit.

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" Come Thou as Guest within the breast
That burns to follow Thee.
Within our heart of hearts
In nearest nearness he ;
Set up Thy throne within Thine own,
Go, Lord ; we follow Thee."

The Risen Christ does not only offer us life and light, as separate gifts to be passed from His hand to ours. No, His offer is far greater than that. He is an infinite Fountain, from which life and light flow ever more abundantly into the members of His Body. His Life in us must grow stronger, and His Light must more and more transfigure the dullness of our surroundings, as we press closer and closer to Him and fling open all the doors of our being for His entrance. At first we may not be conscious of the life which is planted like a seed within us ; but it soon begins to grow, gathering nutriment from everything within reach. And gradually the pure Life, which is taking possession of its rightful temple—the soul and body of man—drives out before it death and corruption, and the Light shining from the Sun of Righteousness conquers the darkness of sin, making the character bright and beautiful.

The little, apparently commonplace, cares, duties and pleasures which God uses to refine, strengthen

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and beautify the souls He loves, are all tremendously important. We can't afford to miss the opportunities offered by the most tedious day; for beauty, strength and courage are splendid things, and are a great gain to the world. It only makes life difficult for other people if we act as dead weights, grumbling and complaining at every little grievance, or going about listlessly as though life were not worth living. It is worth living—grandly worth while. Why,—just think of the wonder of it!—we can give real joy to God. Surely it is true that when a soul grows up straight and beautiful, holding out both hands joyfully and trustfully for everything He sees fit to give, the great promise of the prophet is fulfilled: "The Lord thy God . . . will rejoice over thee with joy: He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."

When the Great Refiner is patiently and wisely "taking trouble" with a soul, slowly transforming it into His own image, a trustful acceptance of His will is absolutely necessary or the work cannot go on satisfactorily. Those whose trust is of poor quality will chafe against the Divine ordering, beating their wings in the effort to escape from the narrow path of duty which seems like a cage—and

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yet God cannot make a mistake in His planning of one single hour. We make innumerable mistakes, and ought to be very thankful that He does not allow us to use prayer as a magic talisman, gratifying every foolish desire as soon as it is expressed. If prayer made God think as we do, it would be the most dangerous power in the universe. But trustful prayer gradually helps us to think as God does, and desire only what He desires. Like our Master in Gethsemane, we begin by praying for release from pain and difficulty, and pray on until we can say "Not my will, but Thine be done." It is a far greater answer to our pleading when we are given strength to conquer in the fight, than when we are permitted to stand aside from the battle altogether.

What a good thing it is for us that God does so often call us to walk by faith rather than by sight. If we could always see that His ordering was best, we should have no opportunity for proving our love for Him, no chance of bringing joy to His heart by trusting when we cannot understand. This is a dear and sweet testing to one who really loves his Master. There is a marvellous gladness in kneeling at His feet, placing both hands in His, looking up into His eyes and saying : " I know that Thy will

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is best, though I cannot understand the reason for my heartache." To take this attitude of trustful loyalty, in little things which cross one's wishes day after day, not only proves one's loving trust, but strengthens it. The habit of believing that God's will is better than one's own will, must result in a growing beauty of soul that is worth infinitely more than the pleasure of having one's own way. If you are asked to face disappointment day after day, year after year, then you have a grand opportunity for growing strong and brave and sweet-natured. Surely that is a gift to thank God for.

" No good
Or glory of this life but comes by pain.
How poor were earth if all its martyrdoms,
If all its struggling sighs of sacrifice
Were swept away, and all were satiate-smooth ;
If this were such a heaven of soul and sense
As some have dreamed of;—and we human still.
Nay, we were fashioned not for perfect peace
In this world, howsoe'er in the next ;
And what we win and hold is through some strife."

Our lives and characters would indeed be poor and weak if God were to answer all our prayers exactly as we—at the time of uttering them—wish them to be answered. Cuyler has remarked that the Church

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is full of "spiritual invalids, who are never ready for the self-denying, difficult duties of their profession. They need pruning. Let us welcome every dealing of the Spirit that will give to us more vigor, more hearty health, more of the athletic graces, so to speak, of the Christian life."

God asks our help in His great business of cultivating saints—is not that an inspiring thing to remember? And saints are apt to grow best without too much of the glaring sunlight of public approval. If you feel yourself kept in the shade, don't forget to thank God; if you are in the sunshine, thank Him for its brightness. In fact, if we desire to grow into the Likeness of Him who is "altogether lovely," we can hardly fail to thank God for everything; for every moment that comes to us is carrying a gift of love from the King, who greatly desires to see us grow in the beauty of holiness.

Love, Infinite Love, not only endured to the uttermost to save us from sin, but is watching over us every moment. The Story of the Cross may grow dim to our eyes, in the far-distant Past, and we may find it hard to realize that the Saviour of the world really cared for our special needs when He

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offered the Great Sacrifice. But His watchful care to-day is more easily comprehended and goes home to our consciousness more readily. When He has planned each moment of the day for our highest good and real happiness, think how disappointed He must be if we refuse to be happy and move with listless step and gloomy face, letting all the brightness die out of our voice. Let us never forget that God loved us so much that He chose to become one with us, stooping very low so that He could lift us very high.

" He has raised our human nature
On the clouds to GOD'S right hand ;
There we sit in heavenly places,
There with Him in glory stand :
JESUS reigns, adored by Angels ;
MAN with GOD is on the Throne ;
Mighty LORD, in Thine Ascension
We by faith behold our own."

Each soul is infinite in its longing after holiness, for it is near of kin to the Most Holy God; and His Spirit is training, beautifying and perfecting our souls every moment—or will do so if we will let Him.

It is an awful thought that we have the power of

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resisting God's will. His Will is our sanctification; and, if we are not being sanctified, then we must be putting obstacles in the way of the Holy Spirit. The thing we need for our good and happiness God provides for us, though it may cost Him the awful agony of Gethsemane and Calvary. And yet we can throw His gifts aside in sullen discontent, and act as though we thought our short-sighted provision for our own wants would have been far better than the treasures of love He has, in infinite wisdom, provided. Someone has said that "discouragement is an act of unbelief," and if that is true, then discouragement is a sin against God, a sin we are bound to fight to the death. To trust God when we have our own way in everything, is very easy and requires no fighting at all. But how pleased He must be when one of His children trusts on and walks forward joyously, with uplifted head, through the hard bits of the road of life. We all know what those hard bits are like, the times when, if we are faithless cowards, we feel as though life were hardly worth living. Then joy is not only a duty—it is always that—but it becomes a triumph, as well; a victory over the dark spiritual foes that

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are trying to drag down our souls with heavy weights.

I have spoken in a former chapter about the wonderful attractiveness of Jesus of Nazareth, how He established friendly relations with all sorts and conditions of people, drawing men, women and children into close fellowship with Himself. He gave love to all, and love has been and is poured out by multitudes in return.

But are His avowed disciples always like their Master, in this respect? Those who love others will never have to complain that no one loves them. To be Christ-like includes attractiveness, on the whole, though a disciple is sometimes forced, like his Master, to oppose evil so boldly that hatred is roused against him.

St. Paul's wonderful description of LOVE, in his first letter to the Corinthian Church, is a picture of Christ; and anyone who is daily growing more like that picture must be growing more lovely, more lovable, more attractive to relations, friends and acquaintances. Those who find that they are appreciated by strangers, more than by the people with whom they live, may discover by careful self-examination that they are always courteous and

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obliging to strangers, keeping their second - best manners for their own relations.

How wonderful was the courtesy of the King, even on that last terrible day of agony ! And it was not cold politeness, but a real kindly interest that He showed in speaking to Judas, Pilate, the sorrowing women, the thief at His side, His mother and loyal friend. Unselfish love will make the plainest face beautiful, with a beauty that is a true reflection of the Face of the Master.

Our Lord's courtesy was easy and beautiful as the restful green of the quiet grass or the peaceful blue of the summer sky. He addressed the poor, sinful, Samaritan woman at the well with gentle grace, was quietly courteous to the cowardly Roman governor, and even met the loathsome kiss of a false friend with unruffled gentleness. And yet He was not always smooth and polished, like a silky courtier. Sometimes His fierce indignation against hypocrisy found vent in scorching, terrible words. Some people are so bent on being polite that they become insincere and untruthful. Their expression of opinion is worth nothing, because they are ready to sacrifice everything if only they can be agreeable. If Christ's courtesy had been simply a veneer, if He

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had set His heart on pleasing everybody, He would never have been crucified. His words came from the depths of a heart of burning love, and sometimes it was necessary to express horror of sin in words awful enough to wake a soul that was torpid with spiritual poison.

But fierce indignation was an exceptional and sad necessity, while gentle courtesy was the natural expression of His heart and of His perfect self-control. He could be roused to righteous anger, but no personal insults succeeded in irritating Him. How different we are. Even when we can control our words, the inner vexation is revealed by tone or look or gesture.

To cure the sin of discourtesy by outside means might result in a superficial polish, which would be little better than the former roughness of manner. But real Christian courtesy springs from within, being the direct result of having the eyes open to see Him who is always with us. Those who have learned to recognize Christ in everyone, will find discourtesy almost impossible—how can we treat our King with rudeness? That would be no light offence on the part of a subject.

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It is a great mistake to fancy that a rude or unkind speech to a child is a matter of slight consequence. Our Lord's warning words bear witness to the gravity of the offence. "Take heed," He says, "that ye despise not one of these little ones." And He makes it very plain that any kindness or unkindness shown to a child is accepted by Him, for He says: "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My Name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me."

Then we must not forget that a Christian who is unattractive in behavior will tend to drive others away from Christ, making them dislike the very name of Christianity. Terrible indeed is the warning against dragging down Christ's little ones. "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on Me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea." Holmes says that our Lord's command regarding children—"Forbid them not!"—must refer also to the "forbidding face," because children are great readers of faces, and "a face bright with looking unto Jesus, must carry its impressions to

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those who look upon it. We may be unconsciously of it, but, if we have been on the Mount with God, others will see it. God works through features, and sometimes we are responsible for the impressions conveyed through our faces."

If we walk with Christ, our eyes will be clear enough and our hearts pure enough to see Him in everyone. As He is *on* with His brethren here in the world, the least discourtesy to them *must* touch Him, the smallest act of loving kindness will go straight to His heart.

If only we could always remember that our dear Lord is really though invisibly present: right in the room with us—though the doors may be shut—and listening to every word! That remembrance could not fail to *make us* more careful what we say. The people we are *finding* fault with, are friends of His. More than that, every unnecessary word we say against the least of His brethren, is instantly accepted as *said* against Him. How often our careless and *unkind* words must have hurt Him! We are speaking *against* Him, and He is listening—let that thought keep down our love of idle and mischievous gossip and prevent any unnecessary retailing of the faults of our neighbors.

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We can walk with eyes on the "Great Companion," but it is no easy matter to keep them from being drawn aside for days and weeks together.

It is easy to hurry through a formal prayer in the morning—if we get up in time—and another at night—with the thoughts muddled by approaching sleep. It is easy to do this, and yet go for weeks, or months, without really remembering, much less realizing, that God is actually with us and in us. If our prayers are careless and formal, or too often neglected altogether, what wonder is it that we make slow progress in our knowledge of God—the knowledge which is life eternal?

Practice makes perfect. It is folly to expect the soul to grow strong and beautiful without its rightful food and exercise, and the fresh air of the Spirit of God. We are learning the necessity of bodily food, exercise and fresh air, let us not be guilty of starving our more precious souls. We cannot look only at the "things which are seen," without great loss to ourselves and others.

"No wonder the day seemed so lengthened!
And its burdens so heavy to bear,
And I so impatient and fretful,
When I ne'er offered one word of prayer!"

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God pity the soul that is living
So far from his Father away,
That in all of life's bane and its blessing
He never once thinketh to pray !"

Let us never feel that the day has passed satisfactorily if the "one thing needful" has been crowded out by less important business—that "one thing needful" being communion with God.

St. Bernard of Cluny, when walking in the cloisters with his brother monks, would sometimes say to them: "Dear brethren, I must go; there is Someone waiting for me in my cell."

There is **SOMEONE** waiting for us in our room—do we let Him wait day after day in vain? What a difference it would make in our lives if, several times a day, we spent even a minute or two consciously at the feet of Christ. Then we should indeed be like mirrors, reflecting the beauty of the King—the beauty of holiness—then our friends would take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus.

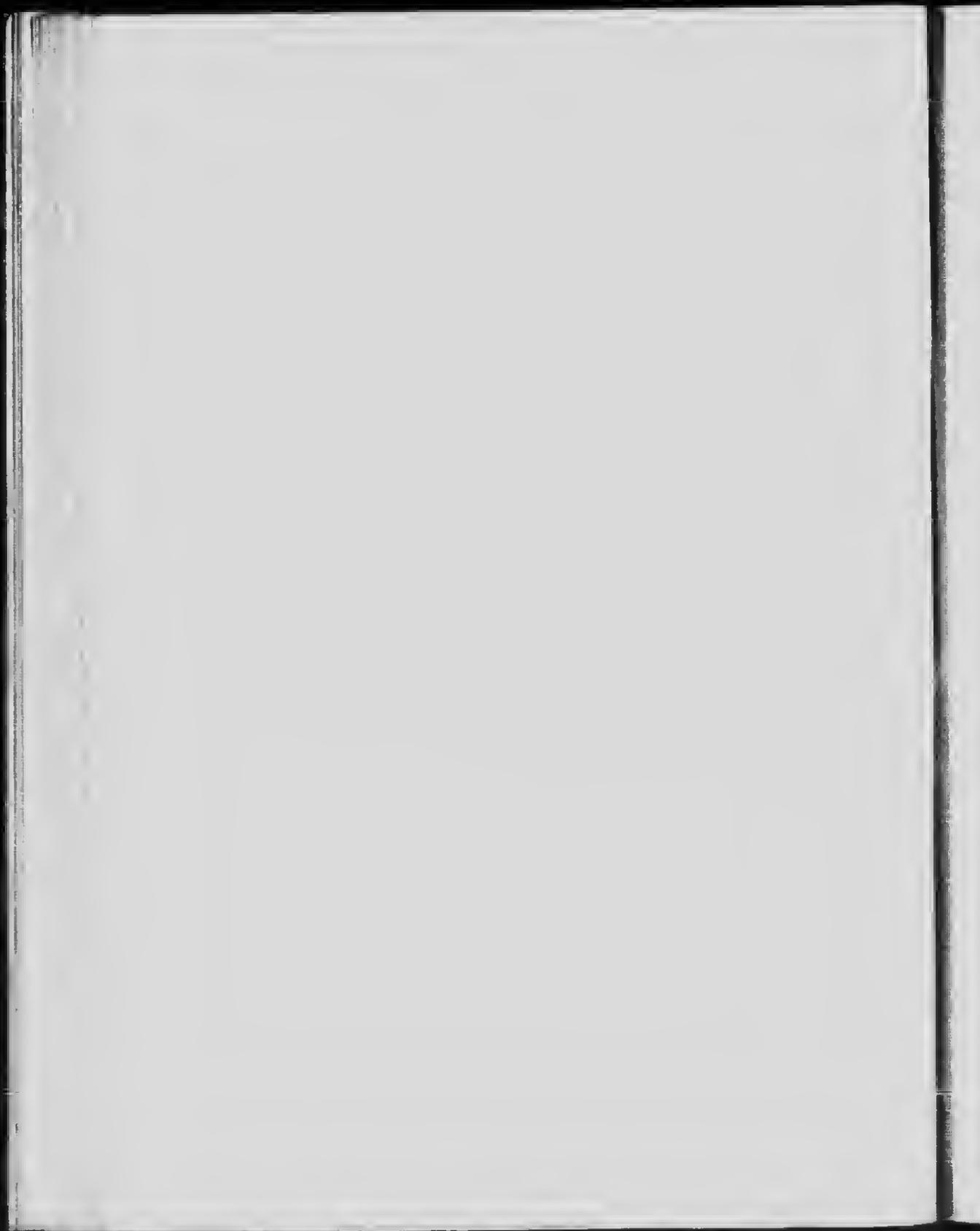
But is this a practical thing? Will it be a real help in doing the common, trifling tasks of every day, as well as an inspiration in a crisis? Surely! Ask those whose hearts are singing with a new and wonderful joy, whether the everyday work is not

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transformed? Joy is a grand tonic, and to walk hand-in-hand with the "Great Companion" is Joy unspeakable.

The Carpenter of Nazareth came to earth to work with the workers. Work that is too much for one, is easy and pleasant for two--especially if One of the workers is God. He wants to be your Companion; will you not show Him, many times a day, that He is very welcome? He says:

" They who tread the path of labor, follow where My
feet have trod;
They who work without complaining, do the holy will
of God.
Where the many toil together, there am I among My
own;
Where the tired workman sleepeth, there am I with
him alone."



THE VISION CALLS FOR CONSECRATED LIVES.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VISION CALLS FOR CONSECRATED LIVES.

" If Jesus Christ is a man,—
And only a man,—I say
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave alway.

" If Jesus Christ is a God,—
And the only God,—I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air."

Many people seem to treat their Christianity as though it were an ornamental fringe to what they consider the " real business of life." It is a matter for attention on Sundays; and a few hours on week days are spent in prayer and Bible-reading. Perhaps considerable missionary and charitable work is also done. But, when the eyes are opened to the Vision of Christ's Face, the whole life is thrilled and permeated with His indwelling Life. Then everything is seen to be holy; what God has touched can never be " common." Then the great promise is fulfilled: " In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; . . . yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah

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shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts"—holy as the carpenter's bench in Nazareth or the manger in Bethlehem.

Then the "real business of life" is the service of Christ, from Sunday morning to Saturday night. Did He not toil for years, in order to show us the glory of work that is done for God? Everything may be poured out at the feet of the Master, when the whole life is His, to use as He pleases. Consecration "makes drudgery divine." It is wonderful to wake in the morning, with the glad thought of Christ's presence gradually stealing into the soul, bringing a glow into the eyes and a smile to the lips. It is wonderful to throw off all one's cares in the evening, putting them entirely into God's keeping, and refusing to be troubled with them—glad at heart as a little child that nestles into its father's arms.

But, between the morning gladness and the evening peace, must come the burden and heat of the day—a day spent absolutely at Christ's command. I once read a book which suggested that the words, "My Master," should be worn next the heart, next the will, sinking into the very springs of both, deeper every day. The writer says :

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"Let us get up every morning with this for the instantaneous thought that my Master wakes me. I wake, I rise, His property. Before I go out to plow, or feed, or whatever it may be, upon His domain, let me, with reverent and deep joy, go into His private chamber, as it were, and avow Him as my Master, my Possessor; absolute, not constitutional; supremely entitled to order me about all day, and, if He pleases, not to thank me at the close."

We are not called to be amateur Christians, just dabbling in Christianity as an occasional pastime; but we are called to be professionals, giving it earnest study and steady purpose for a lifetime.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews a Christian's everyday life is compared to a race, where the runners are professionals, in splendid training. The great amphitheatre is crowded with "a cloud of witnesses," all eagerly interested in his progress; and the contestant presses forward with all the energy he can put into his efforts. He does not weight himself with anything which may hinder his progress, but runs with determined patience the race set before him, "looking unto Jesus." Yes, that is the secret Vision which cheers him in the face of discouragement, which nerves his heart and strengthens his arm and makes his face radiant with

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the reflection of the Sun of Righteousness. The Sun is always shining, but too often we run—or drag wearily along at a slow walk—with downcast eyes and burdened hearts. Unless our eyes are fixed on our Leader we cannot reflect His joy—"the joy set before Him"—which made Him able to endure the Cross, despising the shame, until His hard race on earth was finished, and He sat down at the right hand of the Father. It is a great stimulus to loyal servants of the Master to know that He is carefully watching every step they take, every battle they fight.

If our lives are really consecrated, they must be absolutely at our King's command. We must never question His decisions, even when they do not chime in with our own desires. He is our Master, and His will is always to lead us in the path that fits us best—though we may not be able to see the fitness when we are first called to obey.

" I said, ' Let me walk in the fields.'
He said, ' No, walk in the town.'
I said, ' There are no flowers there.'
He said, ' No flowers, but a crown.'
I said, ' But the skies are black ;
There is nothing but noise and din.'

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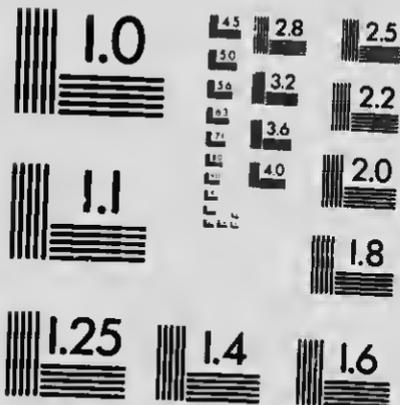
And He wept as He sent me back ;
' There is more,' He said, ' There is sin.'
I said, ' But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun.'
He answered, ' Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark, undone.'
I said, ' I shall miss the light ;
And friends will miss me, they say.'
He answered, ' Choose to-night
If I am to miss you, or they.'
I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, ' Is it hard to decide ?
It will not be hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide.'
Then into His hand went mine ;
And into my heart came He ;
And I walk in a light divine
The path I had feared to see."

Take a common case. A man is plainly called by God to deliberately forego the sacred joys of home. The voice of duty directs him towards the path of self-sacrifice, showing that it means—in his case—the opportunity for wider, fuller service. He obeys the call, turns his back on inclination and climbs his lonely path with steadfast resolution. Is his life less rich and full because he has refused to put out a hand to grasp innocent pleasure for himself—that so he may be able to stretch out both hands to help weaker brothers and sisters in their



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upward climb ? Is he really a loser because, knowing that one who saves others cannot save himself, he chooses to lay down his life, if, by that sacrifice of self, others may find joy and hope through the revelation of God in Christ ? Surely not ! One who loses his life for Love's sake, will save it—even in this life—for our Master's promise is sure : "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . with persecutions ; and in the world to come eternal life."

The outside world may fancy that this promise has not been kept, for the Master loves to have glad secrets with His friends. He gives, even in this life, a "white stone," a shining jewel, with its mysterious inscription, which cannot be read by any one save the recipient and the Giver.

One who chooses the lonely road, in order that he may be free to serve, sometimes finds that God has given him the inward spiritual grace of the "Sacrament of Home" more abundantly than if he had grasped the outward visible sign. He is often far less lonely than those who pity him, far nearer

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those he loves than if he could see their faces and touch their hands. He often sees them better, too, sees their white souls and loyal hearts; because distance hides the little faults which might irritate him and injure the beautiful fellowship and free communion which laughs at the barrier of space and does not fear the grim wall of death.

God wants to send many messages through us; He wants each Christian to be, like John the Baptist, a "voice" speaking His words. It is a great honor and privilege to be used by Him, to be the channel through which He touches other souls; but how can God speak through our voice unless we are living in continual touch with Him? As the Word of God came into the world through a lowly, holy maiden, so He is constantly coming into the world, and reaching man, through men and women and children, who, like Mary of Nazareth, have offered and presented their souls and bodies willingly to His service, and, with pure hearts and steadfast wills, say unreservedly: "Be it unto me according to Thy word." God can do great things through such consecrated human instruments. If He is not working mightily through us—and He only knows whether He is making use of our powers for His

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own purposes—then it must be because we are not entirely consecrated to His service, or are not keeping always in touch with Him. St. Paul's influence for good was, and is, inconceivably great, and why? --He explains it very simply by saying: "I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."

"Be strong!

We are not here to play,—to dream,—to drift;
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;
Shun not the struggle—Face it, 'tis God's gift."

If God has lighted us with the fire of His indwelling Life, He intends us to do our part in the great work of lighting the world. Let us put more life and energy and enthusiasm into our prayers for the growth of His Kingdom, and then we can reach out in the might of those secret prayers to sweeten, brighten and strengthen the souls around us.

The only way to really help others is to press close to Christ, and stay there. Then both hands can be stretched out in eager service. You may have little time, money or world-influence. Well, what of that? The great Life which has transfigured millions of souls, filling them with power

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and joy and beauty, was very short, and had neither money nor worldly influence behind it. The world would have been poorer rather than richer, to-day, if Jesus had reigned in a palace instead of working in a village shop. True power lies in character rather than in circumstances, and the people who help us most in spiritual things are helping us by what they are, not by what they do. With God behind a man, nothing is impossible; though success may for a time be hidden. To-day we can see that Christ's life was great and glorious, but on that first awful Good Friday, it must have looked like an utter failure. Not on this side of death can anyone judge of the results of His life and work. We all may be conquerors—through Him who loved us—but don't let us aim so low that we can possibly win satisfying success here.

Yes, we see that it is possible to consecrate every hour of every day, to make every moment glorious by the power of the Divine Life flowing through us; to make every act great by the power of a great motive behind it. That is our ideal; but, when we compare it with the standard we have actually reached, what do we see? We look back over years of struggle, and see how often the "things that are

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seen " have shut out from us the Vision of our Master's Face. We have distrusted Him in pain or sorrow; we have acted from motives of vanity or worldliness; we have often grown careless about trying to please Him. Perhaps there have been darker times still; times when our white robes of holiness have been stained by wilful sins of thought or word or act.

What then? Are we going to choose a lower ideal to aim at, because we have not found it possible to reach the perfect holiness which can alone satisfy our ambition? God forbid!

" A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's heaven for?"

We have all eternity before us, to grow in, so there is no need to give up the race in despair at our slow progress and many falls. And yet we should never be contented with slow progress. Feeling that we have "not already attained" our high ideal, as St. Paul says, we must forget those things which are behind, reaching forth unto those things which are before, and eagerly "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

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How often—by word, or look, or cowardly silence—we pretend that we belong only to the world' and care nothing for the "Name which is above every name." But the race is being run in the sight of the King. Does He not look at us sometimes as He looked at another disciple who loved and yet denied? God grant that the Master's look of disappointed love may never fail to go straight to our hearts.

And then there are other witnesses watching our progress—a great cloud of witnesses—and not all are cheering us on. We want to help forward the cause of Christ; let us remember that half-hearted, lukewarm disciples can do it more harm than any number of opponents. Those who have no enthusiasm for their Master do more to make doubters think there is no truth in Christianity than any infidel, for a faith which very evidently has little influence over those who profess it must seem to outsiders a hollow sham and mockery—simply a fashionable pretence. Those who name the Name of Christ should have that Name written plainly on their lives, so that no one can doubt Whose they are and Whom they serve. "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His Face; and His Name shall be

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in their foreheads." Those who serve Christ with all their hearts, gazing much into His Face, are sealed by Him as His own. That is a seal which no one can mistake or counterfeit. Let us try to be "saturated with Christ," feeling the power of His Life thrilling along every nerve.

Consecration is such a beautiful thing ; surely we can never willingly live our lives in dull monotony when they might be radiant. It is possible to fill each day with glad and glorious ministry to our King. Too often we forget the marvellous truth which has been well expressed in these words :

" JESUS is the Head of this house ;
The Unseen Guest at every meal ;
The Silent Listener to every conversation."

Just think of the wonder of it ! When you set a table, with careful daintiness, it is because He will be your Guest. When you are cooking or washing dishes, you can feel the high privilege of caring for Him. When you make the rooms clean and attractive, it is because you know that He will notice everything, and will gladden your heart by His gracious approval. If you are working in the fields or in business, you feel that the Son of Man—the

So

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Carpenter—is working at your side. If you minister to sick souls or bodies, you are working with and for the Good Physician to restore men to their normal condition of perfect health.

On the other hand, if your work is neglected, or done without enthusiasm, you will feel the shame of one who has been called to a high office in the Church, an important post in the Great Army, and who must answer to the King Himself for neglect of duty.

Christianity—if it be a real living with Christ and in Christ—has a marvellous power of transfiguring and beautifying whatever it touches—and it should touch everything. Every moment of our lives may be devotional—devoted to God. The old idea that a man who wished to be religious must shut the world out of his sight by becoming a hermit or a monk, has pretty well lost its hold on public opinion. We need not go out of the world to live with God, for He wants to live with us in the world. And, if we do not shut the door of our hearts against Him, He will live with us so plainly and openly that our everyday duties will be transfigured.

To consecrate one's life is not necessarily to alter

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the daily round of duty, but it must fill everything—recreation as well as work—with a new spirit. And the "spirit" in which a thing is done makes all the difference between a great and a small action. A room may be swept or scrubbed because it is a necessary part of the day's work; or the commonplace task may be turned into a high and glorious privilege, if the heart is thrilled with the wonderful remembrance that Christ is the Royal Guest for Whom the room is being prepared.

No life can be commonplace if it is poured out enthusiastically in the service of God and man. We all want to live beautiful lives, do we not? It matters not how plain the face of a loving worker may be, nor how rough and red are the hands, there is beauty there for God and man to see—beauty that is worth striving after and is within the reach of all.

"And God, who studies each separate soul,
Out of commonplace lives makes His beautiful whole."

Surely the remembrance that our daily fight with impatience or discontent, with pride or selfishness, is a matter of intense interest to God and to the

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great cloud of invisible witnesses, should make us see the glory of it ourselves. A life that is really consecrated to God must be radiant with light—the light of the Sun of Righteousness.

And who can measure the power of a consecrated life? As we look back we see such lives burning like glorious stars to enlighten and inspire their fellows. We look about us in the world to-day and can see that the men and women who are walking with God, and whose lives are absolutely devoted to His service, are lives of marvellous power. Bishop Paget says :

“ We cannot anticipate or analyze the power of a pure and holy life; but there can be no doubt about its reality, and there seems no limit to its range. We can only know in part the laws and forces of the spiritual world; and it may be that every soul that is purified and given up to God and to His work releases or awakens energies of which we have no suspicion—energies viewless as the wind, but we can be sure of the result, and we may have glimpses sometimes of the process—surely there is no power in the world so unerring or so irrepressible as the power of personal holiness. All else at times goes wrong, blunders, loses proportion, falls disastrously short of its aim, grows stiff or one-sided, or out of date . . . but nothing mars or misleads the influence that issues from a pure and humble and unselfish character.”

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Think of this, you who feel your power to help the world cramped by lack of opportunity ! What life is too obscure to be holy ? We may well ask ourselves in solemn silence whether we are helping to draw others nearer to God, or driving them away from Him. If we, who are bound to reflect the beauty of the King, show want of trust in our Master by worry, anxiety and grumbling ; if we refuse to "take up" our cross, and only endure it miserably because we can't help ourselves ; if we care only to please ourselves, acting as though our aim were to "get" instead of to "give" ; then the watching world will be repelled from a Master whose disciples are so unattractive. We want to consecrate our lives—then let us remember that LOVE is true consecration, purifying the life at its spring, the heart.

" Love is the filling from one's own
Another's cup.
Love is a daily laying down
And taking up.
A choosing of the stony path
Through each new day,
That other feet may tread at ease
The smoother way.
Love is not blind, but looks abroad
Through other eyes,

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And asks not, 'Must I give?' but
 'May I sacrifice?'
Love hides its grief, that other hearts
 And lips may sing;
And burdened, walks, that other lives
 May, buoyant, wing.
Sinner, hast thou a love like this
 Within thy soul?
'Twill change thy name to saint, ere thou
 Hast reached thy goal."

THE VISION AROUSES ENTHUSIASM.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISION AROUSES ENTHUSIASM.

And what is "Enthusiasm"? I turn to my dictionary and find that it is derived from the Greek "en," in, and "theos," God. Surely, then, it must be God working in and through those who place themselves willingly at His disposal, even as our Lord graciously promises: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him."

Enthusiasm must fire our lukewarm hearts and fill us with life and energy. There is a good deal of cool, calculating Christianity in the world; but what is needed is a passionate devotion, a determination to draw nearer to God at all costs. The Vision of the King's Face has, in all ages, irresistibly attracted eager souls:

" There's heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons, though e'er so bright,
Avail to stop me; splendor-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof:

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For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last."

And enthusiasm in religion is not seen nearly as often as might be expected. Men are often very enthusiastic about politics or business, and women are often enthusiastic housekeepers; but how few, comparatively, are "athirst for God" with a thirst that demands continual satisfaction! It is very surprising how easy many people are about their success in living the spiritual life. If you ask them which is of greatest importance—"goodness, wealth, fame, etc."—they will unhesitatingly answer "goodness," and they will mean it, too. But, if you study their daily life, you may be inclined to think that they are throwing far more determined energy into the pursuit of earthly success than into the pursuit of holiness. If it is really true that we would rather be good than rich, then we certainly will be more enthusiastic in our daily struggle in that direction. But, are we? Our Lord says that the kingdom of heaven "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The marginal reading is

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"the kingdom of heaven is gotten by force." If it needs taking "by force," it certainly calls for more effort than an occasional careless prayer, once or twice a day—when the pressure of other interests permits it—and the remembrance of God for an hour or two on Sunday. The thought of the Divine Presence, the Vision of the Master's Face, is enough to transfigure the dullest life and make the most wearisome work a delight. If we want to please our King, there are opportunities always within reach. If, at the same time, we are eager to grow in the beauty of holiness, eager to help our fellows and make the world brighter and better about us, then let us be enthusiastic in the pursuit of our ideal. The ideal is one, though it branches out in many directions. If we impress it on our subconscious mind as we fall asleep at night, it will be our first thought as we wake—the glad thought of having a new day to make beautiful and radiant, that it may be laid as an acceptable gift at the feet of the King.

We should ask God for this helpful grace of Enthusiasm; ask Him to pour His own Life into us and through us. Think of the rapturous joy that has inspired multitudes of martyrs to play their

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parts nobly ! They drew that joy straight from God, and He is ready to fill us with joy too—the joy of living splendidly for Him instead of dying splendidly for Him. Why should you live on a low level when you might be a "common bush afire with God" ? This new day is a gift from God, accept it enthusiastically, and let everybody know that you are glad to be alive in His world; glad to have continually fresh opportunities of serving the Great Master of men.

" God of Love, God of Work ! Touch me with fire !
For the dross within me, fill me with ire !—
So with pure passion I cleave to my star,
Speed my work, daily, toward the mark—far !

" God of Love, God of Work ! Breathe in me—air !
Blue and breeze-swept spaces brighten my care !—
So each swirl of effort leave my hand calm,
So each heart meeting mine only feel—balm !"

Let no one imagine that the life of an earnest Christian is dull and uninteresting. Why, it is the most romantic life imaginable. The Church is the Bride of Christ, and is always expecting the glad summons : " Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him !" It is not only necessary that She should be ready for His visible appearing, but She knows that He is continually coming, that

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She has the glad privilege of ministering to Him already. "Behold, I come quickly!" our dear Lord says. He will surely come to-day in the person of "one of the least" of His brethren. Let us spring up eagerly to meet Him, let us minister to Him of our best. In serving even a little child we are serving our Master and King. With this wonderful thought in our minds the ordinary routine of daily work will be changed to the grand and glorious sacrifice of a martyr—a loyal witness for Christ. Then every day will be "a red-letter day," every duty will be transformed into an inspiring opportunity and privilege. This daily Vision of the ever-present King is the true Midas-touch, which can change common earthenware into pure and shining gold.

We hear a great deal about "the strenuous life," but a life that is not lived strenuously and energetically is a very poor affair. Those who settle down to a half-hearted, jog-trot kind of Christianity are sure to find life dull and disappointing.

"Only work that is for God alone
Hath an unceasing guerdon of delight,
A guerdon unaffected by the sight
Of great success, nor by its loss o'erthrown.—
All else is vanity beneath the sun,
There may be joy in Doing, but it palls when done."

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Christianity is not just the conscientious performance of necessary duty ; it is enthusiastic devotion to the only Master who can fully satisfy the hungry heart. And enthusiasm of this kind, entirely disregarding the cost, appeals to the chivalrous instincts which lie deep in the heart of the coldest, most calculating of us all. It is thousands of years since three of David's noblest captains risked their lives to get him a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, and their enthusiastic devotion rouses our admiration yet. It is easy to say that it was foolish to risk valuable lives, only in order to gratify a passing desire expressed by their leader—but what king would not desire such devoted love from his followers ? Many might agree with Judas in thinking the costly ointment, poured out on the feet of Jesus by the loyal-hearted Mary of Bethany, was wasted; for it might have been sold and the price laid out in practical fashion for the poor. But He who knows the human heart to its depths, saw that this lavish expression of enthusiastic devotion would quicken cold hearts unto the end of time. He gave the act His warmest approval, saying that it should be told as a memorial wherever the gospel should be preached. There is little danger that our

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enthusiasm for the Person of Christ will ever be great enough to displease Him.

"I found Him whom my soul loveth :
I held Him, and would not let Him go,"

must be the cry of one whose enthusiastic devotion is aroused by the Vision of Him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand . . . and altogether lovely." Christ is the Heart and Life of Christianity; and the attractive power of His Personality is invisible, yet mighty, like the power of gravitation.

If it were possible to remove the living, loving, ever-present Christ from the Christian religion, all its charm would vanish. It would still teach men to refuse the evil and choose the good, but enthusiasm would die out of their souls, as the light fades when the sun goes down. Men who only reverence Jesus of Nazareth as a great leader—only one of many great world-teachers—preach that kind of lifeless Christianity. They teach Christ's doctrines, but do not present Him as a living Person who is in constant, quickening contact with each soul. Their writings, interesting though they may be, make one feel sorry for the writers who have

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missed the only soul-fellowship which can really satisfy a hungry heart.

Jesus of Nazareth is constantly kindling and keeping alive an enthusiastic personal devotion in the hearts of countless men, women and children who have never seen Him—an enthusiasm which burns on steadily, century after century, with ever-increasing splendor. Let those who deny that He is still alive explain that marvellous Fact—if they can! It is unique in the history of our race. Could a man, dead for nearly 2,000 years, rule so royally over the souls and bodies of the noblest and most unselfish of every age? NO! JESUS LIVES! and is ever pressing close to His Heart the heart of each individual disciple, pouring in the strengthening oil of the Holy Spirit and the new wine of a high enthusiasm which must find room for service.

“ Come, my beloved! we will haste and go
To those pale faces of our fellow men!
Our loving hearts, burning with summer fire,
Will cast a glow upon their pallidness;
Our hands will help them, far as servants may;
Hands are apostles still to saviour-hearts;
So we may share their blessedness with them!”

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CHAPTER VIII.

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" He bowed himself
With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease,
That graced the lowliest act in doing of it."

Our Lord threw a flood of glorious light on the commonest acts of everyday service, that last night of wonderful communion with His chosen friends before He died. What a picture it holds before our astonished eyes! There is the "Master of the World" stooping to wash the feet of His own servants, not shrinking from this lowly act of service, even when He bows before the traitor Judas. And this duty, which was usually performed by a slave, is not only done willingly, it is lifted into a different atmosphere altogether. As a priest, thinking of the solemnity of his sacred office, might cleanse with reverent awe the golden vessels used in the Temple service, so the Redeemer of mankind gave the world this great object-lesson of the Glory of Service. It was when His whole soul was filled with the consciousness of His own greatness, when

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He realized to the full "that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God," that He rose up from supper, girded Himself with a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Just because He knew Himself to be their Lord and Master, He felt impelled to serve them; according to the precept He had given them that if anyone wished to be "the greatest," he must prove his greatness by becoming the "servant" of all. Surely God Himself is continually ministering to the commonest needs of every creature He has made. The 104th Psalm makes this very clear. It begins by declaring the honor and majesty of God. He clothes Himself with light, uses the heavens as a curtain, maketh the clouds His chariot, and walks on the wings of the wind. He has laid the foundations of the earth, and has set a bound to the mighty sea; and yet He stoops to provide for the thirsty wild asses and hungry cattle. He plants trees so that the birds can safely build their nests, and provides homes for the wild goats and the conies. All things on the earth, and in the great and wide sea, wait continually upon Him, that they may have all their needs

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provided for in due season. So we see that the Most High God is the Servant of all, nothing is too commonplace for His careful attention.

How, then, is this service made grand and glorious? It is transfigured by Love. The mighty power of love constrained the Master of angels and men to deliberately choose a servant's work; and the same spirit of love is every day constraining His disciples to choose hard work rather than ease and luxury—because they see a chance of helping somebody.

And the Vision of Christ's Face is enough to transfigure and glorify the most commonplace work, in the eyes of one who loves Him. Why? Because, in serving the least of His brethren, the King Himself is served. A beautiful little story tells of the delight felt by the sisters of Bethany in ministering to their Friend, and in stooping to bathe His tired and dusty feet. Which of us would not rejoice in the privilege of such service?

We feel that such an opportunity would be enough to glorify a whole life. Any king might long for the high honor of giving a cup of cold water to the King of kings. And yet that is exactly the opportunity and high privilege which is ours every day.

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" All His are thine to serve ; Christ's brethren here
Are needing aid ; in them thou servest Him."

The Incarnation God has drawn heaven and earth together. By taking to Himself a human soul, the Son of God has lifted this humanity of ours into the highest heaven. " Man, with God, is on the Throne," and is continually pouring the Divine Life into our humanity, uplifting and glorifying it. By clothing Himself with a human body, the Son of God has come into closest union with this material world of ours, uplifting and glorifying all temporal things and filling them with eternal significance.

And, because of this wonderful revelation of the unseen God, this everyday life of ours is radiant with reflected glory. Even here and now, in this commonplace old world, we may—if our spiritual vision be keen—see the Holy City descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God; and her light is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Those who walk with heads uplifted and eyes open to the light will reflect that glory, as polished mirrors, and people will not fail to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. With the Vision of the King

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in His beauty always attracting us to follow in His steps, life can never seem uninteresting nor everyday work commonplace.

There is a great deal said in the Bible about things we might be inclined to call "trifles." I think God wants to remind us at every turn that He is carefully taking note of all the little details of life. Nearly two thousand years ago a man was doing a lowly act of service—just carrying a pitcher of water in a house in Jerusalem. How little he thought, as he walked along the street, that this trifling, everyday action would never be forgotten. I think little he imagined that God was weaving him and his pitcher of water into the most wonderful story the world has ever known. Two of the Evangelists mention that man, who was doing a servant's work just before the greatest of the Jewish Passovers was kept, as if they wished to impress us with God's attention to common things. They may seem trifling to us, but nothing is trifling to Him.

But, if work is to be glorious, it must be done willingly. Grudging service is always mean and inglorious. There is a legend of a monk, called "Brother Francis," whose duty it was to carry the water to be used in the monastery from St. Mary's

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well. The way was long, the work was toilsome, and Francis was discontented; though only God knew how unwilling his daily service was. One evening, when he had been brooding sullenly over his hard lot and wishing he might never be forced to do the work again, the Abbot began unexpectedly to praise him. He was told that his zeal and patience, in bringing fresh water several times a day, would be rewarded by God; but that he looked very weary, so the work would now be given into the hands of Brother Paul. Brother Francis, confused and ashamed, accepted the Abbot's blessing; but with envious glance he watched his successor as he carried water from the distant spring, day after day.

“ And rest from toil seemed unto him a sore and bitter thing,
A penance, lacking penance' grace—no sweetness, but all sting,
And pondering sadly, half in wrath, and half repentingly,
He had a vision, and he saw an Angel from on high
Who, hour by hour, with Brother Paul, walked all the weary day,
And every footstep reckoned up along the sunny way,
And seemed to joy when labor grew; yea, seemed full glad indeed,
As more and more of water fresh the thirsty Brethren need.”

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Brother Francis began to wonder whether God's bright angels had counted his steps and cared to notice how many times his aching feet had tramped the long distance from the well. But a Voice answered his unspoken question :

" Only loving service
High in Heaven is stored,
Ne'er a grudging labor
Bring we to the Lord.
We are sent to gather
From His children's hands,
Whatso'er they offer,
Work, or gold, or lands.
Sometimes we may hear Him
But a loving smile;
Sometimes words, which soothing,
Lonely hours beguile.
Sometimes earnest labor;
Sometimes steadfast prayer;
Sometimes patient suffering;
Sometimes anxious care.
But a stinted offering
He can never own,
Who the Cross elected
For His earthly Throne.
And be sure those footsteps
Angels never see,
Which man cares to reckon
All complainingly."

Willing service can fill a heart with mysterious gladness in the midst of apparent drudgery. The

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people who work willingly really enjoy their work. They secure a great amount of daily pleasure which people like Brother Francis always miss. There is a wonderful difference between a frown and a smile; between slow, sullen movements and the elastic tread that reveals the willing heart.

"God loveth a cheerful giver," and so do men. Is it not true that the angels are about us every day, and that they rejoice over all true—that is, glad—service?

Grudging service is a sin against God, rebellion against His plan for our life. It is not only the angels who are sorry when a child of the Father walks with sullen, downcast looks along the path marked out for him. What a pity it is that we so often fail to make use of our privilege of giving a cup of cold water into the hands of the Great King.

Our Leader was the Prince of servants, pouring out His whole life in the eager service of God and man. And service, rendered willingly for love's sake, always brings wonderful joy. If our Master was a Man of Sorrows, He was also a Man of Joy.

Those who wish to have His joy "fulfilled in themselves" must find it, as He did, along the glorious path of willing service.

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" O the rare, sweet sense of living, when one's heart
leaps to his labor,
And the very joy of doing is life's richest, noblest
dower !
Let the poor—yea, poor in spirit—wear the purple of
his neighbor.
Give me just the strength for serving, and the golden
present hour "

Instead of trying to battle against the inevitable, we might learn to accept our daily orders more joyously if we always remembered that we were soldiers who have no right to choose; soldiers who long to obey our Captain, even unto death. Just think of the grandeur of it, you women who are toiling all day in hard, monotonous work ! You are following the King who toiled for years in a workshop, placed where you are by Him who guides and rules the whole great army. Perhaps the atmosphere of your home is dull and depressing, somebody is apt to be cranky or disheartened—is that "somebody" you ?—and you are given the splendid chance of lifting the fog by the power of steady sunshine. Let your heart sing as you move about the house, for you have a great and glorious work to do. You can be happy yourself and you can make other people happy.

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Somebody says : " There are so many people in the world who are not necessary." Don't believe any such nonsense ! You are necessary, anyway, necessary to the comfort of other people, necessary —what a grand thought !—to the Father-heart of God. Perhaps you look about your home and think how shabby and commonplace it all looks. But put on your magic spectacles and see it transformed. There is the old chair where a dear sick one used to sit; the horse-hair sofa that was a "steamboat" or a "train," or anything else required, in the sunny days of childhood. There are associations of sacred fellowship everywhere, which can make the shabby home, furniture and dishes, more dear than a house filled entirely with handsome new things. Life may be dull anywhere, or it may be brave and radiant anywhere. As it has been remarked : " If you imagine that going to a luncheon or giving a dinner is more interesting than making soap or curing meat, you are very much mistaken."

The truth is, we all want to "live greatly." Let us try to hold fast to the truth of our high vocation, remembering that we are led by the Spirit. If we keep our eyes fixed on Him, glad to go where He leads, life will be one splendid march of victory.

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" And everywhere, here and always,
If we would but open our eyes,
We should find through these beaten footpaths
Our way into Paradise.
Dull earth would be dull no longer,
The clod would sparkle—a gem ;
And our hands, at their commonest labor,
Would be building Jerusalem."

We may think it would have been grand to have been a martyr, to have defied Nero or Domitian, standing fast for our Lord in the face of torture and death; but in God's sight we have that opportunity of heroism every day—are we grasping it or letting it slip past us? The will—if it is strong enough to result in the deed—is the deed, in God's sight. Therefore, in splendid reality, Abraham was "justified by works" when he offered up Isaac, as S. James declares, though he only offered him up in will and intention. God can see quite clearly what we are, without the flashlight of opportunity.

No matter what work may have been assigned to us, it is certainly a splendid thing to be fellow-workers with Him who, as the Carpenter of Nazareth, has lifted all honest work out of the region of the commonplace. No circumstances could be more ordinary—and yet no life could be more splendid—

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than His. Then rejoice at your high calling as you go steadily forward, following the great Master-Workman.

If we dare to say that a man is "worth a great deal," just because he is permitted to spend a few millions, how much would Jesus of Nazareth have been "worth"? Given the grand opportunity of service, and no life need be commonplace. The soul need not be cramped within narrow limits; God does not give us the instinctive desire to live wide and noble lives, without giving us the means of gratifying that desire.

And let us cultivate tender gentleness in our ministry. If we were given the glorious privilege of washing our Master's feet, as Mary and Martha may often have done in Bethany, how careful and tender our touch on that sacred flesh would be. There would be no roughness or rudeness, but holy reverence in every movement. And our ministering to Him, through His brethren, may—if we choose—be really touching Him. His words are plain and emphatic: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto ME." And if we fail in the service to which we are ordained of God, HE is neglected or treated

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unkindly : " Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

And there is another wonderful honor bestowed upon servants. The Master is touching men through you and through me. When we are washing the feet of others, waiting on them and working for them, He is working through our hands. Through our kindly ministrations He touches their bodies and their souls. He washed the feet of twelve men that they might pass on that act of service.

Perhaps you hear of great things being done in the world, and get discouraged because you are only ordained to do little things that don't seem to count for anything, and that have to be done over and over again through long, monotonous years. Well, what of that ! Are these things really your vocation ? Can you see that God has plainly ordained you to serve Him just where you are ? Why, think of the honor of being chosen by the mighty Creator of the universe to do His work in any particular place. Then lift up your head and go rejoicing on your way. The Son of God thought His work was great when He was doing His Father's will, even when, as in the agony in Gethsemane, His own desires would naturally have led Him in an

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opposite direction, even when, as in the carpenter shop, the work seemed commonplace and trivial. He felt that His work had been grandly and faithfully done, not because He had manifested God to the whole world, but because, as He said, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me." It is not by doing a work that the world will declare to be "grand and noble" that we can win the Master's "Well done, good and faithful servant," if we have failed to manifest His Name and His glory unto those whom He has given us to serve and to influence. If He has plainly told you to serve at home—serve, perhaps, in ways as lowly and as holy as the washing of the disciples' feet—then it will be useless to offer Him a "great" work, done out in the world, instead. He will not accept a sacrifice which He has not Himself put into your hands to offer. And the work itself will not, can not be a blessing to the world or to yourself, unless the Holy Spirit works in and through you. Christ only could truthfully say: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"; but, if we are to be owned at the last as faithful servants, we must at least have tried to do that particular work, instead of turning our backs upon it as Jonah tried to

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do. Happily for him, God stopped him in his flight from duty, and gave him again the task he had refused. But it is not always so. Those who, without a direct call from God, turn their backs on the ordinary home duties and rush out into the more exciting battle of the world, may some day feel that they would give all they possess for the chance to minister to the dear father and mother, once left to care for themselves.

But, whatever may be the ministry to which we are ordained, let us prayerfully and earnestly try to make it pure and single in intention. We are constantly tempted to seek the praise of men, and win the admiration of our little world, whether at home or abroad. Our service loses its glory and beauty the moment it is sold for admiration, the moment we feel boastfully that we are not as other men are. Satan is very subtle, and when he fails to tempt us to desert our post, he is pretty sure to do his best to make us self-righteous and conceited. We are apt to forget that, even if we could succeed in doing all that God required of us, we should still be "unprofitable servants"—only having done that which He had a right to expect, that which it was our duty to do.

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Life is very big, no matter how obscure it may be. Did you ever realize that every act and word and thought is not over and done with as soon as it has dropped into the past? It is always living on, having become a part of character. God sees it still, and one day He will hold it up for us to see again. Then it will shine with a glorious light—if it has been done for love's sake—or will look mean and paltry—if inspired by selfish motives. A life of loving service is always a beautiful life. Yes, thank God, you are "ordained to serve." May it be truly said of you :

" Blessing she is ; God made her so,
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her noiseless as the snow,
Nor ever hath she chanced to know
That aught was easier than to bless."

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CHAPTER IX.

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To walk with God means to walk also close to our nearest and dearest friends. I don't believe He ever intends to separate friends, though He often removes them from sight. To really walk with God is to be one with Him, and to feel His life in every part of our being. Then we can, in Him, reach out at any moment and touch the heart or hand of one we love and who is also one with Him. "In Christ His chosen ones are near each other, though continents and oceans may divide them," and even Death—the Great Divider—has been robbed of his terrors. Christ has conquered him and has a right to say, "If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death." As our Living Head is very realy on this side of the Veil as well as on the other side, to be one with Him means that we, too, are on the other side as well as on this.

"Christ with him, and Christ with me,
And so together still are we."

Even when they were visibly beside us, it was

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really the soul rather than the body that we reached out to touch, in the gladness of holy fellowship. If love were dead, what possible satisfaction could there be in such outward signs of the "sacrament of friendship" as the clasp of a hand or the sight of a face. It would give pain instead of joy to have the outward sign, if the inward grace were absent. And it is a truism that the real person is always out of sight—as regards our bodily sight—and can only be seen and touched by spiritual senses.

"I have not seen Thee, though mine eyes
Hold now the image of Thy face;
In vain, through form, I strive to trace
The soul I love: that deeper lies."

Those who walk with eyes lifted to their dear Master's face, find that the hearts and spirits of their friends, who are like-minded, are mysteriously linked with their own. Our nearest and dearest are always beside us. Reaching up to God continually, for us, they pour new strength and joy into our lives. We rest confidently on their love, and walk always side by side with them in the sweetness of real fellowship. If you know the joy of having friends who are drawing you ever higher into clearer

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fellowship with the Friend Whose love "passeth knowledge," then keep fast hold of these messengers from God. Such a friendship is not an easy thing to hold, for true love must always include sacrifice. If you are trying to take all and give little, then you are cultivating selfishness instead of friendship. Give strong love and earnest prayers, and anything else that friendship may demand. But, if you have a friend who is like Christ, and who is helping you to grow like Christ, never let him "slip unawares" out of your life—though it may cost you all you have, even to life itself, to hold fast to him. For such a friendship is eternal in its nature. Though you may be far apart in body, prayer can keep you always close to a friend; and a bodily parting is a very small thing when hearts are one. "We have forever," there is no hurry. God's best gifts go on ripening through all eternity. Those whom God hath joined together, in holiest friendship, can never be parted by distance or death; so long as each is faithful to the other.

The best way of touching those who are "on the other side of Christ," is to minister to Him through His "brethren" who are still visibly near us. And

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gloomy service is hardly worth offering or accepting. If you can't realize anything of the joy of Paradise, if you find it impossible to share in the blessedness of those who are worshipping God face to face, then pray earnestly that your eyes may be opened.

“ Dear hands, unclasped from ours, are clasping Thee ;
Thou holdest us forever in Thy Heart ;
So close the One Communion—are we
In very truth, apart ?
Lord, where Thou art our happy Dead must be ;
And if with Thee, what then their boundless bliss !
Till Faith be Sight; and Hope, Reality;
Love's Anchorage is this.”

We profess to believe in a new and far more glorious life on the other side of the gate which we call “ Death.” We say that to die is to be more consciously in the presence of our Lord than here; and, therefore, death must be a great “ gain” to those who have walked with Him on earth. Yet, when a loved one passes on to the great gladness of the new life, we are only too apt to mourn as those who have no hope. If the one who has been promoted by our King to higher service is young, we even venture to speak of him pityingly, saying :

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"How very sad that such a bright young life should be cut off when it gave promise of so much usefulness." If our Christianity is a reality, and not a sham, we must not be false to our own convictions in this fashion. Christ has lighted our flame of faith so that we may be able to show a light to others. Think of the harm it does to those who are in darkness, to hear such expressions of pity from professing Christians—"pity" for glad souls who have just been crowned with the great "gain" of a new life! "Pity" for those who have been moved up to a higher position in God's school! What good is our faith if it can't make us strong enough to be "a little glad for him!" And death does not divide us from our dear ones, it brings us ever nearer to them if we are true and faithful in our love. I once heard of a lady, who, because an only daughter had passed out of her sight, threw open her beautiful home to tired and lonely girls—nurses, shop-girls, etc.—giving them a happy holiday as long as they needed it. What a glad way of keeping in touch with her child that was. Every act of service done to those poor girls is a real reaching out in loving ministry to her own dear

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daughter; for the "communion of saints" is not a mere name, but a living reality.

Think what you are missing, if you let slip the golden cord with which God binds heart to heart. Do not say: "I can't see the face I love, therefore I have lost it out of my life," for that is not true. If love is killed by loss of sight, then it is indeed a terrible thing to be blind. If the voice you love is silent, that need not be any barrier; for the deaf are not cut off from the fellowship of love.

Distance or death will be a stern test of the worth of friendship; but, if the hearts are loyal and true, any outward parting can only serve to draw them closer together. The little irritating faults, which spoiled the perfect beauty of fellowship, fade into insignificance; our souls at their highest and best can reach out and touch those other souls at their highest and best. The living links which bind their hearts to ours grow stronger day by day. We can rejoice in their bright, ever-growing beauty; the desire to keep up with them, in their upward climb, fills each day with interest; and we learn to give thanks—for them as well as for ourselves—for God's refining pain which keeps us always near to Him and near to His friends.

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But it is not only friends who are "out of sight" who are drawn nearer to us as we gaze into our Lord's Face. "Behold, I come quickly!" the Bridegroom says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock!" He has come, He is continually coming, in the person of a brother or a sister, for He absolutely identifies Himself with "the least" of His earthly brethren. How are we receiving Him? When Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the Christian Church he was stopped by the exclamation of her ascended Head: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

His wondering question: "Who art thou, Lord?" was answered by a repetition of the same great truth: "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest."

Just think what that answer means. Every act or word of unkindness or peevishness touches the heart of Christ; every time we do some kind act, or speak a kind word, we are giving pleasure to our King.

The Vision of His Face helps us to overcome evil with good, and be loving and gentle even to those who are unkind or unattractive. When we feel hurt at some unkindness, we can look up to Christ and see how lovingly He is regarding the soul that seems

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so unattractive in our eyes. He wants to see it grow daily more beautiful; He is earnestly trying to refine and purify it; He is carefully perfecting it. When we realize that truth, the coldness of our hearts will change into warm affection, we shall forget the little injury or wrong; remembering only that, as our Master loves that brother who has hurt our feelings, we must love him too. Joseph solemnly protested unto his brothers, who had come to him for salvation from death, "ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." He gave them what they needed, but they could not come again unless their brother came too. So our Elder Brother warns us that if we wish to come to Him for daily bread, if we wish to retain the power of seeing His face, we must not be satisfied to come alone. We must earnestly try to bring our brothers nearer to Him. Pressing close to our Elder Brother, we discover that all who are near of kin to Him are our brothers too. How can we bear to hurt Him by any rude or irritable word or look?

Someone has said that the stranger who knocks at our door is a messenger, sent by God, and should be received as His representative; then we should be always willing to entertain strangers, remembering

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that "thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

But, if even the stranger who knocks at our door is a messenger sent by God, how much more certainly are the relatives and friends who are near and dear to us, "His messengers." Is it "unawares" that we are entertaining or refusing to entertain these "angels"? Is it a fine thing to become great and famous in the opinion of the world, while we are leaving a dear father or mother to grow old in loneliness and neglect? Then, if we are always pleasant and polite to strangers, how much rather should we be unfailingly courteous and kindly in word and deed to those in our own homes. Rude words are only too common in some homes, even though love is not absent. If Christ is willing to dwell under our roof, not only as a passing Guest, but as one of the family, we must welcome Him loyally. Every impatient word spoken to a child, or want of courtesy shown to a servant, is really aimed at Him; for He is meeting us continually, and we always have the opportunity of entertaining not only a messenger, but our King Himself. We shall not "unawares" show Him any slightest discourtesy if we keep close to the heart His saying:

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"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Then there are those dear messengers of His—our friends—who may or may not be our relations. Those whose spirits and hearts are linked with ours in the wonderful mystery of the Communion of Saints. They are very near to us when we are alone in the quiet hours of the night, though they may be far away in body. We can touch their hands, as we slip ours into our dear Lord's; we can send messages straight to their hearts, through His; we can tell Him how earnestly we desire their perfecting. Shall our prayers for them be less brave and far-reaching than our prayers for ourselves? May we not echo Frank Willoughby's splendid prayer for his friends?

"I do not pray that useless stores of golden treasure,
Beloved or not,
Nor yet that one unbroken round of earthly pleasure
May be your lot;
But rather that your faith and love no dross possessing,
As gold may shine;
And all your path be lighted up with heavenly blessing
And peace divine.
I cannot ask that naught of bitter pain or sorrow
Thy cup may hold,
Or that you may not feel the shock to-day, to-morrow,
Of conflict bold;

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But that the sanctifying power of furnace trial,
 Though burning hot,
May leave your soul, as gain for every self-denial,
 Without a spot.
I would not seek to rescue you from grief's grim clutches,
 Nor cry to spare,
When God, with His own loving, skilful master-touches
 Thy heart lays bare ;
But I would wish to see thee rich in heavenly treasure,
 Full well refined ;
Yes, rich as God alone His hounteous gifts doth measure,
 Nor fall behind.
I do not, can not ask for you a lesser blessing
 Than God's own love ;
To dwell with Him, and all His boundless wealth possessing,
 In heaven above.
For you and I are only waiting here as strangers,
 Still hound for home ;
Abiding 'mid earth's darkening shades and many dangers,
 Till God says ' Come. ' "

Friendship is a marvellously beautiful and precious gift from God. Sometimes, as in the case of David and Jonathan, the heart of friend is knit with friend in the first moment of meeting; but usually the friendships which glorify life, and inspire us with daily joy and strength and courage, are the old, tried friendships, which have slowly but surely woven themselves into our very being. Such fellowship is restful and satisfying. It may not show itself in many words—there is little need of speech

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when we are perfectly sure of our friends' loyalty. The friends who are constantly holding up our souls in prayer to God help us mightily. They bring down His great light to purify and glorify us. They look at us through His eyes, and so are able to see not only the best that is in us, but also an ideal, possible best which is not yet ours. Inspired by their trust, we reach out after the ideal holiness which they desire for us.

If we do not fail our comrades, there is little fear that they will fail us. What we give in good measure will be rendered back richly and generously. If we give our friends love and prayers to help them on their way, they will not fail to entreat God for our perfecting.

" One friend in that path shall be
To secure my steps from wrong ;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see."

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CHAPTER X.

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" The wind that blows can never kill
The tree God plants ;
It bloweth east ; it bloweth west ;
The tender leaves have little rest,
But any wind that blows is best.
The tree God plants
Strikes deeper roots, grows higher still,
Spreads wider boughs, for God's goodwill
Meets all its wants."

The lesson of Trust is not easy to learn, and yet we have discovered over and over again, by our own experience, that if we get just what we want we are far poorer in the end than if we leave our affairs trustfully in God's hands. The Israelites, in their journey through the wilderness, always found that with each new difficulty or need that seemed insurmountable, a way was provided by their Guide. Sometimes their trust failed because there seemed to be no possibility of finding food or water in the desert. But God was pledged to supply all their real needs; and He would keep His promise, even though it might be necessary to rain down bread from heaven and draw water out of a rock. So it

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was always, and yet how often they failed to trust their Leader.

Are we any better than they? Though God has always helped us in the past, do we not grow discouraged and fearful when we cannot see our way clearly?

The trouble lies in our want of spiritual vision. If we kept our eyes on our Master's Face, and accepted each day as a gift straight from His hands, it would be impossible to distrust His plans for us. Then we should not ruin our selves, and spoil the happiness of others, by that very sinful practice called "Worry." God has given us many commands against worry; He has given us innumerable object-lessons to prove that we are perfectly safe in His hands; modern research into the nature and origin of nervous diseases proves that it is terribly harmful; and yet worry is certainly not easy to cure. When any new difficulty or perplexity arises, we are only too ready to fancy that we know far better than God what is best for us. At least, our lack of trust in His ordering seems to imply that we can order our own lives more satisfactorily than He.

It is very foolish and illogical to trust God a

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little. Either we are absolutely safe in His hands, or else He has no power at all to help us. Either He cares for us everywhere and always,—numbering even the hairs of our heads,—or else He cares nothing for us. No half measures are possible with Him who not only “hangeth the earth upon nothing” but also clothes the lily of the field—doing the little things as carefully as those which seem to us to be great and important.

People will often trust God in great matters—when lives are at stake—and yet get worried and anxious about trifling difficulties. If God can safely be trusted to protect His children in great dangers, He can also be trusted in little everyday matters. Look up into Christ's Face and ask why He has allowed them to enter your day; there is some good reason, be very sure.

Susan Coolidge describes a carefully-planned day which was upset by little interruptions and hindrances, so that all the hours seemed wasted. Then a voice within her soul explained that each hour was full of “self-planned” work, and no space was left for an unexpected order from the Master.

“Where was the moment in your plan
For work of Mine which might not wait?”

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The "interruptions" which had irritated her were but sudden tasks He set, His "errands"; which she would have accepted as a privilege if she had only kept her eyes on Him as the eyes of a servant on a loved Master. And so she prays :

" Forgive me, Lord, my selfish day,
Touch my sealed eyes, and bid them wake
To see Thy tasks along the way,
Thy errands, which my hands may take,
And do them gladly for Thy sake."

Perhaps you feel that you could do something "worth while" in the world, if only you had a chance. Does it ever strike you that God may possibly understand your talents and capabilities even better than you do? To murmur and complain against His arrangements, is the same thing as saying that you know better than He does the place and work for which you are best fitted. The kingdom of this world belongs to God, and He is actively ruling it. If He sees that any other position would be better for you, He is quite able to make the change.

Somebody has advised us to "build a little fence of Trust about to-day," but it is not always easy

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to keep that fence, between us and future worries, in perfect repair. It requires attention many times a day, or some little anxiety is sure to force its way through to spoil our peace. Every time a worry makes its presence felt we can, if we choose, take it at once to Christ, ask Him to make it work for our good—and then leave it for Him to deal with. It is foolish to ask Him to manage our affairs for us, and then fret and chafe for fear they may possibly be mismanaged.

The Most High God loves each one of His children with a wonderful, individual affection: "The Lord knoweth them that are His."

"Among so many, can He care?
Can special love be everywhere?
A myriad homes,—a myriad ways,—
And God's eye over every place?"

"I asked my soul bethought of this;
In just that very place of His
Where He hath put and keepeth you,
God hath no other thing to do!"

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

If God is caring for us, as His "special treasure,"

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surely we may safely lay down our burden of care, feeling secure that everything left in His hands will turn out for the best in the end. We may safely trust in the Rock of our salvation, and say, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight . . . and His banner over me was Love."

Those who trust the Divine Leader will find the prophet's words again fulfilled: "They thirsted not when He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them." And our Rock is Christ, all our "fresh springs" for each day come from Him.

"I never thought it could be thus—
Month after month to know
The river of Thy peace without
One ripple in its flow;
Without one quiver in the trust,
One flicker in its glow."

If we could always understand God's plans for us, there would be no room for trust, and trust is such a beautiful thing. Surely there is gladness in the thought that God is trusting us to trust Him with a childlike faith that is sweetest when we cannot understand. Christ can rejoice over His Bride, when she trustfully obeys Him in His absence, doing

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what She knows He would wish her to do, though He may appear to take no notice. Knowing that her Lord has proved His love by dying for her, and is the same LOVE yesterday, to-day and forever, She can read love in His silence as certainly as in His treasured messages. And if we look below the surface, we begin to see how the very silence is a proof of His love, strengthening our weak faith more than continual messages would do. It was when the bride—in the Song of Solomon—found that her beloved had “withdrawn himself” that she sought him persistently, reckless of wounds and insult. It was when she could not find him that she told over and over again his manifold perfections, realizing—as perhaps she would not have done if he had never left her—that he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. When God is silent because He loves us, often the very pain of the silence drives us to search diligently for Him. Then, having known the desolation of loneliness, the seeking soul at last finds Him whose very Name is fragrant as ointment poured forth. Though the seeking time may seem long and dreary, there is all the more intensity in the joy of finding.

Think of the joy of walking hand in hand with

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our Lord ! Perhaps we are living through a time of perplexity and cannot see how the tangle is to be straightened out. We can look up in His face and tell Him simply and trustfully that we put our affairs into His hands, that we are willing to do what He commands, and to accept whatever He gives, knowing that He is able and willing to make all things work together for our good. We can "tie our lives to God at the centre, and so remain fixed in the midst of turmoil and unrest, because our anchor is sunk deep in the Heart of God."

To walk with God all the time, conscious of His presence and leaning on His strength, is to drink in joy and peace with every breath, and to press on eagerly in spite of rocky road and stormy weather.

We are worried and anxious, careful and troubled about many things, just because we forget or doubt His presence. It cannot be that we doubt His power. The universe in which we live—from the wonderful, blazing, life-giving sun, down to the tiniest insect whose life is beyond our powers of understanding—testifies with millions of voices to His power. We can hardly doubt His love—the Cross witnesses to that, with a voice which grows louder all through the centuries, as we see more and more

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that no other ideal of love can compare with that once for all revealed on Calvary. No, what we doubt is not God's power or love, but His near presence. We could not murmur and complain if we felt that He was close beside us; for, if we walk always with Him, we must know certainly that all is well. Then the pressure of daily work will not crush out all freshness and spring. Why does it fret and chafe us until we grow cross and impatient? Is it not—partly, at least—because it is piling up ahead of us and we see no way to get it done? There is always more work than we have time or strength to do? Yes, there is more work that we can see, but in reality God never requires of us more than we can do. To walk with God means to take duties straight from His hand, one at a time; not to stay awake at night wondering how we can ever get through all there is to do. There is a wonderful gladness in the remembrance that our days are planned out for us, down to the smallest detail, the work to be done this minute is laid in my hands by my Master. I can touch His hand as I take it and as I give it back to Him. All the other work I can see—which He has not given to me yet and may not give to me at all—is still in His hand. He will

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see to that, and give it out, bit by bit, to the workers as He pleases. Then there is the pain or the disappointment which we find so hard to bear. Don't let us be satisfied with quiet endurance, but let us seek for the joy which He has hidden in the bitter draught. It did not come to us by chance. Let us take the cup from His hand, looking up and thanking Him for it trustfully; because we know the bitter medicine is given in love, to make us strong with the strength of purity and radiant with the beauty of holiness.

We are dishonoring our King before the world when we murmur and complain, refusing to accept in childlike trust His will concerning us. If we, who profess to be willing to obey Him, have no confidence in His dealings with us, then those who are still looking for the Truth will give up hope, and will not dare to lean with all their weight on One who is evidently not trusted by His own disciples. Think what a lot of mischief a soldier could do if he doubted the wisdom of his general, and plainly showed, by doleful voice and gloomy face, that he had no confidence in his arrangements for the safety and comfort of the army. Such want of trust would not only make the disloyal soldier restless

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and troubled, but the contagion of doubt would spread among his fellows.

Let us try to trust God always, and wait patiently until, in His good time, the flower of our longing desire opens in perfect beauty. If you try to pull open a tightly-closed bud, you only spoil the rose that God was carefully making for you. So it is in life. Jacob was promised the blessing of the firstborn; but, instead of waiting God's time, he tried to obtain it by deceit and fraud, bringing down years of sorrow on his own head. David, on the other hand, was promised the crown of Israel; but he refused to seize it when he had the opportunity, waiting trustfully until God and the people crowned him with glory and honor.

"Trust thou in the Lord and He shall give thee thy heart's desire"; but only if you wait patiently until He sees that the right time has come, will you be able to enjoy to the full what you are so eager to obtain. Let the heart be resting in perfect peace on strong faith in God's wisdom and love, and you will feel far safer in waiting—under His directions—than if you had the power to secure the gratification of all your desires at once.

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" God holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad.
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me,
I might be sad.

" I cannot read His future plan ;
But this I know :
I have the smiling of His face,
And all the refuge of His grace,
While here below.

" Enough ! this covers all my want,
And so I rest.
For what I cannot, He can see,
And in His care I sure shall be
Forever blest."

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CHAPTER XI.

THE VISION GUARDS THE HEART
WITH FEARLESS PEACE.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.—Phil., iv. : 7 (R. V.).

Perhaps those who feel the life and fire of youth in their veins may undervalue the great gift of Peace. It may seem to them that Peace is a passive virtue, and they may associate it chiefly with the aged and the dying, and think it is hardly intended for the wear and tear of common week-days. And yet, the statement given above is martial in its nature. We see the figure of Peace, standing like an armed sentinel on guard before the temple of the soul, refusing to admit a thought that may do any injury to one of the King's friends.

Peace is, indeed, a priceless gift to the aged saints of God; it is infinitely precious to those who are called to face Death—and which of us, is not called to face Death? I have seen it shining in the glad eyes of a friend who was about to undergo a very dangerous operation. She had no thought of fear,

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knowing that whether she lived or died she was absolutely safe in God's care. And I saw it again, a few days later, when she greeted me with a beaming smile.

She knew, and her doctor and nurses knew, that it was worth a great deal to her—as a help towards recovery—to have her head (which appeared to be supported only by a tiny hospital pillow, about an inch thick) really "leaning back on Jesus' breast."

But, not only in such a crisis as that, is the Peace which "passeth all understanding" a priceless possession. We need it constantly as we travel along life's thorny road. St. Paul not only compares the peace of God to an armed guard, he also tells us to keep our feet shod with peace. We are soldiers ourselves, and need to be well shod, not only for our own comfort, but that we may be in good condition to fight the enemy. One whose feet are cut and bleeding, whose every step is painful, can hardly be alert, active and vigorous.

This rule applies to the Christian's warfare. One who is careful and troubled about many things, who is worried and anxious about the future, or irritable and "touchy" in the little everyday trials of life,

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is wasting, in fretting, strength which ought to be spent in real warfare against evil.

Worry is both wrong and foolish. It is wrong, because God has expressly forbidden it. We are commanded to be like little children, casting all anxiety on our Father. It is foolish, because it saps vitality causing nervous diseases, does no good, and makes everybody within reach very uncomfortable. It is also apt to invite to our side the very evils we are afraid of. Besides, as we all know, most of the troubles we worry about never happen. We try to bear all possible burdens at once, staggering along or breaking down under their weight long before they reach us. When God offers a cross—be it heavy or light—He also offers the needful strength to enable us to endure it. But, if we persist in shouldering a cross before He offers it, of course the necessary strength is not given.

We live in such a whirl in this busy age, and people's nerves get terribly on edge, even when they escape an actual breakdown. If ever there was a time when the sentinel of Peace was needed, surely it is in this century when "nervous prostration" is constantly trying to force its way into our homes. God offers peace, are we accepting that offer? There

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are conditions, of course. He will keep in perfect peace a heart that is stayed on Him, a heart that really trusts Him. The weary and heavy-laden are offered rest unto their souls, if only they will put themselves and all their affairs into Christ's hands.

Peace is the result of Trust, so I have rather anticipated the subject of this chapter in the preceding one. But the sandals of peace are so necessary to us all, unless we are to limp painfully over the rough and stony places which occur in every lot, that I must give a short chapter to the subject. Peace is especially our Lord's gift to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He offers it freely; but, although we can hardly fail to think it a gift worth having, the sad fact remains that too often we struggle through life without it. Why is this? We ask the question:

"How shall I quiet my heart? How shall I keep it still?
How shall I hush its tremulous start at tidings of good or ill?
How shall I gather and hold contentment and peace and rest,
Wrapping their sweetness, fold on fold, over my troubled breast?"

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How shall that important question be answered? Will God indeed keep us "under His folded wings in a peace serene—divine"? Is there really such a thing possible for us as the perfect restfulness and peace in the midst of danger, which is compared by Miss Havergal to "resting in a strong fortress," perfectly secure, though deadly foes are raging outside, or "resting in a lifeboat" when the waves are rolling mountains high? Is there anything we need every day of our lives more than peace? Is there anything God offers more freely? The supply is prepared to meet every demand, and it is offered to poor as well as rich—a priceless gift which no millionaire can buy with his money. We all want it; we may all have it, and yet we very often fail to secure it. The reason for this is not far to seek; want of trust is at the root of the difficulty. We don't trust God, and, therefore, we constantly find ourselves "careful and troubled about many things." Peace can only rest safely on the strong rock of Trust. Those who really trust God are sure to find Him "a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." Over and

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over again Isaiah says that God is a shadow from the heat. His prophecy has been exactly fulfilled: "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." What a restful picture is called up by these familiar words. A traveller struggling across a terrible desert, dreary wastes of sand stretching in every direction, the hot blast of the desert wind fills the air with blinding clouds of dust, the throat and lips are parched with burning thirst. To such a traveller it would be like a foretaste of heaven to rest in the shadow of a great rock beside a cool stream. But what a difference it would make in the comfort of his journey if he could walk always in the cool shadow of the Rock, beside the clear waters of the river of Peace. St. Paul says that the Israelites, in their journey through the wilderness "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." If they could do that, how much more can we.

We are given full directions for obtaining the Peace of God. "The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

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made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." If we always felt quite sure that "the Lord is at hand," if our hearts and thoughts were open to welcome Him, the eyes could hardly fail to be lifted to His Face in thanksgiving for His unfailing love and care. Then we could not be anxious about anything. Then we should be fearless in the face of threatening danger and hopeful in apparently crushing defeat. If the Lord is on your side—and you know it—you can enter with joy into the fearless confidence of the Psalmist when he says :

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

He declares that he feels perfectly safe in the midst of danger and pestilence, even though a thousand should fall beside him and ten thousand at his right hand.

Don't let us wait for "great troubles" before we come to Christ for peace. He offers it to us for everyday use ; it will not wear out, but will grow stronger and deeper, like a river, as Isaiah says :

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"O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river."

This possibility of going to Christ about everything, is illustrated in the story of some weavers who were working diligently in an Eastern palace. The men and women wondered to see a little child amongst them, whose work always went smoothly on, without a break or even a snarl in the thread. They asked her how it happened that they could not succeed so well; their silk constantly got frayed and broken, and the beautiful pattern was worn and soiled by their mistakes and tears. The child answered: "I only go and tell the King." They declared that they did the same, going to Him once a week. "But," she softly answered:

"I go and get the knot untied
At the first little tangle."

That is the secret of perpetual peace. If we were only always careful to take our little anxieties to our King—and to leave them there—we should form habits strong enough to carry us triumphantly through every great crisis.

God is always near us, but the way to obtain a

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vivid consciousness of that perfecting Presence is to lift up the heart to Him many times during the day. If we wish to feel that He is listening, we must speak to Him often. The response will surely come, in His own way—a way far better than any we could choose. Religion must be an everyday religion to be worth anything. It is not intended only to be a lifeboat in time of storm, or a sword in time of danger, or a refuge in the hour of death. It should be like wings to the soul, lifting it easily above the little worries and vexations of every day. It should be a steady light on our path, making us able to walk with quiet confidence through this wilderness into our promised land.

God does not always take the load of difficulty, responsibility or pain from those who look to Him for help. That plan would soon make His children weak. The burden is God's gift, to make them grow strong and brave by daily practice. Bishop Ingram says that if men cast all their care on God, He will put His strength within them; "He will take that burden on His own shoulders. . . . The moment the child comes with the burden, the FATHER puts His great loving shoulders under it and the child hardly feels the weight."

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Surely we may trust the Great Refiner to cut and polish the jewels He is preparing so carefully for their glorious position in His Temple on High. If we are failing to meet each day fearlessly, we must be failing in trust; for still, as always, "they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

"Be sure that God, Whose thought hath given thee
birth,
Still holds for thee the best thou canst receive."

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CHAPTER XII.

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" So out of sunshine as of deepest shade,
Out of the dust of sordid every-days,
We may look up, and, glad and unafraid,
Call on the Lord for help, and give Him praise ;
Nor time nor fate nor space can bar us from His face,
Or stand between one soul and His exhaustless grace."

The prophet Isaiah, in telling beforehand about the coming Messiah, says that He will brighten and beautify dull lives. Instead of disfiguring "ashes" they are to have "beauty," instead of "mourning" they are to be anointed with the fragrant "oil of joy," and they are to put off the gray "spirit of heaviness" and clothe themselves in the radiant "garment of praise"—that He may be glorified. Let us never forget that by offering thanks and praise we honor God, and, just as certainly, when we are sullen, gloomy and discontented we dishonor our Master and bring contempt on our high calling. All the people around us should know that we are soldiers and servants of the Most High GOD, and that we are confident in His willingness and ability

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to provide for all our needs and satisfy all our holiest desires.

I think it is Francis Paget who says :

" Mark, then, how joy springs out at once as the unfailing token of the Holy Spirit's presence, the first sign that He is having His Own with a man's heart. The joy of the Lord, the joy that is strength, the joy that no man taketh from us, the joy wherewith we joy before God, the abundant joy of faith and hope and love and praise,—this it is that gathers like a radiant, fostering, cheering air around the soul that yields itself to the grace of God, to do His holy, loving Will."

Think of the tremendous value to us of the hard bits of life and of the long, weary stretches of monotonous dulness. How poor we should now be if we had not gone through them. At least, these may be of incalculable worth, if we make the most of them. The daily exercise of patience, the faithful doing of work which appears to be unnoticed by all but God and the angels, the determined turning away from the contemplation of one's own little pains and worries—these things, which seem trivial when taken singly, are building strength and courage into the character. And this strength and courage, slowly won, is a personal possession which cannot be taken away from the victorious soul. We ask

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God for strength and courage, and He knows that we can only win them by hard fight—so he gives the chance to gain the victory over weariness and discouragement. As Christ Himself is the Rock, and some souls mount on Him to a higher and higher life, while He is also "a stone of stumbling and rock of offence" to others, so it is with the events which meet us and the difficulties, duties, trials and petty vexations of every day. If we allow them to conquer us, we grow weaker and more cowardly with each encounter. But, if we take them as gifts from God, as intended for our perfecting in the beauty of holiness, then we can find good reason to be glad and rejoice before God; yea, to exceedingly rejoice, not only in the sunshine but also in the cloudy and dark day. God wants us to do great things for Him, but let us not doubt His love if He first prepares and makes us strong by daily drill and exercise. It would not be real kindness to order a man forward to a difficult and glorious task, when his strength is so small that he must surely fail. Strength for a hard strain is built up day after day, quietly and unconsciously.

And it may even be that, in God's eyes, the joyous service, poured out ungrudgingly as a willing

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sacrifice to Him in quiet homes, where it wins little praise of men, is far grander than many acts of extraordinary heroism which excite the admiration of the world.

One thing, at least, is very certain—no one has any right to nurse a "fit of the blues"; for that is a very ungrateful and ungracious way of accepting the gifts our Father offers us each day. Of course, we all know that "the blues" usually spring from physical rather than spiritual causes, but that is no reason why we should sit down easily and submit to be ruled by the miserable tyrant, Melancholy. If low spirits are caused by ill-health, at least we can try our hardest to remove the root of the trouble. We have left behind us the days when a pale face and emaciated body were supposed to be the outward signs of saintliness. We want to be like our Lord, and He—we have every reason to believe—was healthy, as a perfect Man ought to be, as Adam was before sin weakened body as well as soul.

Our business—as Christians—is to be as healthy as possible. Unless we are absolutely sure there is no way of escape, it is wrong to sink down with meek helplessness into chronic invalidism. Patience

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is sometimes vicious, when it is submission to evils that can be cured. The body is the instrument through which the soul must do most of its work, and if we are to do effective work for our Master we must keep that instrument in as good condition as possible. There are people who are very particular about oiling and cleaning the machines with which they work, and yet they take no pains to keep in good trim that far more valuable machine — the human body. It is kept going at lightning speed, without reasonable rest or recreation; food is tossed recklessly in, without any regard for the feelings of the long-suffering digestive apparatus; and many other ways of tampering with God's good gift of health are only too common. We commit a sin when we try to live without rest, exercise and fresh air, unless the conditions are so exceptional that we really can't help ourselves. If we are not well, then we are very sinful if we don't try to get well, so that we may do the work God puts before us with ease and gladness, instead of struggling miserably through it. If we are well, then let us thank God always for His great gift of health, and see that no reckless folly endangers its continuance.

But some people find it possible to be bored with

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the dead level of everyday life, even when they are in perfect health. They forget that a day which is given to us by Infinite LOVE cannot fail to bring many delightful surprises to an expectant soul. Henry Van Dyke says that after a year of pain and sorrow, "the hopefulness and confidence of youth returned to me. Since then it has been possible once more to wake in the morning with the feeling that the day might bring something new and wonderful and welcome, and to travel into the future with a whole and happy heart. This is what I call growing younger; though the years increase, yet the burden of them is lessened, and the fear that life will some day lead into an empty prison-house has been cast out by the incoming of the Perfect Love."

Why can't we always wake with the glad certainty that the day will bring something new and wonderful and welcome? God's treasure-house of gifts is inexhaustible and we are His dear children; the precious gifts will most certainly come to us to-day and every day, though we may keep our eyes cast down and so fail to see their beauty.

"O, my King, show me Thy face shining in the dark!"

If God wants to send us on His errands, wants to

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touch other lives through ours, is willing to allow us to carry some of His messages; we must listen for the still small Voice, which will be unheard by anyone who allows himself to be absorbed in the cares and pleasures of this outward, visible life.

It was perfectly natural for Elijah to say : " As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand." He could not see God, any more than we can ; but he had lived in such constant communion with Him that His Presence was not a misty possibility, but the one great Reality of his life. This is within our reach, too. We can form the habit of letting the remembrance of God be crowded out by visible things around us, or we can form the habit of realizing His Presence in every quiet moment. When the hands are busy kneading the bread, or the body is bent over a washtub, the heart can rise in glad communion with an unseen Friend. Take the potatoes to be peeled, or the pan of peas to be shelled, out under a shady tree in the yard; and you will find it much easier to lift up the heart to God when if you sat down in the hot kitchen.

Perhaps you are chafed by the feeling that you want to do great things for the world, and are forced by circumstances into a petty round of

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trifling duties that don't amount to anything. "Forced by circumstances" might, perhaps, be better rendered "called by God." It is a glorious privilege to have the most High God choosing our work and position in life for us. It is a wonderful thing to be told by Him to sweep a room or plow a field—the act at once becomes a privilege that angels might covet.

Let us trust Him to know the training we need—though it may seem to us that our talents have no chance to be used, that we are forced to rust in inaction or trifling duties. Most of all, let us keep the life that is "hidden from sight" strong and vigorous. To go on continually giving out to others, without taking in large supplies from the only Giver of all good things, must end in bankruptcy. To live like that is to become an empty shell, a casket without a jewel, a body without a soul. But to live a quiet, uneventful life, with a spirit always drinking in more and more of God's Spirit, with eyes attracted ever by His beauty of holiness and hand clasped closely in His, is to be ready for any call to do great things for Him, great service for the world. The call may not come until after death, where the servants of God shall still

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serve Him, but how sad it would be if that call should find us unprepared, instruments that are too dull and brittle to accomplish the work required of us. Let us think high thoughts and pray without ceasing, as we do our daily work; with the glad consciousness that it is done for God, and in His sight. Then we shall be ready when the call comes—ready for anything.

Let us be very sure that we know what the Master wants us to do, and then let us do that special work with glad enthusiasm. To do really good work, we must enjoy it, and it is possible to enjoy most things if we are not wasting energy by looking over the fence into the future or the past.

God allows us to help Him in the extension of His kingdom, and in the building up of our own character. And character is apt to grow best without too great a blaze of public approval. Probably that is why many souls are kept in the shade. But, if we want to discover enough beauty to brighten every dull day, we must be on the watch for it and quick to recognize the reflection of the King's own beauty in His "nameless saints." We shall find plenty of saints, if we search for them; otherwise we may overlook very many, like violets in the

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grass. God loves to watch them, and we should find pleasure in them, too; for they are lights to brighten the world, reflecting the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness.

There is the quiet, patient woman, who meets vexation with a smile and goes cheerily on her way, doing her daily work for God's eye to see, and caring little whether her clothes are in the latest fashion. There is the brave and faithful man, whistling as he does his monotonous "chores," day by day, always ready to do odd jobs to help his "women-folks," or to go out of his way to oblige a neighbor. These, if they walk each day brightly and righteously, caring to please God rather than to be popular with men, are saints worth discovering and prizing. They are lighting with love's pure ray countless homes in this land—and love has always been the greatest thing in the world. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the beauty, which has made that story a pearl among parables, is the unfailing love of the father. The dark background is not so much the wild career of the younger son as the unloving churlishness of the elder. One person of that type in a household can make things pretty dark for the rest of the family. You don't need to be rich to

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brighten a little circle about you, and cleverness does little to enlighten the world. The great thing is to shine. A bright face, a cheery word, a pure and holy spirit are invaluable.

Emerson says :

" Write it on your heart, that every day is the best day
of the year."

God scatters quiet, everyday pleasures all around us ; do not let us live in such a hurry that we have no time to stoop and pick them up.

" Why thus longing, thus forever sighing
For the far-off, unattained and dim,
While the beautiful all around thee lying,
Offers up its low, perpetual hymn ?"

Of course, we all want to enjoy our life in this world, and equally, of course, we want to help others to enjoy themselves. Here is a valuable tonic, as described by a wise man long ago : " A merry heart is a good medicine." And it is food as well as medicine, for " he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." If you doubt the value of the medicine, try it.

But, perhaps, you may object that a merry heart

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can't be obtained at will—and yet it is true in this matter as in others, that where there's a will there's a way. Like other valuable accomplishments, it needs plenty of practice. A difficult piece of music that is impossible to a beginner may be easily played after years of earnest effort.

So it is with the far more valuable accomplishment of gladness—gladness that can shine in the darkness, where it is most needed. Anyone can rejoice "When there's nothing whatever to grumble at"—though some people often fail to do it, even then—but, as Mark Tapley would say, there's "some credit in being jolly" when everything goes wrong. Even the easy kind of "merry heart," that is uncultivated, and goes down before adversity, is a good medicine. What a pleasure it is to see anyone with a beaming smile, even though we know that the face wearing it often looks gloomy or cross. But, when the joyous look may be depended on, the effect is magical. Happy people are like sunshine, cheering up everybody around them. When we meet one of these glad souls, we find our smiles rising to match theirs, and we go on our way feeling cheered and helped.

Then there is the bad habit of grumbling about

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the work and environment which God has given to us, as though we could have chosen better than God has done. We forget that we are as vessels on the Potter's wheel, and that He understands perfectly the shaping we need. The pressure of circumstances, which frets us sometimes, is prepared on purpose to fit us for eternal joy :

“ Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impress'd.”

Chronic grumblers are drags on the world's wheels, hindering where they should be helping, weighing down instead of lifting up. Let us never dare to forget that it is good for us to be here—here where God Himself has deliberately placed us.

We have no right to add to the sorrows of the world by being gloomy or discontented. We all create a certain soul-atmosphere. Let us see to it that the atmosphere we are creating every day may help others to thank God and take courage. We can all walk in the glad consciousness of sins forgiven and in the radiance of God's wonderful Love.

Dorothy Quigley shows how vital soul-force can

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be thrown away by those who are not careful to cultivate the habit of everyday cheerfulness. She says:

"Everything proves to us that cheerfulness upbuilds, uplifts, attracts. Be cheerful. Grumbling, whining, complaining are just so much capital taken from your bank account of mental force, and put to a very poor use; indeed, to no use at all. If you drew your money out of your bank every day, and tossed it into the sea, people would deem you insane. You would soon become poor and neglected. You waste your precious God-given force just as foolishly, and lose your power of attracting by fretting over trifles—a letter expected, a bit of dirt on the floor, imaginary insults, and a hundred other silly, false ideas. Your vital energy your very life is thus uselessly dissipated, and soon you rebel, and people study how to avoid you and you lose opportunities of success. . . . Determine to be cheerful. Project a vision, a picture of yourself as cheerful, lovable, courageous, hopeful, and make yourself like it."

And yet, though it is true enough that anyone may, by determined effort acquire the valuable habit of cheerfulness, I think those who are glad at heart—like a merry child—without special effort, help and cheer their comrades far more. Happiness is very infectious. I used to keep a photograph of a laughing baby on the mantelpiece, because I could not help smiling when I looked at it—and it is impossible to smile, all to one's self, and cherish

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melancholy thoughts at the same time. Light must always banish darkness when they are brought together.

No day can be dull if we begin it by kneeling before our King to receive His commands. There is a radiant joy in the heart of one who has

“Knelt in glad surrender
Before His shining Face,”

that lingers all the day through. Think what it must have meant to the loyal heart of Mary Magdalene when she heard that one magical word, “Mary,” and, looking up in startled wonder, saw that her dear Lord was close beside her, while she had been lamenting His absence and death!

“Rabboni!” Only one word she said,
But her heart was in the cry;
There He stood, her Christ! and the sight sufficed,
Although she had seen Him die:
And for Mary of Magdala, through the power
Of that Resurrection Day,
All the dark and the night, all sin and blight,
Had forever passed away.
Is the Christ alive? Let us feel it then,—
The rapture, the joy, the thrill!
No sorrowful veils or despairing tears,
He lives! and is mighty still.
We, too, whom the Master calls by name,
Have *nothing* to do with grief.
Let us lift our eyes to the Eastern skies,
And live in the endless Light!”

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The people who do most to brighten and uplift the lives of others, are not necessarily the people who work most incessantly. They are those who are looking at the invisible, and who can, with God's help, do much to unseal the blinded eyes of others. They come down in the morning with faces shining like the faces of Moses and St. Stephen, shining with reflected glory because they have been gazing straight up into the face of God. They accept the little difficulties or serious trials which meet them, with quiet courage, because they see Christ at their side to give all the strength required for each moment. They never worry about possible troubles in the future, because everything comes to them as a special gift from His hand, and they are always looking up confidently for new proofs of his love. Everything is a holy sacrament, and they prize the outward, visible sign because they look through it and see the inward spiritual grace. If the one you love best on earth should pick a rose and give it to you, that rose is not a commonplace flower any longer, it has power to thrill your very soul with wonderful gladness. Why? Because you do not look only at the visible petals, which can

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only give a passing sense of pleasure from their delicate coloring, but you look through the visible to the invisible love which makes any gift from that hand very precious. So it is with the everyday events of life. If we look only at the outside, we soon find life monotonous and uninteresting—whether we live in city or country, in cottage or in palace—but if we keep our eyes always open to see God offering gifts of love to us, life is flooded with ever-fresh interest. Each difficulty is an opportunity for gaining new strength, as the soul reaches out to God for help. Pain of heart or body beautifies the character, when it is taken with bright willingness from His outstretched hand. No matter from what human source it may appear to come—though it may be caused by one's own fault, or by the fault of others—one who is not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, can say with quiet confidence: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

With eyes gazing into a loved Master's Face, and hands outstretched in trustful confidence for any gift, duty or opportunity His love sees fit to offer,

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nothing will seem trifling or unimportant, for everything can be seized and pressed into the great work of life, which is the invisible building of things visible and temporal into the great invisible reality of character—and character is eternal. The invisible person, hidden within the outside clothing of circumstances and environment, has been built up slowly, but very steadily, out of the raw material of the past days and hours. If the temper is sweet and easily controlled, it is because it has been trained and strengthened by a thousand little victories. If we are easily irritated or upset by trifles, it is because we have never formed the habit of welcoming every circumstance as valuable material for our daily task of building character. How disappointing it would be if God made life so smooth and easy that we had no chance to acquire the great gifts of patience, long-suffering and meekness, and so we had to go out through the gate of death lacking these pearls of great price. The Great Refiner never makes a mistake in His training and perfecting, and we could gain new beauty and strength every hour, if we always walked prayerfully and trustfully, with eyes raised to Him.

We cannot help forming habits, they are tightening

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their bands round us every day ; therefore, it is vitally important that our outlook on life, which is steadily hardening into habit, should be a true one. Life can be lived sweetly, nobly, grandly, in a lonely prairie home just as easily as in a palace. It is always the invisible that is the real and eternal; it is always the inside that counts most. We do not all stand on the same level—not because one has more money or education than another, but because one has extracted health and beauty from the circumstances which surround him, while another has failed to learn the lessons set him in God's great school of life. People talk of an occasional event as a "special providence," forgetting that everything is a "special providence," carefully planned by our Father for the good of His children.

" I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no
less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen
God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises
it too)
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-
Complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to His
feet "'

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When the Most High stooped in wonderful condescension to "link Himself organically"—as every child of man is linked—"with fish and bird and beast," that Divine touch made everything holy. We need not wait for a future heaven, for heaven must always be where God is—and He is here. If our eyes are only open to see the Vision of the Almighty, we cannot fail to bow before Him in a lowliness of spirit that lifts us ever higher

We call Palestine "The Holy Land"—why? Simply because the footsteps of our Incarnate God sanctified it. But His Incarnation has made not only Palestine, but the whole earth "holy ground." The first Adam was made of the dust of the ground, and the ground was "cursed" for his sake, but the Second Adam reversed the curse. His body also is made of the dust of the earth, and everything with which the Holy One is organically united must be holy. He has carried up into highest heaven the body which still links Him indissolubly in a very special way with this planet and everything in it.

Our Lord's hallowing touch has transformed the commonest acts of life into parables and sacraments. The day begins with the morning bath, which cleanses and invigorates the body as the

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water of Baptism the soul. Then comes the daily round of work, for which the body is strengthened and refreshed in the same way as the soul. The children of a common father gather round him at his table from time to time, eating and drinking together in a holy communion and fellowship. All the everyday business and details of life are lifted into a clearer, holier atmosphere, ending with the evening cleansing of the weary soul from the stains of the day's sins, when the Master Himself stoops to wash the feet of His weak but penitent disciples. As we fall asleep, we can anticipate the breaking of the New Morning on the shore of the eternal sea, when we shall lift up our eyes to our Lord's face and enjoy the heavenly meal which He is preparing for the disciples who have toiled all night in the attempt to draw other souls to His feet. Those who work patiently and prayerfully under His directions will not draw empty nets to the shore. He who wishes to tread on holy ground need not take the long journey to Palestine, nor shrink away from his fellows for fear of contamination. The only holy Man was—and still is—the Friend of publicans and sinners. By His kindly human touch He inspires us with a desire to be holy too—kindliness

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is a mighty power for good, because it is the outward sign of a loving heart within. The place whereon thou standest is holy, and therefore it is bright and beautiful. It cannot fail to be holy—for Christ is there.

" This is the Gospel of labor,
Ring it ye bells of the kirk,
The Lord of love
Came down from above
To live with the men who work."

THE VISION IS A FOUNTAIN OF JOY.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VISION IS A FOUNTAIN OF JOY.

" I would my friends should see
In my glad eyes the beauty of His Face ;
Should learn that in His presence there is peace,
Strength and contentment, that can never cease."

For years I have prayed that God would give me
His wonderful gift of a deep heart-joy, for I felt the
truth of the saying :

" Of all the weapons we wield against wrong, there
is none more effective than pure and burning joy."

The Bible is the great Book of Joy. Not only
are we commanded to "rejoice in the Lord always"
—and "always" means in the darkness as well as in
the light, in storm and pain and sorrow, in diffi-
culty and in danger—but most surprising occasions
are picked out as a reason for special joy. We are
not surprised to read : " In the day of prosperity
be joyful" (though some melancholy natures seem
to find it hard to be really happy even in pros-
perity). But, when we find our Lord actually com-
manding His disciples to "rejoice, and be exceed-
ingly glad," when they have to endure persecutions



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and false accusations, and all manner of evil, we are naturally astonished. This strange joy is a gift which He promised to give to His disciples, as they could not obtain it for themselves. Did He keep that promise? It seems so, for, when they lost the visible presence of their dearest Friend, they returned to Jerusalem with "great joy"; when they were beaten, for preaching about Him, they departed, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." St. Paul gives his testimony to show that some Christians "took joyfully" the spoiling of their goods, even as he declares of himself: "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," and says again: "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."

The martyrs of the early Church astonished their torturers, not only by their dauntless courage and strong endurance; but by their marvellous joy in the midst of agony and in the face of a terrible death. What do you think? Is the power of Christ less mighty in this generation, or is His gift of joy only intended to sustain martyrs in their agony? Is it offered freely to all who consecrate their lives to His service, and available for ordinary, everyday

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use in this matter-of-fact age? Surely the words of the prophet are a promise of the gladness of Christ's kingdom on earth, when he says that the desert "shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing." He can hardly be speaking of the heavenly life, or he would not call it the "wilderness," the "solitary place," and the "desert."

If Christians find their lives a bare, dull round of monotonous duties; it must be because they have their eyes fixed on their work rather than on the face of their Master, or are giving only half-hearted service. Those who pour out their lives eagerly for God, without thinking of any other reward than His approving smile and wonderful "Well done!" find out by experience the truth of the words:

"God Himself is the heart's desire of those who delight in Him; and the blessedness of longing fixed on Him is that it ever fulfils itself. They who want God have Him. . . . The sunshine flows into the opened eye, the breath of life into the expanding lung—so surely, so immediately the fullness of God fills the waiting, wishing soul. To delight in God is to possess our delight. Heart! lift up thy gates; open and raise the narrow, low portals, and the King of Glory will stoop to enter."

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We may form the habit of thinking about God and realizing His Presence, so that the heart turns to Him when alone, as naturally as the needle of the compass swings round to the north. Especially is this possible in the silence and darkness of the night, when the visible no longer is a veil to hide the invisible from our longing eyes. We are never less alone than when we appear to be alone, because then we can be instantly in communion and fellowship with those whose society we most enjoy. In the daytime we may, perhaps, be forced by circumstances to associate with uncongenial people; but, when alone on our beds at night, we are free to enjoy spiritual communion with whom we will. Only Christ can fully satisfy our hunger for perfect communion and fellowship; for He is perfect Man, understanding our human longings; and perfect God, so that He can satisfy our every need. No wonder that Isaiah's words fit every generation of men :

" With my soul have I desired Thee in the night ;
yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early."

No wonder the Psalmist could say :

" In the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice,"

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when it was his habit to remember God's holy Presence upon his bed, to meditate upon Him in the night-watches, and to think upon Him always in the moment of waking.

" If chosen souls could never be alone
In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,
No Greatness ever had been dreamed or done."

I fail to see how a soul living apart from God can know the meaning of Joy in its deepest reality, or how a soul that is in conscious touch with Him can fail to find it. Who is able to contradict the truism of Elihu : " If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures." The "pleasures" which are God's gifts to His beloved cannot be destroyed by tribulation ; and the soul is often rejoicing in truest " prosperity " when outside circumstances are apparently wearisome and trying. There is something very splendid in the quietly victorious lives that are being lived out on many a lonely farm, and in many a quiet village ; something very heroic in the cheery accepting of whatever lot in life God has chosen for His servants. Will you not try to remember that

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you—yes, I am talking to you !—may, if you will, make your life shining and glorious ?

Happiness and joy are not the same thing. Those who turn their backs on happiness, sacrificing their own wishes for love's sake, do not always find that God gives them back the happiness they have given up—but He does give a mysterious, secret joy that can sweeten the bitterest cup and brighten the darkest cloud of sorrow. God's rewards for service need not be waited for, they are hidden in the service :

" Lord, with what courage and delight
I do each thing,
When Thy least breath sustains my wing !
I shine and move
Like those above,
And with much gladness
Quitting sadness,
Make me fair days of every night."

Those who can look up confidently and joyously into their Master's face, and see that He is pleased, need not make themselves unhappy, even if the world finds fault with their conduct. The gloom of a sad or sullen spirit cannot hold its own, if the soul is flooded with the abiding presence of the Sun

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of Righteousness. Darkness always dies when it is brought face to face with light. Gladness of spirit is not only a privilege, it is a duty. The habit of grumbling and complaining not only makes life harder for ourselves and all about us, but it is a sin against God. It is a mistake to think that such everyday sins are unimportant in His eyes, and passed over as trifling. In the Book of Numbers we read: "When the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it, and His anger was kindled."

Surely when His people complain now, and murmur against the circumstances and environment His love has provided, He does not fail to hear the complaints and see the doleful faces of His children. We are dishonoring our Master, and disobeying His command, when we fail to "serve the Lord with gladness."

Robert Louis Stevenson seems to think that our great task in life is to be happy; as little children gladden a father's heart by their sunny smiles and disappoint Him when they are sullen and miserable. The familiar lines can hardly, in my opinion, be quoted too often:

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“ If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness ;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face,
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not ; if morning skies,
Beams, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain ;
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake ;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose Thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in.”

Let us pray that we may have joy of heart, and may show it by the sacramental outward signs of bright looks and cheerful tones.

One person with pale, mournful face, and a weary headache, can depress a whole family. Our business, as the servants of the God of Joy, is to cheer other people, never to depress them. So, if the headache can be cured, it should be cured—I don't mean choked back with headache powders. Sometimes a rest is needed, sometimes a walk in the fresh air or a cheerful call on a friend, sometimes a little wholesome fasting from indigestible food will work wonders. Perhaps the case is more serious

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and calls for a doctor's professional skill and knowledge. But, whatever is making your body less effective than it should be, don't submit to it in weak helplessness if there is any way to remedy the trouble. If pain is unavoidable, then we must rally all our powers to endure it bravely; but, for the sake of God and our fellows, as well as for our own sake, do let us get well, and keep well, if we can. God wants us to be healthy, our Lord healed all manner of disease—disease of body and mind, as well as of soul—and He will help us in our fight against every kind of evil. Religion should make us sane, healthy and bright; not morbid, sentimental or doleful. It is intended to make us happy in this world as well as in the next. Our bodies are holy—being temples of the Holy Ghost—and should be consecrated in the most effective service we can offer to God and our neighbors.

"Holiness is health of soul, and health is holiness (wholeness) of body," therefore it is important to cultivate the outward signs of health, according to the "suggestion" theory that to "say we are well" is to fight a winning battle against disease of every kind—bodily, mental and spiritual. We should try to form habits of cheerful activity, and take a

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heartly interest in our everyday work and in the people around us.

Everyone is interesting if we can only get through the shell and touch the person underneath. In every soul we may see something of God. Some are like polished mirrors, reflecting His face, so that the slightest contact with them, or even the thought of them, sends one's heart upwards almost involuntarily; while in others the image of God is very dim and distorted. But, even then, we know it must be there, know that in serving them we are serving our Master and Lord.

I have no patience with the pessimists who tell children that youth is the happiest time in life. It is an instinct with us all to press forward to something better than we already have, and it is a true instinct. Those who consecrate their lives to God in childhood will surely find that their path shines more and more, until the Sun of Righteousness floods every day with inner sunshine—deep joy, which is infinitely more satisfying than the gay light-heartedness of childhood. Every day brings fresh opportunities of touching other lives, and of growing in the knowledge of God, which, as our Lord tells us, is "life eternal." Then, there is the

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joy of making real progress in spiritual growth ; for it is false humility to shut one's eyes to that progress, when there is a steady struggle after God and holiness.

With numberless doors of opportunity standing wide open, surely no one should find the days commonplace or uninteresting. And no one can walk through life with the fearless, happy trust of a dearly-loved child in his own father's house, without radiating brightness. Joy is very infectious, and we can render grand service to our brothers and sisters just by being happy. It is no use pretending to be happy. The gladness must spring like a living fountain, ever fresh from the Christ within the heart, if it is to do real service. We must walk with God every day in the week, if we are to be mirrors reflecting the Sun of Righteousness.

We are told to become as little children, and perhaps the most attractive feature in an ordinary child is its sunny gladness. I used to pity the children who lived in a tenement district, until I went to live there myself. Then I was filled with wonder over the amount of happiness they managed to extract from gloomy surroundings. If they can't get a green field to play in, they make the paved

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street or ugly back-alley ring with merry shouts and glad songs. Of course they have their troubles, like the rest of the world, but happiness seems to be their normal condition and pleasure the groundwork of their lives. We, too, may be happy, if, deep within our subconsciousness, lies the confident assurance that our Father loves us and will provide everything that is for the real good of both body and soul. Our future is in strong and loving hands, and need not give us an anxious thought. The sins of the past—if earnestly repented of—are blotted out "as a thick cloud," leaving the sky clear. As for the present, how can we fail to rejoice if we are careful to walk always close beside the One who is altogether lovely. Then, almost unconsciously, our hearts will repeat the sweet refrain of the Song of Solomon: "My Beloved is mine and I am His."

"The busy fingers fly ; the eyes may see
Only the glancing needle which they hold :
But all my life is blossoming inwardly,
And every breath is like a litany ;
While through each labor, like a thread of gold,
Is woven the sweet consciousness of Thee."

The great secret of perpetual gladness is the

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realization of the presence of God. It must destroy cowardly fear of danger, to know that God is close beside us, all-loving and all-mighty to protect and strengthen His forgiven children who are earnestly trying to obey Him in all things. It is true that life has its times of agony. The soul must pass through the fire, before it can be purified as silver or fine gold. There are times when the deep joy of a soul that rests upon its God, is pressed down under pain, as the everlasting joy of Christ was hidden under a cloud in Gethsemane and on Calvary, when He felt that even His Father had forsaken Him. His pain was terrible, and yet the "joy" of which He had so often spoken to His disciples on that last evening—"My joy," He called it—was still His precious possession. And if the joy of Christ's felt presence has become the priceless possession of any soul, pain or darkness cannot kill it. The black cloud will surely pass, and the sun—which has never ceased its shining—will be seen again. If you are passing through the fire now, and feel as though life were a burden which could hardly be endured, remember that One who loves you is watching tenderly over the refining process. He is showing His love by purging away the dross.

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Surely we can be glad—glad in the midst of the pain—because the great Refiner sees precious gold in our souls, and is not willing to lose that gold through the cruelty of too-indulgent softness in dealing with us. But we cannot be refined if we refuse to submit to God's dealings with us, if we persistently say: "Not Thy will but mine be done." Surely we do not want the lament of Jeremiah over his people to be true of us, when he declares that the refining process is a failure. This failure is not the result of want of skill on the part of Refiner, but is the fault of the material He is trying to refine. "The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain . . . reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." Yes, we may rejoice in tribulations, and seek to gain the gift of a beautiful purity, gazing continually into the face of the One whose hand "presseth sore," yet very tenderly, until He can see His own Beauty of Holiness reflected in us, and can, with great joy, take his beloved as pure gold out of the furnace.

THE VISION IS A PLEDGE OF VICTORY.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VISION IS A PLEDGE OF VICTORY.

The LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong : but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand : for the LORD your God, He it is that fighteth for you.—Josh., xxiii. : 9, 10.

We all want to be victors in the battle of life; we all wish to lead successful lives; but we may not all agree in our definition of a victorious life. But those who have gazed long at the King in His beauty—that surpassing beauty of perfect holiness—can hardly fail to have the same great ambition. They want to please the King, and they long to be like Him. So their idea of victory is the triumph over sin and the mounting steadily upward, nearer to God. Their prayer is :

“ Only grant my soul may carry high through death her cup unspilled,”

though the elixir it contains may have been slowly and painfully distilled from loss, failure of earthly hopes, sorrow and death.

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St. John says that the victory which overcometh the world is "Faith." Now, "Faith" is the eye of the soul; it is the power of seeing things not seen by our bodily sight. So, in the grand roll of victors, given in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are told that they conquered, not having received the promises, but having "seen them afar off." Moses is expressly said to have endured, as "seeing Him who is invisible." How could he fear the wrath of the king of Egypt, when by faith he saw the King of the whole earth at his side to guard and to direct?

God only knows what our life on the other side of the Veil, which we call "Death," may be like; but, while we belong to the "Church Militant" here on earth, our business is fighting—and fighting to win. We must be neither half-hearted nor faint-hearted if we fight in the ranks of the great army described by St. John—a wonderful army, riding on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and following a Leader whose Name is KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

We fight close beside the King; He is pledged to give all necessary assistance, and He never fails to

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notice if we grow careless or lukewarm in our efforts for the spread of His kingdom. No spot or stain, which may defile our white garments, is unnoticed by Him. He is always willing to cleanse us from sin and let us start fair again. He always notes every little victory over pride or temper or discontent, which may mark our day. He smiles His warm approval into our eyes when we make any real progress in our great business of loving. He gives us the hand of a loyal Comrade to help us through special difficulties. We belong to Him who has come "conquering and to conquer," and who says of all His own: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are One."

Our Captain "always causeth us to triumph" if we steadfastly cleave unto Him. Even though we may be called to endure "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword," or be accounted as sheep for the slaughter, even in these things "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

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The harder the fight, the more glorious is the victory. Surely no one could fail to recognize the Conquering King on that first Good Friday, when a Man of wondrous courage accepted torture and shame, insult and death, with unfaltering determination and perfect serenity. That was a triumph for humanity. It showed how the kingliness of manhood may be victorious when all outward circumstances combine in the attempt to crush it.

And many noble followers of the Great Conqueror have been able to echo the triumphant battle-song of a soul victorious in the midst of earthly failure and defeat :

" Of wounds and sore defeat
I made my battle stay ;
Winged sandals for my feet
I wove of my delay ;
Of weariness and fear
I made my shouting spear ;
Of loss, and doubt, and dread
And swift oncoming doom,
I made a helmet for my head
And a floating plume.
From the shutting mist of death,
From the failure of the breath,
I made a battle-horn to blow
Across the vale of overthrow.
O hearken, love, the battle-horn !

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The triumph clear, the silver scorn !
O hearken where the echoes bring,
Down the grey disastrous morn,
Laughter and rallying !"

Oh, it is easy to be bright and pleasant when apparent success follows every venture, when the world is admiring and everything goes smoothly. But that is no proof of victoriousness—a life that is smooth and easy and comfortable may often be a dead failure from God's point of view—which is the true view, of course. When things are too easy there is usually little progress ; just as a child at school is not really doing well if he is kept in a class where he can learn the lessons without any effort.

To succeed easily in all we attempt, proves beyond a doubt that we are not aiming high enough. The work which was hard for us last year, and is easy now, gives no chance of a victory. A life of luxurious, inglorious ease is not the most healthy for either soul or body. Can we not be brave and wise enough to thank God for the difficulties and failures through which we must fight our way upward ? It is not easy to

"Welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go !"

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But, after the battle is over, and we find that real progress has been made, we shall thank God with all our hearts because He would not allow us to stand still.

God will not let our spiritual muscles grow weak for lack of exercise; so we are forced to fight on, if we would not be pushed downhill. Fighting, with God on our side, means making headway. No one can "cram" for God's test-examinations; but steady effort is bound to tell. So, if you know you are making continual efforts in the right direction, looking to the Great Companion for needed help; then you know you are surely winning the great victory which is worth fighting for.

Sometimes God, in His deep love, calls a son to dare the disapproval of the world—yes, even the disapproval of those nearest and dearest. One who dares to stand alone with God and his own approving conscience, and is even strong enough to rejoice that he is being refined by the pain of loneliness, is a victor indeed, and surely must he very dear to the heart of his King. He is being carefully trained and perfected for a hard but glorious work.

To be disappointed and discouraged because we fail in accomplishing anything that seems to be

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"worth while," is a proof that we have not been working from the right motive. The pain and humiliation of failure should open our eyes to our wrong aim, and help us to do better. True success, true victory is putting heart into a task and doing it purely for love's sake. To be disappointed because it appears to fail, shows that we have been looking at the outward success rather than into our Master's Face.

To have one's work held up as a model for the world to admire is no proof of success. It is possible to win a reputation for sanctity and good works, and to be well satisfied with that shallow success; really caring very little whether God is well pleased, or whether the work deserves the applause it is receiving. And it is possible—perhaps more common than we think—for men and women to toil and fight on, with quiet patience, winning small notice from the world, but cheered and strengthened by the approving smile of their Master. They may fail again and again, but each failure only brings them to their knees, giving them an opportunity to win a victory over pride and worldliness.

Then, with their Master's pardon and blessing,

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they are ready to start again on His errands, knowing that He is able and willing to supply all needed wisdom and power. They never go to battle at their own charges, and they know that real defeat is impossible if God is working through and with them.

The pain of humiliating failure is welcomed as a danger-signal, warning them that they have been looking for the world's approval rather than for God's "Well done!" So they can wring strength even from defeat; because, seeing their own weakness, they depend more utterly on God, drawing always fresh supplies from an Infinite Source. Fighting in the ranks of the King of Kings, and leaning on His omnipotent arm, defeat is impossible.

"I know
How far high failure overleaps the bounds
Of low successes,"—

and a failure like that of the apostle, who thought himself brave and strong yet, before the cock-crowing, discovered his own weakness, may deepen and strengthen a whole life. The weakness was there in his nature—carefully hidden by self-reliance—and the failure swept away the veil. After that he would

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be careful to trust to God's power instead of to his own strength.

We are so apt to fancy that God's purpose concerning us must surely be fulfilled if we succeed in doing some grand and beneficent work for the good of mankind. But surely God is far more pleased if we are steadily growing more grand and noble and beautiful ourselves—and the two things do not necessarily go together at the beginning. When I say "at the beginning," I mean on this side of death, for death marks off a very short space of our life. It is certainly true that every man shall reap the harvest of good or evil that he has sown; but, the better the harvest is, the longer he may have to wait for it. And we can well afford to wait. Yes, if need be, to wait until we see things as they really are in the clearer light beyond the veil of death—for we have all eternity to enjoy the harvest. All good work is put into God's hands, and He will never let it fail in the long run, though it may appear to fail at first. And all bad work is playing into the hands of Satan, and will certainly bear its bitter fruit. "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." To do wrong is to be sure of failure, while to do right

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is to place one's self in the army of the Divine Conqueror, and to be sure of lasting victory in the end. God's great "Well Done!" will not necessarily be given to those who have successfully carried out great and world-wide schemes for good, but belongs to those, and to those alone, who have been good and faithful servants. No matter what your position may be, nor how cramped your circumstances, you have as good a chance of winning that glorious commendation as anyone in this boundless universe. No one can make you a failure—no one but yourself—for faithfulness is ways success, and you can be faithful if you will. To you has this inspiring promise been spoken :

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

"Speak, History, who are life's victors? unroll thy long annals and say—
Are they those whom the world called the victors, who won the success of a day?
The martyrs, or Nero? the Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst,
Or the Persians and Xerxes? his judges, or Socrates?
Pilate or Christ?"

WHEN THE VISION IS DIM

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN THE VISION IS DIM.

If our spiritual sight were always keen, no shade of worry or care could ruin the peace which should guard the door of our hearts. But sometimes the darkness of unbelief steals in, and clouds hide our dear Lord's Face from our sight. What shall we do when the Vision is dim, when we walk on a darkened way, and trouble seems to have no meaning, because we cannot feel sure that God is providing for all our needs, every step of the way?

I suppose every age has its own peculiar difficulties, and ours is no exception to the rule. Many people, who earnestly desire to believe, are troubled by the merciless criticism to which the Bible is exposed, in these days of research. It has been attacked before, and has stood firm—will it endure this searching scrutiny of the "higher critics"? men ask tremblingly. I am not going to attempt to write for or against the "higher criticism" movement; for I am not a scholar, and it would be as sensible for me to write an essay on electricity as to discuss a matter of which I know nothing.

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But I have no fear that God's truth can be killed by anybody—"it is not an invalid, never to be taken out into the air, except in a closed carriage," as Dr. Holmes says. But certainly we need not wait for any decision of scholars before we can be quite sure that the Bible is the Word of God—a real message from our Father to His own children.

"I have a life with Christ to live,
But ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date ?

"I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die,
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply ?

"Nay, rather while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life, and death and sin ;
Let me but creep within
Thy fold O Christ, and at Thy feet,
Take but the lowest seat.

"And hear Thine awful voice repeat
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet :
'Come unto Me, and rest ;
Believe Me, and be blest.' "

No criticism can silence the Word of God, which is, as it has ever been, "profitable for doctrine, for

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reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Those who really want light to guide them in the right way, will still find it a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path.

"But," some may object, "if the Bible is God's Word, why does He allow it to be handled so roughly? Why does He not interfere?"

God does not always explain His reasons for non-interference; but, because He allows a messenger of His to be treated with indignity and rejected by many, we need not therefore conclude that the messenger is disowned by Him, or has failed in the successful delivering of the message. Long ago, One, who is also the "Word of God," was scorned and rejected of men. The question that was asked by many was, "Would God—the God in Whom He trusted—deliver Him?" That question seemed to be answered in the negative, even God appeared to have forsaken Him. But at least one desperate soul, feeling its burden of sin too heavy for endurance, reached out pleadingly, and found that He, Who seemed to be unable to save Himself, was mighty to save others.

So it is with the Bible. It is not a book which can be destroyed by man, for it comes with living

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messages from God to each of us. Men may confidently assert that "miracles do not occur," but the Bible is itself a miracle—alive and fresh and young, speaking to the heart of all who hunger after righteousness and who abhor the defilement of sin. It is really the "Word" of God, His message of hope and strength and purity to every age.

So also is Christ a miracle. He stands alone in history, and reigns as King in the world to-day. It is not only that His words and example hold up before us the highest ideal that we can conceive of, but that multitudes in every age testify to His Living Presence, and joyously pour out at His feet the best love they can offer. More than that, those who are really Christians, giving themselves up unreservedly to Christ as their Master, go steadily forward and upward. All the world loves and admires goodness that is sterling metal all the way through, as all the world scorns imitation goodness—the miserable sham which goes by the name of "cant."

So, if your eyes are too dim to see the Face of Christ, if He seems to you to be only a great human Teacher who is dead, then keep your gaze steadily fixed on the light that is visible to your

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spiritual sight. Certainly you can see some light which will guide you in the right direction, for God has not left Himself without a witness in your spiritual nature. You can see that Christ's ideal of holiness is the grandest possible : keep your face steadfastly set in that direction. You can see that His life of self-sacrificing love is an inspiration to all men to follow in His steps ; try to be actively kind every day. As you look towards the light, it will most surely grow stronger ; as you try to follow the example He has set, the Vision of His Face will grow clearer. His promise is sure to be fulfilled, that if any man willeth to do the will of God, he shall "know" whether the teaching of Christ comes from God, or only proceeds from a fallible man.—S. John, vii. : 17. All who seek Christ, with steady determination, will most certainly find Him and know Him to be indeed the promised Deliverer, the rightful Master of the world.

One who, like Saul of Tarsus, is really though mistakenly seeking God, may have his eyes opened suddenly to the blinding glory of His face, but a real thirst for God must be aroused before it can be satisfied. Only those who hunger and thirst

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after His infinite holiness can be filled. The wonderful miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus only made some men more wicked, for they hardened themselves and determined to put him again to death, in order to stop—if it were possible—Christianity's victorious progress.

God loves us, and, therefore, instead of blinding us by miracles, He draws us secretly and silently by His marvellous beauty ; then we run after Him more eagerly, as desire is roused by denial, that so the delight of finding Him may be a true and lasting joy.

And I think that God's silence makes us listen more carefully for His voice—when we have heard that voice sometimes. If we could always feel the sweetness of His presence, we might not watch or listen so attentively as when we are afraid we may, by a moment's carelessness, miss the revelation He intends for us. It was good for the disciples to see their Master's glory on the mountain, but St. Peter was mistaken in thinking it would be good for them to stay there all the time. We cannot see the shining Vision of our Master's face, nor always hear the Voice from the cloud, which proclaims Him to be Divine, but we can always bear about

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with us the inspiring memory of such occasional revelations, and—just because they don't come very often—we learn to value them more and watch more eagerly for them.

Though God may seem very far away, yet He is really close beside us. We may know this as a matter of theory and yet fail to realize His Presence, and so miss the gladness and strength of walking consciously with Him. We may, in the "darkness of a half-belief," grope for His heart, like a child blindly seeking its natural resting-place, as Margaret Deland says :

" O distant Christ ! the crowded, darkening years
Drift slow between Thy gracious face and me ;
My hungry heart leans back to look for Thee,
But finds the way set thick with doubt and fears.
My groping hands would touch Thy garment's hem,
Would find some token Thou art walking near ;
Instead they clasp but empty darkness drear,
And no diviner hands reach out to them !
Sometimes my listening soul, with bated breath,
Stands still to catch a footfall by my side,
Lest, haply, my earth-blinded eyes but hide
Thy stately figure, leading life and death ;
My straining eyes, O Christ ! but long to mark
A shadow of Thy presence, dim and sweet,
Or far-off light to guide my wandering feet,
Or hope for hands prayer-beating 'gainst the dark.

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O Thou ! unseen by me, that like a child
Tries in the night to find its mother's heart,
And weeping wanders only more apart,
Not knowing in the darkness that she smiled.
Thou, all unseen, dost hear my tired cry,
As I, in darkness of a half-belief,
Grove for Thy heart, in love and doubt and grief ;
O Lord, speak soon to me— ' I.o, here am I ! ' "

Strange and often very hard to bear is the silence of Divine Love. Sometimes, like Elijah, we can hear the still small Voice speaking to our souls, but there are dark hours in life when it seems as though God paid no attention to our prayers, when we cannot feel His presence, and there is no outward sign that the promise, "ask and ye shall receive," can be depended on. Of course, this is often our own fault. God has declared over and over again that He will not answer the prayers of those who are not trying to obey His laws. He has also made the answering of our prayers largely dependent on our own faith. But, when a soul is consecrated to God's service, and asks earnestly and faithfully for something which is plainly according to His will, only to be met by deep silence, it is very hard to understand how God can be silent "in His love." Sometimes we try to escape from sorrow or pain,

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pleading that this cup may pass from us, and yet it is still held steadily to the shrinking lips. But such a silence, though it may be hard to bear, can be accepted as the silence of love ; for pain and sorrow, if trustfully endured, are priceless gifts for the refining, beautifying and strengthening of character. But it is hard to accept our Lord's strange words : " It is expedient for you that I go away." It seems as though it must be better for us to be able always to realize His presence, and we can hardly believe that He is silent " in His love " when He hides His face from us ; and all our prayers for light, and earnest seeking after truth, meet with no response. Though Christ—the Holy One of God—passed sinlessly through that darkness, when He cried out in agony, " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?" still it is not easy to understand why—

" It is good now and again for you to be without a taste of God,
That you be not puffed up in days when all is fair,
And take some pleasure in yourself that you are what you are not."

Perhaps it may be light for someone else that we

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are praying for. Surely such prayers are well-pleasing to Him who is continually making intercession for us all. Why, then, are they often offered year after year in vain—or apparently in vain? It is mysterious, and yet we may learn to understand something of the mystery; and, for the rest, "we can always trust," and grow strong in spirit through continuous trust. In the first place, let us never lose hold of the fact that such loving, faithful prayers are always heard and answered, though we may have to wait a long time before the answer is visible. If you planted a seed deep in the ground, and then prayed that it might take root and grow, the prayer would not be unanswered, even though you might have to wait a long time before the young plant appeared above ground. And the most enduring plants usually grow slowly, sending down their roots deep into the ground—visible only to God—before they break through the crust and show themselves to men. And then there is another thing to be considered, a fact which makes the answering of prayer anything but a simple matter. If God gave us our Promised Land without effort on our part, it would be a worthless gift. If He gave us goodness without struggle, we

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should be machines, not human souls. And it is the same with faith, which, though it is a gift of God, is never forced on us. If our Lord had proved His Divinity—as Satan tempted Him to do—by casting himself down from the pinnae of the Temple, upheld by angel hands, the crowds, whose belief in Him would have been thus forced, would have gained nothing by such effortless faith. If you, who are pleading day after day that the eyes of a friend may be opened to see Him who is invisible, were given power to work a miracle, and so to convince him of the truth, would you not gladly take advantage of the opportunity? And yet such a forced belief would be utterly worthless, and would only do harm, making real faith more difficult. If God gave us all the temporal gifts we asked for, without effort on our part, the result of such cruel kindness would be to make us more lazy and selfish and unhappy every day. But to give us spiritual gifts too easily would harm us far more. We ask for holiness, and, though it is a gift freely given by God, yet we must make it ours, not only by daily, constant prayer, but also by throwing all our energy into the struggle. We must work out our own salvation, St. Paul says, with fear and

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trembling, although it is God alone Who inspires us with the will to be holy, and gives us power to grow steadily more and more like Himself. Surely it is in wisest love that He keeps silence, refusing to change us into perfectly-working machines, incapable of going wrong ; even as a father refuses to do all his child's lessons for him. We can only make the gift of patient endurance our own by a real encounter with suffering, and we can only strengthen faith by trusting God in silence and darkness. If we could always see His face, hear His voice and understand His dealings with us, there would be no room for trustful faith.

It is a beautiful thought, which may comfort those who are walking in the dark for a little while, that they can be splendid conquerors if they will turn away their thoughts from personal needs to the necessities of others. Christ endured the cloud of darkness which for a time hid His Father's Face; endured it that we might never know such thick darkness. Love is always eager to help others.

" For love must pray in its own dark day
That light may shine on its loved away."

Those who go on trusting, praying and seeking

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will certainly come out into the light, in God's good time. The Sun of Righteousness goes on shining, the clouds which obscure our vision belong to earth and will pass away.

Professor Romanes, when he lost out of his life the Vision of God, said: "The universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness." But, even on this side of death, he—who felt "it is Christianity or nothing"—found the thick darkness dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness. Darkness and death are only temporary, but light and life are eternal. If you are distressed by your dimness of sight, you will be spurred on to find a cure.

"The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt."



WHEN THE VISION IS CLEAREST.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN THE VISION IS CLEAREST.

Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. . . . He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.—S. Luke, xxiv. : 16, 30, 31.

He was known of them in breaking of bread.—35.

I am aware that the subject of this chapter is not only "holy ground," but is also liable to provoke controversy. My object is not to argue about points of difference; but to do my best to help those who are brothers and comrades in Christ, to draw nearer to each other and to Him. Therefore, I shall not attempt to declare my views about the Lord's Supper, but simply plead with you to accept Christ's gracious invitation. Listen to His words: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

St. Paul has told us that the mysterious bond which unites Christ and His Church is the heavenly reality, of which the marriage bond is the great earthly type. The Bridegroom was about to die

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for His loved Bride, so He laid in Her hands a precious, parting gift—a Sacramental Token of His undying love. If the Church loves her Lord, that token cannot fail to be very dear and very sacred. It is like a mirror, the more She gazes into its mysteries, the more clearly She sees the Vision of His Face. To put it aside, as a thing of little consequence, must be impossible. She loves the Giver, and therefore cannot fail to prize His gift. She wants to keep in closest touch with Him who has said: "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him"; so She presses closer and closer, in a sweet and trustful obedience which delights His heart, feeling sure that if She does Her part He will not fail to do His. Through all these centuries She has not failed to hold up before God and men the Memorial of the Bridegroom's death; She has not failed to treasure the token of His love.

The Church has not failed, but many who love the Lord hold back when the invitation is given: "This do in remembrance of Me." Others, who obey, sometimes are heard to say that they don't find that it does them much good. Any sacrament will be bare and lifeless, unless there is the inward

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spiritual grace to leap and thrill with bounding life along the arteries of the outward visible sign. A ring, which has been given as a pledge of love, appears to be only a little strip of metal which has cost a few dollars. But the clear eyes of a loving woman can see in it a treasure which all the wealth of the world could not buy.

So is it in this great Sacrament of our dear Lord's Love. If we find little in it, the fault is not His, but our own. If a woman finds that her wedding-ring is nothing but a little band of gold, it is a sad sign of something missing in herself. But is not the fault of the love-token.

Don't stay away because your heart feels cold and hard, and you can't find any spiritual joy in the service. Never fancy that because you have not yet seen the clear Vision of the Bridegroom's Face, when you have knelt at His feet to receive the love-token from His own hand, that you will never see what others have found there. Can any one put into words the mysterious preciousness of a real token of love? Can any one tell how great its value may be when the giver is out of sight and the heart reaches out after him? So, also, no one can express in words the special, secret confidence which

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God has with each soul that loves Him. Sometimes He suddenly presses on the consciousness the reality of His near presence. The veil which hides His Face grows luminous at times, and we can see Him more plainly. Especially when we obey His call to meet Him at the Holy Supper, is He ready to shut out the world and "wrap each soul in a veil, a sacred privacy with Himself."

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, I don't wish to be controversial, especially in talking about holiest subjects. But my object in sending out this book is to add my witness—the witness of my own experience—to the testimony of others. Therefore, I declare that—though sometimes in the Lord's Supper I have had to believe by faith that Christ has given His Life to me, and have not been able to feel that He is very near—more often I have found that the Vision of His Face grows clearest at such moments. But, happily, the gift is just as real when the feeling is absent, if only the faith be steadfast and the heart loyal. We can come away, knowing that we have met our Master in the Holy of Holies, knowing—even though we may not feel—that He has linked us more closely to Himself, and

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that His Life is in us to refresh and strengthen and purify our hearts and lives.

We also know that, through this Sacrament, we who are members of Christ are drawn nearer to each other. There we can reach out to touch the hand of one we love, clasped close within His. There we are joined together in one communion and fellowship. There we can meet, in spiritual reality, those who are hidden from us by the Veil of Death, but who still live and love in God's holy keeping.

God knows that we need sacraments — need the outward tokens of love. The prodigal son could not doubt his father's love, when he saw the best robe, the ring, the shoes and the feast. The heart may feel sure of the loyal love of friends, and yet leap up with delight at each outward token of affection — a hand-clasp, a kiss, a letter, a gift, a tender word. These are not worth anything unless they are sacramental, unless they are visible signs of a real love within. They are of slight intrinsic value, and yet they may be treasured as very precious by the receiver. It all depends upon the love of the one who gives and the one who receives.

I think that is why our Lord chose the simple

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elements of bread and wine as the outward sign of His love-token to His Bride. She could not forget the Giver in His gift. And, as He could raise one simple meal to such a height of glory, so He has power to glorify all common things in the eyes of His friends. He is with them always, therefore they are always on holy ground. Each moment is accepted as a gift from His hand, therefore each is a precious token of love. Even pain and sorrow have a strange sweetness when the bitter cup is taken from His hand—the hand which bears the outward signs of a Love that is stronger than death :

" And pain and weakness make Him nearer seem,
Till life becomes a story of which He is the theme."

In this Sacrament we are joined to Christ and to each other; as St. Paul tells us in the tenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, it is the communion of His body and blood, and also makes us, who are many, "one bread, and one body." His love, as Holland says, "beats like a great heart, pulse upon pulse, combating, defeating, expelling that slow death which has crept over the body of

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humanity. And thus, 'in Christ, all are made alive.' All: the whole human race is swept forward, is borne upward, by the power of the Risen Lord."

Are we being swept forward, constrained by the mighty Love of Christ within us to devote our lives to His service? Do we keep our eyes lifted to His Face, so that we may be guided by the love in His eyes? Surely we don't want to drift away from our Lord and King, in cold indifference or careless forgetfulness. Then, let us press very near to Him, prizing and using His treasured Love-token.

It is not enough to come regularly to the Lord's Supper. If we seek strength and refreshment, we must learn to find God there; we must touch the garment of Christ if we seek to be made whole. Long ago the multitudes were thronging and pressing Him, but only the woman who reached out consciously to touch the hem of His garment was helped by the close contact. If we heard that in a certain church on a certain day our Lord would visibly be present, ready to cheer and counsel and heal all the weary and heavy-laden, that church would be filled to overflowing. I am afraid we don't quite believe His promise to be in the midst

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of every little group of worshipping disciples. We enter the church. Let us forget to look at the people, or at the fashionable costumes. Let us remember, with a thrill of awed joy, that the King of Kings is there, that He is looking right into our eyes, right into our hearts. We can kneel at His feet, look straight up into His eyes, feeling that we are not alone in this sweet communion, but are thrilled with the mighty pulse of Christian love, which, in all countries and many ages, reaches up to Him whose grandest name is LOVE.

God gives us the great and necessary gift of a holy day each week, as He gives us the miracle of sleep, which starts us fresh with new life every morning. Our bodies need a rest and change from the steady pressure of week-day business. Our minds need the refreshment of absorbing a different kind of idea. Our spirits need to be revived and quickened by closer communion with God and our fellow Christians. That is why the day should, if possible, be begun by meeting our Lord and His disciples at His own Holy Table. There He presses His own life into our souls, and we can reach out in conscious fellowship with Him, and with the other members of His body. There we can touch

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the hand of a friend, who is out of sight, but very near. He may be on the other side of the world, or on the other side of death. What matter! As we touch the hand of the Lord Jesus we can feel within His tender clasp the pressure of another loved hand. We go out feeling that we have been holding high and holy communion within the "upper room."

"Then in the silence let Him speak to thee,
And in the reverent hush look up and tell
The love that He hath kindled in thine heart,
And seek in that blest Presence thus to dwell."



THE PERFECTING OF THE VISION.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PERFECTING OF THE VISION.

Being, therefore, always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight) ; we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.—2 Cor., v. : 6—8 (R. V.).

If I felt, in writing the last chapter, that I must tread softly, being on holy ground, that feeling grows stronger as I try—in imagination—to draw aside the Veil which hangs between our eyes and the Face of our Lord. “ Now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face : now I know in part; but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been known fully.”

It is wonderful to know that when “ the little golden gate that opens into Paradise” swings back to let us through, we shall find ourselves “ at home with the Lord.” Death, the king of terrors, is not only a conquered foe, it has changed into a welcome friend. St. Paul is not the only man of strong and vigorous character who has eagerly looked forward to the time when he should depart and be with the

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Master whom he loved. And the Light Beyond, which shines through the dark veil, making it luminous, is not simply the hope of Rest which is welcome to a weary soul. Rather, it is the desire to be free to serve. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His Face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." The "souls under the altar" will be clothed in white robes of purity; their desire to wake up after the Likeness of the Most Holy shall be satisfied, for, seeing Him as He is, they shall become like Him.

When I was young I used to delight in reading the poem "Yesterday, To-day and Forever"; but, when I had passed in imagination with the departing soul through the gate of death, had read of the joyful meeting with friends who had gone before, and had come to the description of the first meeting with Christ, I stayed right there. Nothing that was described after that had any interest for me. A few weeks ago I read it again, and wondered how I could ever have found the description of that meeting so satisfying. Now I understand that it is impossible for any man to describe that perfected Vision, or imagine the words of welcome which will

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greet a happy soul—"unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

I have a dear friend—one of God's patient saints whose ears have long been closed to earthly sounds. She is looking forward to the glad time—a time already anticipated in the mysterious land of dreams—when the long silence will be broken by the voice of her loved Master. These are her brave yet hopeful words :

" Alone in my solitude and dread,
I think upon the years that are to be
Of silence—deep as that about the dead—
Which God has bidden to encompass me.
I think of all my hopes, the aims and fears
That I have laid down slowly one by one,
To drink the cup God gave, with bitter tears,
Till my poor heart could say, 'Thy will be done.'
I have grown patient through these years of pain,
And wait the power that shall summon me
Out of the silence into sound again,
When Jesus breaks the chain and sets me free.
And the first sound that enters to my ear
Shall be the voice of Him whom most I love—
There shall He melt the seal and bid me hear
And join with angels in the songs above."

On this side of the Veil we often see a servant of God fall asleep as quietly as a child, and surely we

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really believe our glorious religion enough to rejoice with him, as he springs out into the light.

Why should the names of those who have "passed out from hence within the lifted curtain" be banished from our familiar home conversation, as though our dear ones had committed some crime and were disowned by the other members of the family? Why should they be spoken of pityingly as "poor," when their souls are in the hand of God, and no torment can touch them, "their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High."

And think what it will be like when the message falls on our listening ear :

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee!"

Then our fear of death will vanish, as we see earthly aims and ambitions fading into insignificance before the touch of the Great Reality. Then the certainty that we shall soon be face to face with the Lord of Life, that we shall kneel at our dear Master's feet and see His glad smile of welcome, fills the loyal heart with a wonderful joy —

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"Life comes crowding in upon the soul, and death dwindles down to an episode."

I think we are too apt to speak of death from the point of view of the heathen. We talk sadly of its sorrow—which can not and should not be quite laid aside—and seem to think it would be unfeeling to rejoice with those who have left earthly cares and sorrows behind and have entered into the joy of their Lord. The sorrow will make itself felt, there is little need to press it always close against the heart of a real mourner; but, surely, if we believe that our dear ones are with Christ in the light, we ought to rejoice with them. "Can't we be a little glad for him?" a child said when Jesus stooped to lift a baby brother nearer His Heart of Love. Can't we? My prayer has been that this may be a book of Joy, and I see no reason why Joy should ever wither and fade as though it had a mortal birth. Joy, like Love, is immortal, and Death is powerless to touch it. As we gaze with the eye of faith into the Face of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, death loses its terrors and is seen to be only a short "episode" on the road of life.

It is like passing through a tunnel on a railway journey. The soul shivers in the gloomy chill of

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the darkness, and then it is rejoicing in the burst of sunlight on the other side. Often, very often, the dark gateway between the lower and the higher life is passed unconsciously, as a traveller on a train may be asleep when the tunnel is passed, and the new life bursts suddenly on the enraptured spirit.

The startling message from our Lord and Master, which we find on the last page of our Bible is :

" Surely I come quickly. Amen."

Let us be quite sure that we wish to answer :
" Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

 " Unto you is given
To watch for the coming of His feet,
Who is the glory of our blessed Heaven ;
The work and watching will be very sweet,
Even in an earthly home ;
And in such an hour as you think not
 He will come.

" So I am watching quietly,
 Every day.
Whenever the sun shines brightly,
 I rise and say :
' Surely it is the shining of His face !'

THE PERFECTING OF THE VISION.

And look unto the gates of His high place
Beyond the sea ;
For I know He is coming shortly
To summon me.
And when a shadow falls across the window
Of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door, and ask
If He is come ;
And the angel answers sweetly
In my home :
'Only a few more shadows,
And He will come.' "



THE MASTER IS COME AND CALLETH FOR THEE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MASTER IS COME AND CALLETH FOR THEE.

I thought I stood near a palace fair,
In a hot and noisy street ;
And shining doors were opened wide,
So that all who wished might step inside
To rest in the coolness sweet.

I was hot and tired and sad at heart,
For everything had gone wrong :—
A kind voice said, " The King is your Friend,
He waits within, your cause to defend,
Oh, don't keep Him waiting long !"

"But," I said, "my troubles are all so small,
I'm ashamed to tell the King.
He was brave and strong in torture and loss,
While I shrink hack from the lightest cross—
A coward in everything."

"Yet He calls for you and for you He cares,"
The voice made answer sweet;
"You want to be strong, and the Cross He sent
Is a gift of love, to strengthen you meant,
Lest you should accept defeat."

Then I passed from the noisy glare of the street
And before the King I stood :
His message of love was for none beside,
I could not repeat it if I tried,
And I would not if I could;

THE VISION OF HIS FACE.

For He waits to strengthen you Himself,
To show you what Pain doth mean ;
He calls you to leave the world for a space,
To rest in His Love and to see His Face,—
No stranger may come between.

The Master is come, and calleth for thee !
Are you too busy to care ?
The door is open, He waits within ;
You need His help in the fight with sin,
Your burdens He wants to bear.

He calls you to lean on His Heart of Love,
To rest with Him for a space.
I must step aside, for the King is here !
He says, "It is I !" then do not fear,
Look up and behold His Face !

