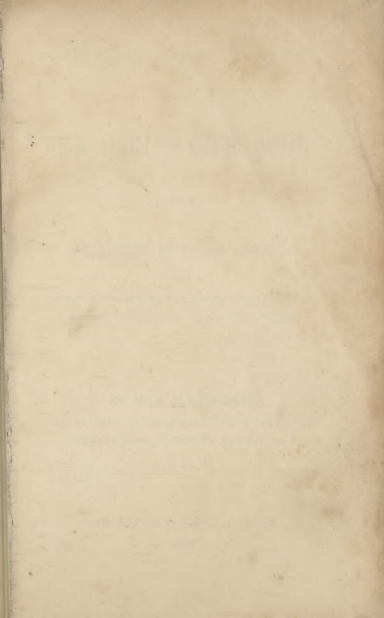
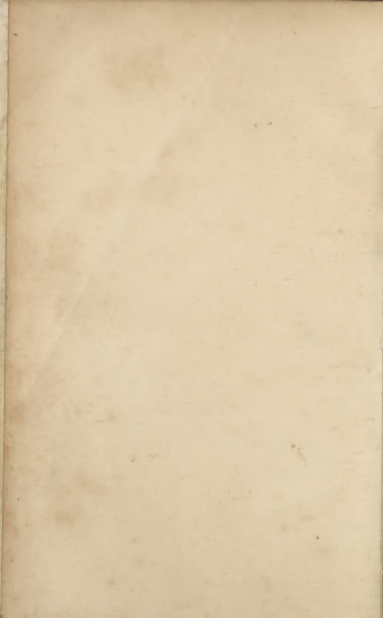




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EARLY CHRISTIAN LESSONS CONTINUED;

OR,

# THE GIRL'S OWN BOOK:

CONSISTING OF

ADDRESSES TO YOUNG PERSONS

WHO HAVE RECENTLY CEASED TO ATTEND  
SABBATH SCHOOLS OR BIBLE CLASSES.

By MRS. MATHESON,

AUTHOR OF "EXPLANATION OF THE PRINCIPAL PARABLES," &c.

"MEDITATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN MOTHER," &c. &c.

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APPENDIX

1. The first of the three principal parts of the work is a general introduction to the subject, in which the author discusses the importance of the study, and the scope and limits of the inquiry.
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3. The third part is a summary of the principal conclusions reached, and a discussion of their significance.
4. The fourth part is a list of the names of the persons who have assisted in the work, and a list of the names of the persons to whom the work is dedicated.
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## INTRODUCTION.

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MY YOUNG FRIEND,

THIS is your own book. I do not simply mean that it is yours, as the gift of a kind friend, or the purchase of your own money. What I mean is, that it is written for you expressly. For many years, I have been more or less engaged—always deeply interested—in the instruction of youth. I know the delight a teacher feels, in watching the regular attendance—the lessons carefully learned, and attentively repeated—the glistening eye, and the intelligent answer—the affectionate smile that welcomes her appearance in her class, and seems to thank her when the exercise is over, as if it would say, “We know you desire our good.” This pleasing interest deepens and strengthens every year, as the little girl, who could only

repeat a single verse, or spell a few words at her teacher's knee (if indeed she did not find herself seated there)—as this little lisping favourite gradually grows into the tall, sprightly figure, that seems to linger between childhood and youth, in dress and manners still a child, though very soon to pass into the name and character of a young woman. And then comes the day, when she makes her last appearance in the school-room, or the parlour of her instructor; the time, when, for one reason or another, she ceases to occupy the seat of a learner, and it is announced in her class, that Ann, or Mary, or Jane, “is not coming any more.” Oh, she little knows the emotions awakened in her teacher's breast by this announcement! Not that any young person thus instructed, can be ignorant, or entirely forgetful, of the affectionate earnestness which so long has won her respectful attention, if not her grateful love. But yet, she cannot imagine the yearning anxiety of one who has so laboriously sown the good seed, to see whether or not it will bear fruit; she sees not the wistful, searching glance, that explores the accustomed sanctuary, to ascertain whether choice and principle will bring those, whom school regulations or close inspection would not in former days have suffered to be absent;

she is not aware of the exquisite pain she may inflict, or the amount of pleasure she can confer, according as her future conduct repays her early training or not.

But the writer of this little book is one, to whom all this descriptive picture is a reality. I have had my share both in the disappointments and the joys here referred to. And, in common with many others whose feelings were similar to my own, I long regretted the extreme difficulty of gratifying this sort of anxious curiosity respecting former pupils, *because they kept almost entirely out of my way*. Their memories, I knew, were stored with Scriptural doctrine and precept, but they needed directions how to apply them. They had been faithfully warned of the evil of sin, but it was now assuming new and bewitching forms, in which, to their inexperienced minds, it was doubly dangerous. Freed from the restraints of childhood, and called in some measure to act for themselves, they were all unconscious how every step they took was forming their character for life. In such circumstances, when certainly a counsellor was more necessary for them than ever before, they dropped all communication with those who would gladly have continued to give them counsel; and passed at once from statedly meet-

ing their teacher, to avoiding her presence altogether.

I am far from supposing that this is always done systematically, or on purpose. But what we think can be done at any time, is very apt to be left undone altogether; there is no fixed time, no special inducement to bring them into contact, and those perhaps who would most value occasional intercourse, are too bashful to visit uninvited the dwelling of their former instructor, or formally to seek an interview with her. If Sabbath-school teachers in general had abundance of leisure through the week, they would naturally continue to seek out, and to watch over those whose interests are so dear to them. But there are few such teachers who have time at their command; and, as the little flock still under their care demand, of course, their first attention, it is in most cases impossible to follow those who individually are dispersed.

To remedy this evil, to form some rallying point, sufficiently attractive to bring these wanderers occasionally under my influence and observation, was the subject of much consideration. At last the plan was formed, of providing materials for useful clothing, which the young people were requested to assist in making; with the promise, that each, in her turn, should

select a poor family, or an individual, to whom she should carry a portion of the articles which their united industry might produce. One evening in the month was devoted to this work of charity. And while the hands were busy, there was some employment for the mind also. At each meeting a question was proposed, which was to be answered at the next. These questions were given alternately by the girls themselves; and, while they were all encouraged to bring a written reply, it became my duty (and a pleasant duty it always was) to give them my answer also.

I detail this little history, in the hope of making my readers feel that this *is* their own book. The following pages are in substance the answers given to questions proposed by young persons like yourselves. When I anticipated their monthly meetings, and while I looked upon the countenances long familiar to me, I tried, above all things, to meet the disposition, the capacity, and the circumstances which I knew to distinguish the various group. My aim was to remind them of truths which they had learned in lessons and catechisms, by presenting these truths to them in an enlarged view, and with a practical application. And, however I might fail in this attempt, it was at least a

satisfaction thus to call their minds into exercise upon what was stored in their memories; while I had the opportunity of giving utterance to feelings of the most affectionate anxiety, that they, receiving the truth in the love of it, might at once secure their own highest happiness, and bring forth "fruit that should abound to the account" of those who had taught them the way of the Lord. Will you, then, in imagination, place yourself at our work-table? or rather, will you think of the instructor you have loved the best, recall the voice and the looks that commanded your deepest attention, and read these simple pages as a message from *her*, receive them as a remembrance of *her*, and keep the volume as a little monitor which she has provided to supply her place?

Consider seriously the important position you occupy. It is no light matter surely, to have been for years the subject of zealous effort and earnest prayer. Whatever were the circumstances which brought you under instruction, it was the providence of God that ordered them all; it was "the love of Christ constraining" them, that moved and sustained the labourers who perseveringly sowed the precious seed; and the Holy Spirit, who taught them the worth of your soul, was thus inviting you to seek his

gracious teaching for yourself. In your childish days, it was not to be expected you should take into account these solemn considerations. As you tripped along with your little bag, you spake as a child, and thought as a child. But now, the case is different. You are able to appreciate motives and causes, which you did not think of before. And far from being entirely done with school, because you have left it, the period is but just commencing, when you are able to make a full improvement of its exercises. Now is a time of most serious responsibility—responsibility which cannot be diminished by any thoughtlessness of yours. You *ought* to think; God has given you a capacity for thinking; and nothing can alter his eternal law, that “of those to whom much is given, much will be required.” You have been taught by “line upon line, precept upon precept,” and fellow-creatures were the instruments employed to teach you; but what they taught you, was “the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and you know the punishment to be inflicted on those who obey not that Gospel. (See 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.) If you should act, so as to disappoint and grieve your Christian friends, remember that of itself is a weighty offence with Him who will say at last, “Inasmuch as ye did

it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." But the things you have learned, are things belonging to your own everlasting peace. Life and death have been set before you, and now you are to make your choice. While your teachers anxiously wait for your decision, there are other eyes upon you;—will you heighten the joy of angels, or gratify the malice of devils? will you cast instruction behind your back, and thus say unto God—"Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways"? or will you not "from this time cry unto him, My Father, be thou the guide of my youth"?

## EARLY CHRISTIAN LESSONS CONTINUED.

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### I.

#### HOW SHOULD THE BIBLE BE REGARDED AND USED?

THE Bible! the Bible! What object can there be, with which you are more familiar than your Bible? Week-day and Sabbath-day, you have carried it to school; and full well do its worn and oft-marked pages testify, how many times you have turned them over in search of particular passages; or sat intent on "getting off" the portion which your teacher had prescribed. Perhaps, too, you can show your Bible, as something which you purchased for yourself, by the payment of those weekly pence which the labour of a child could earn; and which, if singly squandered, could have gained you nothing but toys or sweetmeats. Ah! my young friend, this cheap and early possession of

a Bible, is a blessing to be highly valued. The time was in Britain, when you, as a female, would have been forbidden to read it; and when perhaps your father's income, every year of his life, would have been insufficient to purchase a single copy. But while you should rejoice to live in these happier days, take care lest your long acquaintance with the Scriptures should make you neglect to inquire into their real value and importance. I am happy in being able to say to each of my readers, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." But now that you are children no longer, I should be still more glad to believe, that the question before us had been carefully considered and individually answered by you.

You do not need to be told, that there is a remarkable difference between the Bible and any other book. The word *Bible* simply means book; and this name is given to one book alone, because it is emphatically *the* book, the *only* book of the kind—a book possessed of qualities peculiar to itself. What, then, is its peculiarity? Simply this, that *it was written under the immediate direction of God*. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by

the Holy Ghost.”\* These holy men were directed to write—to make *Scriptures* of what the Holy Ghost moved them to say (for the word scripture means writing); and we are told, that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God.”† You see in one passage it is said, that the holy men were *moved* by the Holy Spirit; and in another, that the Scripture was given by *inspiration* of God—inspiration means the act of *breathing into*. Sometimes the sacred writers heard a voice speaking to them; and sometimes their minds were silently *moved* or breathed into, by that Spirit whom the Saviour compares to the wind.‡ Whatever method was employed, however, we are plainly taught, that the holy men wrote nothing but what the Spirit revealed to them, or directed them to record. Even when they related circumstances which had taken place before their eyes, they told just as much and no more than their Heavenly Instructor saw fit—“not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” If you will read the Bible with attention, you will perceive the truth of what I have just told you. For remember, though one book, it is made up of many writings, it is a collection of

\* 2 Pet. i. 21.      † 2 Tim. iii. 16.      ‡ John iii. 8; see John xx. 22.

Scriptures. The writers of these lived in various and distant periods of time; they were men of very different education, occupation, and disposition; and yet there is not one of them who contradicts another, they perfectly agree in every particular. For instance, Moses died 1451 years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah did not begin to prophesy till nearly 700 years after the death of Moses, and the Apostle John wrote the last of the Scriptures about 96 years after Christ had ascended to glory. David and Solomon were kings, Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit, Luke was a physician, and Peter a fisherman, yet, if you examine the parts written by each of them, you will find their statements exactly the same as to the glorious character of God, the total depravity of man, the necessity of an atonement for sin, and all the other doctrines which you have been taught. Now, how could this entire agreement have taken place, unless One Spirit had dictated the whole? Yes, that old brown Bible on the shelf—torn, it may be, and the binding almost pulled off by the number of little hands through which it has passed—that plain and homely volume contains *the word of God*.

And if you want to know how this Word ought to be regarded, think of Moses at Mount

Sinai, when he "exceedingly feared and quaked;" of Daniel (Dan. x.), who had no strength remaining, nor breath left in him, when he heard the voice of his words; of persecuting Saul, when, trembling and astonished, he fell prostrate on the road to Damascus. Doubtless, there was much of terror, much of sudden surprise and confusion in the feelings of these men, when they found themselves in the immediate presence of the divine glory; but when you sit down in a quiet corner, and open your own Bible, God is as really near to you, as he was to them on these occasions; and the words which are printed on the paper, are as entirely his, as those which were first "written on two tables of stone, written with the finger of God." It is his kindness and condescension, his tender consideration for your timidity and weakness, which permit you to approach him without either "blackness, or darkness, or tempest, or the sound of a trumpet, or the voice of words," loud and terrific as "the sound of many waters." Imagine, if you can, these awful scenes, and contrast with them your situation, so perfectly free from everything to disturb or to alarm; allowed even from infancy to hold in your own hand the whole of what God himself revealed from heaven "at sundry times, and in divers manners;" and

surely you may exclaim, with grateful wonder, "Blessed are my eyes, for they see, and my ears, for they hear those things which many prophets and righteous men have desired to see, and have not seen them, and to hear, and have not heard them." Even Samuel and Timothy were less highly favoured; for though Timothy did possess a great part of the Holy Scriptures, and knew them from a child, they were written on many skins of parchment, not contained in a volume such as you can carry in your pocket. But are you to forget the "great fear which is due unto God's name," because he has thus condescended to speak to you daily, familiarly, and at your mother's fireside? Look again at the instances I have referred to, in which he spoke with all the overwhelming grandeur of his majesty. The splendours they witnessed, had such an effect on the persons whom he addressed, that they seem to have been hardly capable of attending to the will of him that spake, till he removed their fears, and restored their strength. (See Dan. x.; also, Isaiah vi. and Rev. i. 17, 18.) But the strongest proof that can be given of reverence, is, *to believe* and *to obey*; and it is remarkable, that this faith and obedience were rendered, after the first excitement of surprise and terror had passed away.

Certainly, it was while Saul lay trembling on the ground, that he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" but he continued to do whatever the Lord enjoined upon him, to the end of his days; in the dismal dungeon, on the stormy ocean, under the sinking influence of hunger, and in the lonely, silent watchings of the night, in all these depressing circumstances, his obedience was as complete and as devoted, as when he saw "that Just One, and heard the voice of his mouth." You see, then, it was the *authority* of God's word to which they bowed, and not merely the *appearance* of his glory, which constrained them to submission at the moment. Do not say, then, "If I had beheld 'the chariot of the God of Israel' like Ezekiel, or heard 'a voice from the excellent glory' like Peter, James, and John, I would have been as devoutly reverent as they." Remember, Jesus declared, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." And think, too, what wonders he himself performed, while many who saw them, only became more hardened in impenitence and unbelief.

Now, I can imagine you ready to say to me, "I know that the Bible is the word of God, and that I ought to feel in reading it as you

have described; but I find it difficult to keep this in mind; I have repeated many parts of it so often, and so thoughtlessly, that I cannot feel any particular interest in them; and I find my attention apt to wander, even while I am trying to understand what I read." All this may prove to you the truth of one great Bible doctrine, namely, that you have a sinful heart, and that sin has not only impaired the understanding, but produced a habit of inattention to the words of God himself.\* Let it, however, also convince you of another thing I want you to remember, and that is, that when you read the Bible, it should be *with prayer for the teaching* of that same Spirit who inspired the holy men employed in writing it. Even one of their own number has given us many examples of such a prayer. King David, the sweet singer of Israel, was remarkable for his devout attachment to the Divine word; and he says, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." There are many promises also to encourage the hope that such prayers will be answered:—"I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which

\* Matt. xv. 16; Luke xxiv. 25; Ps. lvi. 5; Jer. vi. 10; James i. 22-24.

thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye.”  
 “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.”\* Do not be satisfied, then, to go on reading the Bible as if it were a common book. If you were assured there was a treasure hid in a field, would you be content with poverty, because the treasure was not lying on the very surface? If you were parched with thirst, would you lie down to die, when you were told that a fountain was at hand? And have you no desire to find that in the Bible which is “sweeter than honey, yea, than the honey-comb,” that which “is better than thousands of gold and silver”? Are you willing, in short, to “put salvation from you, and count yourself unworthy of eternal life,” for the Scriptures are the words of eternal life? Think not that the sweetness, the riches, the glory of the Bible, are mere customary phrases, without a real meaning. There are multitudes alive at this moment, young, and active, and healthful like yourself, who can truly say, that they have found all these in the Bible. Yet, they were once as insensible to its charms as you are now. The same heavenly teacher, the Interpreter,†

\* See also Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5.

† Job xxxiii. 23-30;  
 John xvi. 13, 14.

who unfolded them to their view, waits to do the same gracious office for you. But remember, these things are "hid from the wise and prudent." If you are too wise in your own eyes to ask his aid, or if you are so profane as to imagine you can be happy without enjoying what God has seen necessary to provide for your happiness; if for these reasons you do not earnestly seek the influences of the Holy Spirit, then you not only miss the blessedness which others have attained, but you incur the fearful guilt of despising and insulting Him "who speaketh from heaven."—Heb. xii. 25.

But I cannot bear to think that you are so lost to your own best interests, or so regardless of the many entreaties and admonitions you have received. And while I repeat again, that the truths of Scripture will not reach your heart, unless the Spirit of the Lord remove the veil which sin has thrown over it,\* there are also some other directions which you may find useful in connection with an entire dependence on his help. And first, let me recommend the daily reading of the Scriptures at *stated times*. Do not look into them just when you feel inclined; let it not be one of those things which "can be done at any time." You know how frequently

\* 2 Cor. iii. 15-17.

it happens that such things are done at no time. Fix upon the hour and the place which you think will be least liable to interruption; and having so fixed, consider it as your most important engagement, to which every other must give way. You know very well, I would not advise you to any neglect of business or domestic duty; but I cannot imagine any young person so laboriously occupied as not to have time for her daily reading a few verses of her Bible. Should it be but one verse, do not say "it is not worth while;" for even those who have much leisure for reading, find it exceedingly useful to select one verse as their text for the day, a settled point to which their thoughts may turn whenever they are not necessarily engaged with present concerns. I know the case of a pious woman, now in glory, whose labours always commenced at six in the morning; but such was her love to the Word of God, that she habitually rose at four, that she might secure time for its perusal before the cares of the world demanded her attention. And it was known to her own family, that from this early portion she invariably chose one short passage to be her companion through her working hours. She was thus enabled to say with the Psalmist, "Thy

word have I hid in my heart, that I offend not against thee." And it was remarked by one who lived many years under her roof, that she fully exemplified Psalm xxxvii. 30, 31, "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment; the law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide." She realised also the 37th verse of the same Psalm, from which her minister preached her funeral sermon,—“her end” most emphatically “was peace.” The memory in this way becomes almost imperceptibly stored with the language of inspiration. And when you meet with passages which formerly you have repeated as tasks, I trust you will think over them with peculiar interest, as recalling Sabbath-school scenes, and accompanied with some recollection of explanations and questions once addressed to you.

It is not hurriedly reading a chapter or two, or many chapters at once, and then closing the book, which will really improve your acquaintance with it. It is the spirit of thoughtfulness, dwelling upon the meaning and design of the passage, which I would most anxiously desire you to cultivate. At the same time, a *regular reading through the Sacred Volume*, in its natural order and connexion, is highly important. You are familiar with the two great divisions

of it, called the Old and the New Testament. You know, too, that the one was completed before the birth of Christ; while the other was written after he had ended his life on earth, and ascended back again to heaven. It may seem to you unnecessary to mention this, but it is very desirable you should always bear it in mind. To make Christ known, is the grand object of the whole. The Old Testament contains promises and predictions concerning him; and the New Testament is the place where these may be seen fulfilled and explained. It is, therefore, an excellent practice, to read a chapter of each together, or one in the morning and the other in the evening; or if you have very little leisure through the week, at all events, let this be a stated exercise of the Sabbath. You will find the Books of Exodus and Leviticus illustrated by the Epistle to the Hebrews. And while you must admire the wisdom of the Proverbs, and see how exactly they are suited to direct your conduct in common life; you have the same precepts amplified, and connected with the most powerful motives to obedience, in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. In these, there are also frequent allusions to the Old Testament, and many quotations from it. And it is interesting to consider, how those

persons must have felt, who had long possessed the latter, when the various writings of the New Testament, with these quotations and allusions, were first put into their hands.

I have remarked already, that throughout the whole book, God himself is speaking; and I may add, that throughout, he speaks to *you*. But he does this in a variety of ways; sometimes by relating a history of events that took place; sometimes by recording the prayers and praises offered up by those whom his Spirit inspired; and sometimes by presenting the discourses of our Lord himself while on earth, as well as those of his Apostles, and the letters written by them to people of different and distant habitations. The place *where*, and the time *when* events happened, are particularly to be noticed in what are called the historical books. For instance, the Books of the Judges, of Samuel, the Kings, and the Chronicles, detail the history of Israel, while they remained in their own land, down to the time, when for their sins, the most of them were carried prisoners to Babylon. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah represent what happened, partly at Babylon, and partly in the land of Israel, after some of the captives were permitted to return to it. Observe, too, that the Books of the Kings, and those of the

Chronicles, are a history of the *same period*. Some particulars are given in the one history which are not mentioned in the other; and the same remark applies to the four Gospels, as they are called, of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Most of the Prophets distinctly state at the commencement, and at the different divisions of their prophecies, the kings who reigned in Israel and Judah; or, after the captivity, the kings reigning at Babylon, at the time when they were directed to write what they did. It would be a useful exercise to read the portions of the prophetic writings, along with those parts of the history to which they belong, as far as you are thus enabled to distinguish them.\* The Gospel of Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles, were both written for the information of a person called Theophilus. And the Epistles—that is, letters written by the Apostles—describe the characters, as well as generally name the abode, of those whom they addressed. Unless the *character* of those to whom promises are made, or precepts given, be carefully observed, there will be great danger of misunderstanding and misapplying both precepts and promises. This remark applies, not to the Epistles only,

\* See, for example, 2 Kings xviii.—xx.; 2 Chron. xxix.; and Isaiah xxxvi.—xxxix.

but to every passage, whether of a threatening or encouraging nature. I slightly refer to these things, with the view of inducing you to read with attention; to form the habit of observing every particular; and to search for every notice, however short, which may help you to ascertain the *time*, the *place*, the *speaker*, and the *persons spoken to*. Accustom yourself, also, to picture in your own mind, as well as you can, the scene of every event, and the circumstances in which it took place. Especially, the miracles and the sufferings of our blessed Saviour will be found unspeakably more instructive, if you reflect on all the objects that surrounded him, on every minute circumstance in the narrative of what he did and suffered, till you can almost fancy you see the whole. And another thing I would suggest, is, to mark the cases of those who were young like yourself; the peculiar manifestations of the Redeemer's condescending kindness to females; instances of their love to him; and whatever has any resemblance to your own situation, or refers to duties which it belongs to you to discharge.

There is another view of the Bible, in which I wish you to regard it; namely, as the *only standard of right and wrong*. Your Christian friends have taught you to consider many things

as sinful, which are not only practised, but justified and commended by multitudes around you. Your natural inclination is all in favour of doing "as other people do;"—regarding the Bible as a very good book for Sundays, but not at all as having anything to do with the ordinary actions of week-days. And now that you are no longer under the constant influence of Bible teaching, there is the greatest danger of *your* beginning to think and act in a way so easy, so agreeable, and so common as this. I cannot suppose you will deny, that Scripture rules must be attended to, in regard to honesty, sobriety, and chastity. Neither is it likely, that you will hear any one dispute the authority of any one of the Ten Commandments. But many persons habitually repeat them, and teach them to their children, who yet, at one time or another, and in little things perhaps, break them all.

And now is the time for you to examine whether the maxims and opinions of your teachers, or those of worldly neighbours and acquaintances, are most in accordance with the whole word of God. You know, Jesus declared, "He who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." And when he explained the law of the ten commandments, he showed

that it reached to the thoughts and desires of the heart.\* “Abstain from all appearance of evil,” is as much a divine command as that which forbids you to make an image and bow down to it. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” *You* are bound by every precept it contains, and every hour you live should be equally under its control. You are too well informed to misunderstand me here as if I meant to say, that all the directions to offer sacrifices, &c. contained in the books of Moses, were binding on you. If you read with attention, as I have advised you, the Old Testament and the New together, you can be at no loss to know what are the laws which you are to take in the plain, simple meaning of the words, and obey them accordingly. Those commands which are not to pass away, are all confirmed and explained in the New Testament; while those which were intended only for Old Testament times, are shown to have become unnecessary by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. The only difficulty in knowing what duty requires, arises from the unwillingness of our own minds. “Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.” “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

\* Matt. v.

Remember, that by the Bible you must at last be judged. It is a very ancient book, and in our happy country, a very common one; but it addresses *you*, as personally, as individually, as if you alone possessed it among the millions of mankind. Try to realise this truth, bring it home to yourself as you read the sacred pages. While I most anxiously desire that it should be your custom to read them daily, beware of doing it *merely* as a custom. Every time you open them, think with yourself, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." To *me* is the word of this salvation sent—to me, young, and obscure, almost unknown—to me, at this moment, in my own little chamber, or trying to fix my attention on the book before me, amidst the only apartment of the family—to *me*, the most precious blessings, the most exalted privileges here described, are freely offered; I may obtain them at once; and this very hour, in which I read my Bible, can have a connection with that final and joyful sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." On the other hand, if you trifle with the revelation of heavenly mercy, if you refuse to make it the rule of your conduct, consider seriously that it will become the rule of

your condemnation; for He who is the Author of that book will be your Judge at last. You may learn to speak very fluently, in imitation of those who "teach for doctrines the commandments of men, making the commandments of God of none effect by their tradition;"\* "but at that day every mouth shall be stopped," and those who were the most plausible, the most sociable, and agreeable, in making excuses for sin and negligence, will then be found speechless,—for "the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."†

One thing more let me observe, and then I have done. The Bible should be your *guide in self-examination*. It "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" and one purpose for which it is given to you, is, to enable you to discern them yourself. Unless you do this, you may be fatally deceived, like those

\* See Matt. xv. 1-14.

† It is obvious, that these very solemn views of the Divine Word are quite inconsistent with certain profane customs which are too common, and too little condemned. I allude to using the language of Scripture in jest; or, in any form whatever, introducing Bible scenes or characters for amusement; opening the book at random, and applying to individual cases, or trifling circumstances, the first verse that meets the eye, without regard to the true meaning of the passage, &c. I trust you will not only avoid such levity yourself, but decidedly frown upon it in others. To *smile* at it, would make you "a partaker of other men's sins."

who had "a name that they lived, and were dead." For the conduct may be so far in accordance with the Scripture, that "all men may speak well of you," and yet you may be only as "a whited sepulchre, which indeed appears beautiful outwardly, but within it is full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." "God looketh on the heart," and if the motive, the reason, the desire, that produces an action, be not according to his will, that action cannot be pleasing in his sight, or truly excellent in itself. "The first and great commandment, is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart. This is the work of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Be not satisfied, then, with the most blameless character, if it is not formed by *love* to God, and *faith* in Jesus Christ. And do not hesitate thus to try yourself by the Divine Word, because you know you will be "found wanting." It would indeed be discouraging and painful, if this were all you could learn from it. But it also reveals the promise of "a new heart and a right spirit"—an upright, sincere, and holy mind, that will "delight in the law of God, after the inward man." It unfolds a covenant, a solemn engagement which God has made, to "put his laws into the mind, and write them in the heart" of

those who become his people. And while it is truly a wretched and unhappy state, to know that you are disapproved by him, even your own sinful heart condemning you; on the other hand, “in the keeping of his commandments, there is a great reward—great peace have they that love his law.” If you will but “take Christ’s yoke upon you, and learn of him,” you will find that his “commands are not grievous.” You will be able to make “his statutes your song”—a song of overflowing delight when you are merry,\* and a song of joy even in tribulation also.†

\* James v. 13.

† Rom. v. 3.

## II.

HOW CAN THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT BE MOST FULLY OBEYED, BY DAUGHTERS WHO HAVE PASSED THE AGE OF CHILDHOOD?

OF all the Divine commands, this is perhaps the least disputed, and the most generally approved, even by the rebellious race of man. In a well-regulated family, submission to parents is so much a matter of course—the habit of obedience is so strong and so familiar, that the command itself is in danger of being forgot, simply because it is seldom necessary to appeal to it. I trust I am not supposing too much, when I take it for granted, that you, my reader, were early taught, and have been long accustomed, to “do as you are bid.” I have, therefore, no intention of enforcing this duty; I rather wish, in answering the question proposed, to point out the new forms (if I may so speak) which the command assumes, as you pass from childhood to youth. You are now, in some measure, able to take care of yourself; you know what is required to be done at the various hours of the day, and in all circumstances that are of

daily occurrence. It is consequently more than probable, that, except when the case is somewhat out of the ordinary way, your parents find much less frequent occasion than formerly, to use the language of authority, or tell you exactly what to do. Your own sense of propriety begins to supply the place of that constant superintendence and direction, which were necessary for you as a little child. You have come to be the companion, and are treated as the friend of your parents, especially of your mother; and if she has younger children, she feels it quite a relief, that you can be, in some degree, released from restraint, while she has such full employment in training them. If, however, you are thus rarely called to *direct, immediate obedience*, you will not, I am sure, imagine that the fifth commandment has lost anything of its authority over you. On the contrary, you are but just beginning to make it in reality the rule of your conduct. It ought to be a matter of unfeigned gratitude, if you were early and imperceptibly habituated to honour your parents; but it is quite as important, and much more honourable to yourself, that you should continue to do it, voluntarily, freely, and cheerfully, now that you are not absolutely compelled to it. You are capable now of understanding how much is in-

cluded in the command, to "honour thy father and thy mother;" and while obedience is a first and essential part of the honour due to them, you must perceive, that it is a part of it only. What I want, then, is just to assist you in discovering *how much* honour you can give them. And I am the more inclined to do so, because in some particulars I have seen young persons deficient, who, I believe, were so more from want of consideration or advice, than from wilful disregard of the duty.

To honour any one, must surely imply, that your manner toward them be respectful. In your happiest moments, then, when indulged with their most unreserved confidence, never forget that your parents are your superiors. How strange the inconsistency, when a young person shows the utmost civility and modesty to strangers; while she can flatly contradict, or rudely express disapprobation of what is said by a parent. You are endowed with a judgment of your own, and it must be gradually brought into exercise; but the probability is, that your parents know better than you do; and you should never conclude that they are in the wrong, without the plainest evidence. Even, however, when you have the best reason for thinking so, it may be very unseemly for you to express what you

think; at all events, it must not be done in a tone of petulance or disrespect. Remember, too, whatever faults you discover in them, that they had to bear much and long with the forwardness and folly which were "bound up in your heart."

But here I would address myself to one class of readers in particular. Is it your misfortune, my young friend, to have parents who, having no fear of God themselves, present an evil example to their family, and would even lay commands upon you which you cannot obey without committing sin? Your situation is truly distressing; but while you are to obey God rather than men, remember this must be done *in strict accordance with the spirit of the fifth commandment*. For a child to find fault with a parent, or refuse compliance with his wishes, is a thing so critical, so difficult to be done without impropriety, that it requires the utmost prudence, humility, and diffidence, and should only be ventured on after the most mature consideration and earnest prayer for Divine direction. Perhaps the best way of doing it is, to mention seriously what the Bible says of the matter in dispute, whatever it may be, and to say as few of your own words as possible. Cases may occur, in which you must decide and

answer at the moment; but if it can be avoided, never enter into any discussion of this kind before your younger sisters or brothers, still less, in the presence of strangers. And, especially, let me caution you against repeating the faults of a parent, to any one whatever. If you are really actuated by the fear of God, the sight of a parent's sin will be so exceedingly painful, that you will hide it from your own eyes, if it be by any means practicable; but, to speak of it, to unfold it to the knowledge of others, should be regarded as an exposure the most indecent and indelicate. Whatever be a parent's character, he is your parent still,\* and as such, you should honour him. Should he actually have forfeited all claim to the respect of others, *you* must respect the command of a Father in heaven. Indeed, if you are placed in such circumstances as I have supposed, you are peculiarly called to treat your parents with tenderness, and to address them with deference. It should be your aim to convince them, that it is really a sense of duty which compels you to act as you do; and if you dare not gratify all their wishes, you should be doubly anxious to oblige and please them in everything lawful. Let them see that you study their pleasure and their convenience;

\* See Chap. VII.

strive to surprise them, by anticipating their desires. Always remember, too, that they have many perplexities and trials of temper which you never experienced; and perhaps their youth was not blessed with those advantages of religious instruction which have favoured yours. Take care that at least they reap the benefit of that which you have received, by your "showing piety at home"\* in all its loveliest fruits. And, if you know that they cherish erroneous sentiments, or neglect important duties, do not be rash or hasty in attempting to set them right; rather take time for consideration, watch a favourable moment when you may gain permission to read some portion of Scripture, or some striking tract, embodying the truths which you are desirous to set before them. A child who sincerely, watchfully, and constantly honours her parents, with a real desire for their good, will generally acquire a powerful influence over them; and the caresses and persuasions of such a child, have often prevailed, to the giving up of sinful practices, or to produce an attendance on the means of grace, where all other arguments and motives had failed.

I trust, however, there are many of my dear young readers who cannot say, "these last re-

\* 1 Tim. v. 4.

marks are addressed to me." And, turning again to a general view of the question proposed, let me remind you, that to honour your parents, your submission to their will must be *prompt and cheerful*. If you know what will please them, this should have the same influence on your conduct as if they expressed it in words. And obedience, whether to wishes or to commands, is not worthy of the name, if it be rendered "grudgingly, or of necessity, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." There is little merit in such cheerfulness, when you are only required to do what is agreeable to yourself. But to perform with alacrity an unpleasant task; to wear a smile when prevented going out with a favourite companion; to bear it meekly and patiently, if even you are unreasonably blamed—this is a double excellence. It is not only giving "honour to whom honour is due," but it is "having rule over your own spirit," which Solomon declares to be a greater achievement than the "taking of a city." To pout and grumble, and go sullenly about the house, is most cruelly to irritate a parent's mind, already harassed by multiplied toils and cares. But a dutiful daughter will employ all her ingenuity to soothe her mother's spirits, chase the clouds from her brow, and help her to obviate everything that

could possibly cast a gloom over her father's evening hours.

And here I must say, that the duty you owe to your brothers and sisters is essentially connected with honouring your parents. The comfort of the whole family depends much on the management of the younger part of it. And in this, you can do a great deal besides nursing the baby, or helping to put the children to bed. An elder sister, of all people, should "follow the things that make for peace." And being young and light-hearted, free from the oppressive burden of languor and anxiety, and regarded rather as a companion than a superior, she can often be more successful as a peace-maker, than even the master and father himself. Observe what the children are most apt to quarrel about, and make it matter of consideration how you can alter or remove it. With brothers particularly, a little kindness and contrivance might be of essential service. How often is there a lively, clever, affectionate boy, who, simply because he has nothing to do, is looked upon as the disturber and the plague of an otherwise comfortable fireside! Perhaps you are yourself the first to suffer interruption and vexation, from his entangling your thread, throwing candle-grease on your work, or making such

racket and confusion that nothing can be done. If you scold and give way to pettish complaints, you will not only add to your own discomfort, but grieve the hearts of your parents, who love both you and your brother; and, by and by, he will learn to think of home as the place where he is always crossed and never welcome. In this way, many a youth has had his temper soured, and his best affections alienated; while his mother's heart has been broken, by seeing him become altogether reckless and dissipated. But try a different course. See if you cannot invent some amusement for his evenings. Enter into his feelings, remember how *you* felt at his age; and if he finds that you try to make him happy, he will most likely cease to annoy you. Cannot you coax him to learn his lessons for school, by helping him in his difficulties; showing him, for instance, how many words in a column of spelling have the same termination; explaining to him what is meant by borrowing and carrying in his sums; begging him to repeat to you what he has to commit to memory, till you can say it yourself? There are many such plans which will occur to you, if you make the attempt. Could you not afford a penny a-week, or threepence a-month, for some entertaining magazine which he would like to read? or if you

cannot give him a taste for reading, a few common tools would be easily procured, or materials for book-binding or drawing or kite-making—no matter what, provided it were agreeable employment, without mischief. But sister's good-tempered smile is the most essential part of all. And then, how much squabbling and peevishness might be prevented, if you could teach the children a few simple hymns or moral songs, which they might sing to one or two lively tunes; and whenever you saw a cloud gathering, the first note of a favourite melody would generally bring the smiles and dimples back. But an example on your part, of dutiful obedience, cheerful industry, and uniform contentment, will of itself have a powerful influence on the younger ones. The good you may do in this way is incalculable. For while you save much trouble to your father and mother, you are helping materially to form the character and fix the habits of perhaps a numerous household. Especially is this important in regard to religious duties. For it too often happens, if the elder branches of a family are negligent in these, that the children learn to regard them as an irksome restraint, imposed on them only for the sake of convenience, and to keep them out of the way. But let them see, that you consider

such duties a privilege—that you conscientiously hallow the Sabbath—and that having ceased to use the Bible as a school-book, you statedly read it of your own accord; let them see these things, and it will do more to attach them to such observances, than the most weighty arguments of ministers or parents.

I am writing, doubtless, for some who are earning their own livelihood, and this, to a dutiful child, must be a great satisfaction; but I have been often grieved to observe, that this circumstance, in itself desirable, has really become a matter of regret, from its being supposed to loosen the bonds of obligation to the duty we are considering. I have heard even parents themselves remark, “Oh, such an one must have her own way; *we* cannot interfere with her; she is able to maintain herself, and therefore we let her do as she likes.” And many daughters seem to think and reason in the same way. Would that I could be assured that there were no such selfish, heartless reader of these pages. There is one inspired commentary on the fifth commandment,\* which seems especially to condemn such an ungenerous, ungrateful principle. But even untaught, a truly affectionate

\* Mark vii. 9-12; see also 1 Tim. v. 4, where the Apostle is manifestly referring to the duty of children supporting their parents.

child will come to quite an opposite conclusion. She will say to herself, "I should not have been able to work for myself, if my parents had not taken care to have me taught some useful occupation. I can never repay them the expense they have incurred, or recompense them for the fatigue, and privation, and anxiety they have endured in my infancy and childhood. But the smallest expression of my love is pleasing to them; I will strive to make some little addition to their comforts; or, if this is beyond my power, I will, at least, by endeavouring in all things to meet their wishes, to give them all the pleasure I can. My mother has laboured beyond her strength, and is almost sinking now under manifold and incessant toils; when my own work is done, if I can only lessen the heap of undarned stockings, or save an hour from my morning sleep, to assist her in washing and cleaning; if I can enable her to go sooner to bed at night, or see her enjoy a little interval of quiet leisure in an afternoon, oh how glad I shall be!" And glad, my young friend, would *she* be also—glad of the welcome and unwonted repose, but far more so, to be indebted for it to your kind and dutiful attention. The time of sickness especially will call forth your tenderness; and whether in such a peculiar emergency, or in the daily and regu-

lar course of domestic affairs, let this be your principle of action,—“ My parents have had to strain every nerve for the education and comfortable support of the family; my mother, in particular, when we were all young, suffered many privations from the total absence of help in household duties, as well as the want of various little comforts, which, though not expensive, are unattainable without the aid of some one to prepare and administer them. *My rule shall be, to promote the ease and comfort of both father and mother to the utmost of my power; and to consider, that all the lawful indulgence I can possibly procure for them, is no more than a fair and just compensation for their former toils and efforts.*” Solomon declares, that “ if a man were to give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned.” And surely filial love is not to cease because a child has ceased to be dependent on a parent for maintenance. It is true, there are parents so overwhelmed with difficulties, so incessantly engaged in labour, that they scarcely seem to express any tender interest in their grown-up children; but, in such cases, the latter are generally in fault. Let it be your ambition to awaken all that latent tenderness, and so “ to love, honour, and cherish your father and

mother," that they may be convinced you desire and solicit their smile as your best reward and highest earthly happiness.

You may have agreeable, lively companions, whose company is more entertaining than what you have at home. And I would not say a word to lessen the sweetness of youthful friendships, provided they are neither improper in themselves, nor attended with the neglect of your own appropriate duties. But beware how you prefer the society, or the apparent kindness of any one whatever, to that of your parents. You may rest assured, unless your case presents some sad peculiarity, that they are your best friends. Think how they nursed you in infancy, soothed your childish troubles, and how much comfort there is in having a father's house to go to, even though you may be able to live by your industry. At all events, if there be a companion with whom you wish to associate, unknown to your parents; if plans are laid, and conversation is carried on, which you are anxious to conceal from them, conclude at once that there is something wrong. However great your fancied pleasure, you are on most dangerous ground, when you wish for such concealment. Think again; try to realise how it would be, were these your natural protectors and earliest

friends removed by death. And looking at such a prospect, while you esteem it a great mercy that God has spared one or both of them so long, determine so to act as will secure the largest measure of enjoyment, both to them and to yourself, while He may be pleased to continue lives so entirely uncertain.

You must not, however, confine the meaning of these remarks to your own parents. A step-mother, in particular, ought to be treated with especial deference and kindness. It is impossible she can have precisely the same love for you as if you had been her own: strive, then, by every means, to *gain* that affection which you cannot claim as your right. Remember she has undertaken a most arduous task, but if you can make her love you, the difficulty is half removed. And far from indulging the mean and wretched spirit of jealousy, as if she were an intruder in the family, consider it was the hand of God which removed the parent who is gone; and that having done so, His command is now equally binding upon you with regard to her who is to fill up, as far as possible, the breach which He had made.

And there is yet another branch of the honour due to parents, which I particularly desire to set before you; namely, that you honour *their*

parents, if they are alive, and within your reach. I call this a branch of your duty to your own father and mother, because, if they have been dutiful themselves, they must naturally desire to see you maintain and perpetuate their own feelings of respect and veneration for these aged relatives. It is impossible you can truly honour the former, without extending your regard to the latter. And they have, if possible, the stronger claim upon your sympathy and tenderness. The days have come, and the years have actually arrived, in which they say that "they have no pleasure in them." This inspired description applies to the manifold pains and infirmities which age has brought upon them. Yet it does not say, that they are incapable of pleasure, or that the attempt to please them would be hopeless. It rather sets forth their depressing situation, that, after the example of Him who "knoweth their frame," you may "pity them." They have felt many sorrows, endured many fatigues, and are now perhaps reduced to the helplessness of second childhood. And though the wrinkles and the gravity of age may seem to you much less engaging than the dimples and the sprightliness of infancy, they ought to be treated with all that tender care and watchful fondness, which you naturally bestow on the

infant that clings to you as its nurse. There are, however, some points of difference between the feebleness of infancy and that of age. Tenderness for old persons is to be mingled with respect: "rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man."\* Their feelings are easily wounded; and, unlike those who are just entering upon life, there is no reason to be afraid of spoiling them by indulgence. The only rule to be observed with them is, to relieve them as much as possible from pain of every kind; and to procure them all the enjoyment that can be conferred, during the short space they have to remain on earth. Be willing to listen to their complaints; exert all your ingenuity, in contrivances to give them ease; sit down by them when you can, and let them not feel neglected or forsaken; above all, take care that you render no service to them in such a manner that they shall think it is rendered grudgingly. Consider, that, very likely, they tended you in your earliest days; and that if you live, you will become as infirm, as insensible to youthful pleasures, as much disfigured and disabled as they are. A young girl, from her comparative leisure, and from being acquainted with many little affairs of domestic duty un-

\* See Lev. xix. 32.

known to the other sex, has it probably more in her power to add to the comforts of the aged than any one else. And even their eternal interests you may be enabled greatly to promote. While you read to them, you are improving yourself; especially if their "hoary head is found in the way of righteousness," their comments and counsels may be invaluable to you, remembered with deep interest in many future days. Or if, by persuasion and kind assistance, you can lead them to the "place where prayer is wont to be made," you may have the satisfaction of thinking, when they are gone, that you helped them to prepare for "everlasting habitations." Perhaps, in the place of their childhood, there were no schools or classes for the religious instruction of the young. They may even be prejudiced against them—as old people commonly are, against new schemes and modern inventions. But would it not give you pleasure, to hear them say, "I know nothing myself about these schools; only, my grandchild went to one of them, and I am sure she learned nothing but good—she is quite a treasure to me"?

In closing, let me remind you, that this is the only commandment of the ten, which has a promise appended to it. In the keeping of all

God's "commandments, there is a great reward;" but the Divine Being has been pleased to give this special encouragement to dutiful children. Many remarkable instances of their temporal prosperity, have proved that He is faithful to his own word.\* Perhaps in no case is it oftener verified, that "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." The habit of honouring parents not only gains a good character; it also prepares a young person for discharging all other relative duties with credit and propriety. But, my dear young friend, seek to honour your "Father who is in heaven." Let the tender love of your earthly parents lead you to think with love and confidence of Him, for He has condescended to adopt not only the name, but the feelings of a parent, in order to show you his real character. Commit the following passages to memory, and accustom yourself to think of them, when you see your mother fondling her babe, or soothing the sorrows and wiping away the tears which could find no relief but in her bosom; when your father uses chastisement, yet evidently suffers most himself from its infliction; or when, with ready and indulgent hand, they distribute the wholesome food which childish appetite must

\* See Jer. xxxv.

crave:—Is. xlix. 15, 16; lxvi. 13; Ps. ciii. 13; Prov. iii. 11, 12; Matt. vii. 9–11.

You do not need me to tell you, that if you would enjoy these expressions of divine love, and become a child of God, it must be through the mediation of his beloved Son—by coming unto him, who perfectly obeyed his Father's will, while he made reconciliation for the rebellious and disobedient. If you thus find peace with God, you will "esteem all his commandments, concerning all things, to be right." And while you cheerfully attend to the duties of every domestic relation, you can look to Christ as himself your elder brother; rejoicing also in the assurance, that "when your father and your mother forsake you, the Lord will take you up." Death will invade the happiest dwelling, and divide the most united family. But

"Your Heavenly Father cannot die,  
The eternal Friend for ever lives."

The place that now knows your honoured parents, will soon know them no more, and you may cease to have a home. But blessed still are the disciples of Christ; for he has assured them, "In my Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you." "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

## III.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SINFUL OR WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS? AND WHY ARE THEY TO BE AVOIDED?

“SINFUL pleasures, worldly amusements,” are expressions quite familiar to you. You have often been urged to abstain from them; various expedients have been used to prevent your going to scenes of temptation; and you are perfectly aware, that such places are avoided by all truly pious persons. This of itself might seem a sufficient reason for your refusing to join with those who frequent them. But I am desirous to make you acquainted with the real nature of the pleasures in question, as well as with those considerations which have hitherto made us so anxious to withdraw you from them. We love to see you cheerful, and should be very sorry to cast a gloom over youthful days. We only wish to counsel you against things which we know will be “bitterness in the end.”

I shall select those amusements which are the most common, and tell you, as briefly as I can, what I think of each. There are plays, dancing, races, cards, and novels.

In regard to the first, I will tell you a remark I once heard made by a young man who lived in Drury Lane, where one of the great London theatres is situated. From his father's house he could see the people who flocked to the theatre, and those who loitered about the door; and he said, "this was quite enough to convince him that the theatre was a bad place, for there was always an assemblage of the worst characters in London." Now, mind this was said by one who had no sense of religion himself, and who had never been the subject of either instruction or restraint, on religious grounds. Far be it from me to say, that all who go are immoral in their conduct; but it does appear very strange, that respectable persons should, for the sake of entertainment, bring themselves into contact with those whom they would by no means associate with on any other occasion. But, suppose you were fairly entered within the walls, seated among the better portion of the audience, and surrounded by such company as would forbid the near approach of anything offensive, what would you see and hear? Scenes would be brought before you, which no decent woman could witness without a blush, if they were *really* presented in common life. Swearing, and taking God's name in vain, are attributed

to characters which are nevertheless represented as most amiable and fascinating. Falsehood is exemplified in such forms as to be irresistibly laughable, or so varnished over as to seem an essential part of polite manners. Disobedience to parents and masters, is made to appear particularly clever, when managed successfully. And so with many other sins, which you would think it very wrong to commit; but which, on the stage, you would deem exceedingly amusing and interesting. Do not say, "there can be no harm in laughing at a mere representation—the actors are not really committing dishonesty or falsehood." This is delusive reasoning. The Bible tells you, that "fools make a mock at sin;" but no one, who has any fear of God, could admire even an imaginary view of that "abominable thing which he hates." "His eyes are in every place;" the theatre is not beyond the reach of his observation; and what can be more insulting to Him, than to "make believe" crimes which He has forbidden, for the diversion of those who are already under the sentence of his broken law? Besides, the transition from looking on sin with complacency, to the *real* acting of the scene that diverted you, is so easy as to be almost imperceptible. When a young woman has been a few times to the play, she

begins to tolerate, if not to encourage language and behaviour from those of the other sex which before would have shocked and alarmed her. She had been accustomed to think her parents or her mistress perfectly reasonable in the rules they expected her to observe; but she has now learned to consider older and graver people unnecessarily strict. And having got a taste for amusement, she will risk her own character and their displeasure, and pride herself on the ingenuity she can exercise to elude their vigilance. If you are acquainted with any young persons who attend the theatre, I am persuaded you have seen my remarks confirmed in their conduct. May you never *feel* their truth in your own sad experience.

I believe I mentioned dancing next. Now, dancing, simply considered in itself, is a harmless exercise, and quite as pretty as any other sport for little children. But you are not children now, and you would blush to be seen at childish games; you would not choose to jump over chairs, or play at puss in the corner, before visitors. I should see, however, no harm at all in your having a good run in the fields *with one another*, provided you could be safe from observation. But if you would be ashamed to have half-a-dozen young men looking at you, while

you skipped and ran round the field, does it at all alter the case to dance in a close room, not merely with such spectators, but they actually joining in the nimble movements? It does alter the case, certainly, but only for the worse. It destroys that modesty which is your greatest ornament; and instead of being taught, that propriety requires a quiet and staid behaviour in such company, you would learn that it was one of the principal purposes of the evening, *to attract attention*; and, strange to say, to do so by exhibiting yourself in a variety of figures and attitudes, which, at another time, would be thought a proof of disordered intellect. This cannot be done even once, without injuring the delicacy of the mind; but the evil consequences extend farther than this. When a young person begins to seek for admiration in a ball-room, she comes to consider graceful manners, a light step, and a handsome dress, as the most desirable attainments; while the character of an honest, industrious, and orderly girl, are regarded as something quite vulgar, and unworthy of her ambition. You can hardly believe it possible, that any persuasion could make you think in this way. But, oh! if you knew the mischief that has thus been accomplished—the thousands that have been ruined—the crimes that have

been committed, when the spirits were excited by dancing, and by the refreshments usual on such occasions; if I could but paint the years of unavailing regret, entailed on many a broken heart, at such a season of illusion and infatuation, I am sure you would avoid these scenes of gaiety, as a place where the victims of most cruel misery were enticed and decorated only for their destruction.

With regard to races, I shall say but little; as the Religious Tract Society have published a small tract respecting them, containing all that I should wish to say about them. It is written in a very interesting manner; and if you reside in a neighbourhood where such an amusement is practised, I would recommend you to get a copy for yourself. It is called "A Peep at the Races."

The reading of novels, is liable to most of the objections urged against attending the theatre. It is, in fact, more injurious, because it may be pursued with less expense, and at all seasons. Even the sacred hours of the Sabbath are, by many, devoted to these pernicious books; while a habitual poring over them, alone perhaps, and in the stillness of the night, gives them a double influence on the mind. Their fictitious representations become familiar to the memory and

to the thoughts; and to a person thus living, as it were, in a world of fancy, the business of common life becomes burdensome and insipid; it is slothfully performed, if not altogether neglected. But especially is this true of religious duties, which are so foreign to the individual's favourite indulgence, that if she attends to them at all, it must be with the disgusting consciousness that she is acting a hypocritical part. That surely cannot be a safe or proper recreation, which renders the heart discontented with daily, unnumbered mercies, and unfits an immortal being for taking any interest in the realities of eternity.

As to card-playing, it also has been treated by more able pens than mine. Yet, "as my beloved children, I warn you;" and if I cannot unfold all its evils, I think I can say enough to convince you that they are not small. It is certainly a most idle and childish way of spending time; yet those who have acquired a taste for it in their youth, become more and more attached to it as they advance in years, so that it is no uncommon thing to see aged people eagerly engaged in it. A winter evening becomes insupportably tedious without this amusement; and as it cannot be enjoyed alone, the snug fireside loses all its attractions, unless

graced with company and cards. Where the habit has become so strong as this, it generally makes people selfish, regardless of the feelings and the comfort of others, if they interfere with their favourite indulgence. You would shudder at the bare possibility of considering attendance at your mother's sick-bed a wearisome task, or grudging her the assistance of your needle, when her table was covered with unmended clothing; if you would not become thus undutiful, then "touch not, handle not" the ensnaring cards. It is universally allowed, that they awaken the worst passions, even while they are affording amusement; envy, and vexation, and malicious pleasure in another's loss, by their continual recurrence, do much to sour the temper, and to change the countenance once beaming with good-humoured contentment, to an aspect of gloomy, anxious dissatisfaction. And as it must appear quite incongruous to talk on any rational or serious subject, while the hands are so engaged, the game is usually accompanied by conversation the most frivolous, if not poisoning and corrupt.

But there is another and a dreadful evil, connected with all games of chance. You are ready to guess that I allude to gambling—the giving or receiving of money, according as an indivi-

dual wins or loses the game. I will not dwell on the sinfulness of squandering money bestowed by a gracious Providence for useful purposes; nor on the strong temptation to use deception, in the hope of retrieving losses, or to act unfairly, to the disadvantage of the honest and unsuspecting. I will only say, do not think it impossible, that a few young people playing together for nothing but diversion, are in danger of becoming gamblers. Such was once the thought of many, who are now enduring all the horrors of poverty, and disgrace, and vicious character, from no other cause than gambling. Like the habit of intoxication, the desire for its indulgence becomes so insatiable, the infatuated hope of success so strong, that no consideration whatever, not even the prospect of starvation and ruin, will forbid its gratification.

But be it so, that you played and should always continue to play for nothing, What is it that affords you pleasure? It is the alternate hope and fear, the perfect uncertainty, the *chance* of winning or losing, that makes it so delightful. But what is chance? Can you tell me the meaning of the word? or, taking it as it is generally used, can you tell me any one thing that really does happen by chance? Undoubtedly, not the falling of a sparrow, or the drop-

ping of a hair from your head; for these, as you know, are under the superintendence of our Father who is in heaven. We also read in Scripture, of the "stormy wind fulfilling his word." Certainly, then, the smallest particle of dust or of the "chaff which the wind carrieth away," is moved in obedience to the Divine will, equally with the majestic ship or the lofty cedar. And, however far it may be from the thoughts of those who throw the dice or shuffle the cards, they are *making an appeal to the Almighty*—they are referring the result to Him who holds their own life and death in his hands. How shocking it would seem, to mention this at the moment of playing! how profane would it be thought to *pray* for the winning of some trifling bet!—and profane and shocking in the extreme it would be. But does not this just prove the utter impropriety of all such engagements? It has often been remarked, that that employment cannot be a proper one, on which you cannot ask God's blessing. And if you apply this simple rule, you can be at no loss for an answer to the question, "What do we mean by sinful or worldly amusements?"

Most of you, I believe, will admit the truth of what I have been saying; but still, you may think that there is a possibility of being too strict;

that, situated as you are, there is little fear of becoming habitually gay, and therefore, there can be no danger in taking pleasure, when occasionally it is within your reach. There are many elderly persons, too, who will be ready to frame excuses for you. Says one, "The players come to this town but once or twice a-year—these girls have been very industrious—let them for once go to the play; it is not a very good place certainly, but, at all events, they cannot go soon again." Perhaps not; but that one evening may be quite sufficient to leave a stain on the virtuous purity of a youthful mind, which can never be removed. The races, too, occur but once in a year. And as for dancing, another sober and respectable neighbour gives her opinion, that it is highly necessary for young people to be diligent in their business, and early and regular in their hours. "But just at Christmas time, what harm can there be, in letting them have a dance? they will have plenty of time to get sobered before Christmas comes round again." This kind of reasoning is so common, and so plausible, that it is apt to be received without dispute. But if it is repeated every Christmas, and every race-week, it cannot be said that you are venturing only once. Besides, the company to be met with in a dancing-room,

or on a race-ground, do not stay there all the year round, any more than yourselves. And, amidst the unrestrained hilarity of the one place, and the lounging and sauntering of the other, acquaintanceships are quickly formed, whose influence extends far beyond the precincts of either. The intervening year that is talked of, as effectually to cure all the evils of occasional gaiety, is only giving this influence time to work, by affording other opportunities of enjoying this new companionship; and when the next season of allowed temptation arrives, is it likely you would keep your resolution to "go no more," or separate yourselves at *that* time from the chosen associates of every spare hour for months before? Ah! my dear girls, there is many a heart-broken wife, many a forlorn and ruined female, who could tell you that the tyrannical husband, or the treacherous destroyer of her peace, was first known to her as the gay and fascinating partner of an evening's dancing.

But, whether such effects are produced by one compliance with worldly customs, so speciously pleaded for, or not—of this I am quite sure, that in going to any of those places I have mentioned, it would be with a full conviction that you were acting contrary to the wishes and the advice of your teacher and your minister.

Should either of them cross your path, you would meet their friendly salutation with the downcast look of conscious shame. This same consciousness would make you continue to avoid them; and even when the Sabbath returned, there would be a reluctance to appear in your accustomed place of worship,—knowing, and fancying that others might know, where you had been during the week. I am persuaded there are many, once instructed as you have been, who have entirely forsaken the house of God; and who could trace their first departure from its services, to feelings such as I have described. Take it as my sincere and deliberate opinion, that *to venture once on this forbidden ground, is to break the tie that now binds you to Sabbath institutions, and to alienate you in a greater, or less degree from those who have shown themselves your best friends, and whom you have hitherto regarded in that light.* Oh, will you not pause, before you take such a step? Will you not consider it a serious thing, to declare yourself “of the world”—to give a manifest proof, that you desire not to be found among the people of God? Think not that that step can be easily retraced; be assured, it is only the commencement of forsaking altogether the path of safety and of peace. And I do

most earnestly entreat you, if invited or enticed to mingle with the giddy crowd, first to sit down alone in the presence of God, and say to yourself, "*Now I am asked to do something which will affect my character, and my prospects for time and eternity.*" And if you feel that it is difficult to resist the temptation—if you are almost allured by the dazzling pleasures that are offered, oh then, as in circumstances of imminent danger, will you not "from this time cry unto God, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth"?

It may, however, be the case, that some are reading these lines who have already overstepped the boundary I am so anxious to erect. To such, let me say, that it is not too late to return. You could tell much better than I can, the obstacles that stand in the way. But remember, they increase and multiply every hour that you continue in your present position. Nothing but a vigorous and determined effort can disentangle you from them. Nothing but "total abstinence" will suffice to break the evil habits you have formed, or are forming. Especially, if novels have ensnared you, hide them from your sight, venture not to take one in your hand. For they have not only induced you to lay your Bible on the shelf, and thus

deprived you of that by which alone you could cleanse your way (see Ps. cxix. 9); they also maintain and stimulate that craving appetite for other amusements, which you find so irresistible. Listen not to the suggestions of pride and shame, which would forbid you to appear again, where you might be admonished by the faithful instructors of your childhood. If they know of your faults, be assured they regard you "not with anger but with sorrow." And gladly would they aid you in breaking those bonds, which, if not broken immediately, will bind you to be "led captive by the Devil at his will." Above all, look unto him who was manifested for "this very purpose, that he might destroy the works of the Devil." And if you did but "taste and see that the Lord is good,"—if once you knew the "gladness" which He puts into the heart that loves him,\* you would need no farther argument to withdraw you from foolish and destructive pleasures. "The pleasures of sin are but for a moment," but at "God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

\* Ps. iv. 6, 7. Read, also, and carefully consider, Ps. xxxii. 11; xcvi. 11; 1 Timothy, v. 6.

## IV.

CAN EVERY ONE BE USEFUL IN THE WORLD?  
—AND WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS IN  
WHICH *WE* CAN BE USEFUL?

THE first part of this question may be very easily answered. God has made nothing in vain. And though, at first, the appointment of incessant labour was made in consequence of sin, yet the wants and sorrows which sin has introduced are greatly alleviated by the *usefulness of human beings to each other*. It may be safely affirmed, that no rational being, arrived at your age, has any right to say, “I cannot possibly be useful.” You are exactly in those circumstances which your Maker has seen fit to appoint for you; and if you fulfil the duties which He also himself enjoins upon you, you are useful. A dutiful daughter, an affectionate sister, a faithful servant, is most useful in the world. And even should you be so forlorn as to sustain none of these relations, yet *you have something to do*. “Yes,” perhaps some one is ready to say, “truly I have enough to do. I am working from morning to night. And nobody ever thanks me, or seems to value my

labour. But I have no choice; I must do it whether I like it or not." Services, thus rendered, may be useful, certainly; but if you disregard the Apostolic injunction, to do your work with "good-will," the usefulness of your services can afford you no satisfaction. You cannot think how it would lighten your labour, and cheer your spirits, if you would learn to regard your daily employments, as directed by Him who rules over all—as a part of the arrangements which his kind providence has made for the comfort and happiness of society. Should your toil be without remuneration, or your station be of the most menial order, still, if you are conscientiously diligent, you are so far fulfilling the designs of infinite wisdom—you are truly useful. And unless there be this cheerful, honourable attainment of usefulness at home, this willing attendance upon duties, that *must* be performed whether you are willing or not,—I could have no pleasure in seeing you most strenuously active abroad. I know not a more contemptible character, than an individual, whether old or young, who either neglects or grumbles at her own proper business; while she is eager to be engaged in schemes which may be called useful, but which are not of indispensable, paramount obligation upon *her*.

To such a one I have nothing to say, except that she plainly shows she has reaped no benefit whatever, from the disinterested efforts of those teachers who laboured so long to be useful to herself. But the young person who is truly, willingly useful in her appropriate sphere, will not be anxious to know with how *little* exertion she may secure the consciousness of being useful; her question will be, How much *good* can I do? how can I gain a larger share in the satisfaction of real utility? what are the methods most attainable in my particular circumstances?

To such an inquirer as this, I would say, first of all, learn to redeem *time*. It is very unlikely that I am writing for any one whose time is entirely at her own command. It has been already supposed, that each reader "has something to do." And it may happen, that some are filling up every moment with necessary duties, so that it is really impossible they can do anything more. Those, especially, whose lot is servitude, must conscientiously feel, that their time belongs to their employers. Let such be studious of the Apostolic direction, "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;"\* and rejoice, that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted,

\* See Col. iii. 22-25.

according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Let them consider, too, that Christian servants, by "showing all good fidelity, may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour."\* Striking thought! the doctrine of the Saviour is beautiful—it is a complete specimen of what infinite wisdom and love can produce; and yet a maid-servant, young and inexperienced, occupying perhaps the lowest place, is directed how she may *adorn* that doctrine. You cannot, to be sure, add anything to its own beauty and excellence; but you can render it more beautiful in the eyes of those around you, by showing its blessed effects in your good temper, your industry, and your obedience. You may live with those who are blind to the beauty of the Gospel, but they can see and admire the beauty of an orderly, obliging, trustworthy servant; and they will be led to inquire, what that doctrine is, which has formed such a character. I am well acquainted with a respectable family, who were all induced to attend where Christ was preached, by a desire to hear the beloved minister of a valuable domestic who lived with them. They not only continued to hear him preach, but he visited several of them on their dying beds; and it is

\* See Tit. ii. 9, 10.

impossible to estimate the good which that plain and humble woman thus accomplished. I trust the Sabbath-school is connected with some of your fondest and most pleasant recollections. Yet Sabbath-schools have had many enemies. Clever books have been written, and able sermons preached, in their defence. But you—yes, you, my young friend, just beginning to learn the duties of an under-nurse, or a kitchen girl—*you* can defend and recommend the institution of Sunday-schools, more effectually than the most learned writer on the subject. If you are willing to be taught your work, “not answering again,” when fault is found with it—if you are exactly attentive to the directions given you, and determined in doing the same when your mistress is absent, as when she is present,—then you can make her think, if she does not say it, “Well, that girl has got much good at the Sabbath-school. I shall not feel opposed to such schools any more. I will try to prevail on such a one, and such a one, to send their children to a Sunday-school.” These thoughts of hers will come out some time or other; her conversation has its influence on her acquaintances; and though you may regret that you never could contribute anything to the funds of your beloved school, the next collec-

tion made for it, may receive additions from the effect of your good conduct.

But even if this should not be the case—if all that follows should merely be, your teacher incidentally hearing, that Mary or Margaret is a truthful, honest, and careful servant,—does not your heart leap with joy to think of the delight she would experience? And if it were farther remarked to her, “The instructions you gave to that young person, have done her much good,”—would she not consider it a sweet reward for all the labour bestowed on you, as well as a powerful encouragement to persevere in teaching others. Besides, if your behaviour is exemplary, there are a thousand ways in which you may be useful to the family in which you are placed. If there are children, you may soothe their fretful or drowsy moments, with hymns and Bible stories; if you have fellow-servants or fellow-apprentices, you may prevail on them to join you in the daily reading of the Scriptures, or to attend the worship of God, instead of taking their pleasure when allowed to go out on the Sabbath; but in no way whatever can you do good, nay, if you attempt to do as I have hinted, you will do much harm, *unless you are blameless in the discharge of your own proper service.* The only way to

secure this, is to have the fear of God before your eyes; to believe in him who "also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."\* And if you are thus at "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," you have another means of usefulness, of which none can deprive you; I mean, the privilege of prayer. The house, and all the property of Potiphar, were blessed for Joseph's sake. And not only may you invoke blessings on your master's household, but on the far distant heathen, as well as on multitudes around you, whom you have no opportunity to instruct or to relieve.

While I conclude, however, that most of my readers have daily and fixed engagements which they must not neglect, I am persuaded, there are many who could rise an hour earlier in the morning, or who have half-an-hour to spare after dinner, or in the evening. And if, for one day, you will make it your business to try whether you cannot more quickly perform your allotted task; to count how many minutes are spent in looking out of the window, or in just running down the yard to speak to a neighbour; if, in short, you will keep this in view from morning to night, "How can I save a little time?"

\* Read and consider 1 Pet. ii. 18-25.

you will be astonished to find the amount of the whole. The time gained may not be an hour all at once; it may be ten minutes in the morning, and five after dinner, and a quarter of an hour before tea—but 15 and 5 and 10 make 30. And never throw away half an hour, by thinking “Oh it’s only five minutes till I return to work; in ten minutes, I must set about preparing my father’s dinner; what can I settle to do in a quarter of an hour? I may as well sit down till the clock strikes; or else be walking slowly on—I shall meet with some one to talk to, till it is time to enter the work-room.” You have had such thoughts, have you not? And now, perhaps, you are thinking, “Well, suppose we do save this half hour, what good use can we make of it?”

Only put this question in good earnest, with a sincere desire to do what you really can, and I am assured you will find little difficulty in getting an answer. Have you no neighbour with a young family, who would feel it a great relief to have her baby nursed for a few minutes, or a little water brought from the well? You know she loves to have her children tidy; and how often she is vexed to see a torn frock, which she has not time to mend, or a child without a pinafore, which is lying unmade. Just take

that frock and mend it, and look at the clock to see how many minutes you are in setting the patch on. And if it should take all your half hours for a whole month, to make her husband a shirt, or to knit her boy a pair of stockings,—surely you would think the time well bestowed, in helping a notable wife, who works hard herself, to save the hard-earned wages of her husband. And yet a greater blessing might you confer upon her, if, by staying with her little ones on a Sabbath afternoon, you could enable her to go in quietness to the sanctuary.

Ten minutes are indeed very quickly over; but there is many a poor old woman, confined to her bed or her chair, who spends days and nights in solitude, without ever hearing a kind word, or obtaining any help, beyond that which may be thought absolutely necessary. Ten minutes in a day, or half an hour in a week, of soothing attentions from you, would be to her like a gleam of sunshine, breaking through the gloom of years in which she “says that she has no pleasure in them.” Perhaps her room is dirty, and her bed and her person very uninviting; but how soon could you brush away the cobwebs, and shake up her pillows, and bring her the basin of cool and refreshing water! It may be one of her greatest troubles, that she

can no longer attain the appearance of neatness, for which she was once remarkable; how little trouble would it cost you to please her, by a clean cap, or a nicely swept hearth! The very tone of sympathy—the consideration that led you to inquire into her wants, would cheer and animate her feeble frame. “He that giveth unto the poor, lendeth to the Lord;” but the privilege is not confined to *giving*, for “blessed is he that *considereth* the poor.” And many who give of their abundance, bestow less of real comfort than you could do by these personal services. Even where such services are not needed, there are other wants which, without money, you could supply. Among the aged around you, there are some deprived of sight; and many more, whose youth was not favoured as yours has been, with Sabbath-school instruction. Most of these persons, it is to be feared, having never known the value of it, are insensible to the greatness of their own loss. But if you kindly and respectfully ask their permission to read a chapter of the Bible to them occasionally, it is very unlikely that they will refuse. They might at first accept the offer, merely as a relief to the dull monotony of their tedious hours; but, by the blessing of God on his own word, they might come to “esteem it more than

their necessary food." Oh, it is mournful to think, how many who have toiled and laboured all their days in the service of others, are going down to the grave, destitute of any real consolation or bright prospect for themselves! And though it is delightful to see them (as sometimes we do) cared for and attended by dutiful children of their own, how often does it happen that all their care is confined to food and raiment; while the bustling, active daughter never finds time to sit down and read, or thinks of guiding her parent's tottering steps to the place where prayer is wont to be made! Cannot you become "eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame," as effectually, or in a sense as important, as Job could possibly have realised? And would it not delight you to know that the eye which *could* "see you, blessed you, and that when the ear heard you, it bore witness" to your kindness in these respects?

One most effectual way of improving spare moments, is, to have some employment always ready—some bit of work, which you can take up at any time. Besides being thus useful to friends and neighbours, work may be turned into money, for benevolent purposes. A friend of mine was able to make a considerable addition to the comforts of an aged woman, by

making pincushions, and giving them to her to sell. There are various Missionary institutions, which gladly accept of such articles as you could easily make: these they either dispose of at home, and use the money for sending out teachers and missionaries; or send them abroad to foreign parts, where they can be turned to better account than in England. You hear how the poor Chinese and Hindoo girls are neglected and ill-used; now, here is a method by which you can do them good. While sitting by the side of your father's chair, you enjoy that place in his affection, which their heathen parents deny to them.\* The very socks you knit, or little frocks which you make, may travel on an errand of mercy to the other side of the globe.

But, if you prefer having a little money, which you can have the pleasure of laying out yourself, on some charitable and useful object, the occasional labour of an extra hour may easily procure that pleasure for you. Never be discouraged, by thinking how little could thus be earned. It would amount, in time, to more than you expect. And if a few of you together

\* By recent accounts from the Missionaries at Benares, it appears that they have agreed to take under their care a number of children who have been made orphans by the ravages of a dreadful famine. The Missionaries state, that each child can be boarded and educated for £3 per annum.

could unite for such purposes, you would encourage and help each other. I know of three ladies, who built a Sunday-school in a village where it was much wanted, chiefly by the proceeds of flowered muslin, which they worked themselves, and employed a person to sell. They were able to devote much time to the accomplishment of what they desired; and your circumstances are probably different. But still it is a noble specimen of what may be done, by *united and persevering* industry. However, earning money is not the only way of gaining it. It may be *saved*, as well as earned. Might not your bonnet look quite as neat, with a yard less of ribbon on it? Is not a collar quite as becoming, without lace edging? A band of the same material as your gown, would do as well as a ribbon for your waist. And good, careful mending, makes new stockings and petticoats much less frequently necessary than some people think. Only keep it always in view, to save money for the sake of being more useful; and I am persuaded you will find there are some things you thought you must have, which you can do without very well. There are indulgences in eating, too, not absolutely needful. You might ask your mother, what she would give you in a week, if you gave up using sugar

in your tea, or butter on your bread; and if this should help to provide for some one who has neither bread nor tea, surely it would repay you for the sacrifice.

But, as in regard to minutes, you may be ready now to say again, "After all this saving, what good can be done with so small a sum?" How small is it? Say a penny a-week; the very lowest estimate, surely. What will a penny a-week do? In some places, it will put a child to school; and wherever there is a Bible Association, it will be received in payment for a Bible or Testament, for some one who is destitute of the Scriptures. I have heard a calculation made, that if one person in three, of all the population of England, were to give one penny a-week, for the spread of the Gospel in the world, a million a-year would thus be raised for that most desirable object.

But most of my readers have, or might have occasionally, more than a penny at their own disposal. And, if you inquire into the income of those who have no means of support but the parish allowance, you will find that the value of threepence or fourpence is a most acceptable addition to their comforts, especially in sickness, or in severe weather. The materials have been of late so cheap, that a useful garment, if made

by yourself, may be procured for such an individual at a very small expense. And which would give the most real pleasure, think you,—to be dressed in silk, and say, in answer to the wistful looks of a starving neighbour, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;” or, to wear a good plain stuff, with the consciousness that you had helped to mitigate distress, by “giving those things which are needful for the body”?\* And if you desire to give food for the immortal mind, for sixpence you can buy one hundred hand-bills of the Tract Society, each containing divine truth in a striking form, sufficient, by the blessing of God, to turn a sinner from the error of his ways. Tracts are equally cheap in proportion to their size; and the distribution of such publications, requires less, both of time and money, than almost any other method of doing good. I was once applied to by an old Sabbath-scholar, then occupying the place of a servant, for a few tracts. “For,” said she, “I go into the market every Saturday to purchase eggs and poultry, and I think I may give six tracts each week among the country people, without any encroachment on the time which belongs to my mistress.”

There is yet another plan of usefulness which

\* Read James ii. 1-16.

would be, in many respects, of great use to yourself; and that is (if you could obtain permission) to teach a little class in the Sabbath-school. This would not only lighten the labour of those who are already engaged in teaching, and keep up your acquaintance with your own teachers; it would also be a most effectual means of improving your knowledge and understanding in the truths which you have learned. And I know nothing that would more obviously tend to gladden hearts that have often mourned over scholars ungrateful and unprofited, than to see you in this way seeking to extend the benefits bestowed upon you. But even if this should not be practicable, there are other ways in which you might promote such benevolent designs. Are there not children known to you, who go to no Sabbath-school? And perhaps, if you ask them to go, you will find that the dread of having tasks to learn—the growing habit of neglecting all “book learning,” prevents them from yielding to your persuasion. But if you promised to help them—if you sat down with them, under the garden-hedge, or at their own fireside, and cheerfully repeated their lessons along with them, contriving little methods to assist their unaccustomed memories, you might both prevail on them to attend the school, and

make their attendance doubly advantageous to them. Are there not, too, girls of decent character, who, from being early sent to work at mills and factories, have never been taught even to read? Perhaps you know of one such, who is growing up to an age fit for service; her mother intends that she shall shortly go to place; she is old enough to understand something of the value of reading, if it were kindly pointed out to her. But now is the only time for her to attempt the acquirement of it; for if once she becomes a servant, it is too probable she may live and labour and die, without ever knowing the Bible as anything else than "a sealed book." Who can tell, how precious to her that book might become, if you would devote one or two half-hours in the week to her instruction? Perhaps, at first, she might exercise your patience; but how she would bless you in the time of trouble, and on a dying bed, if you had led her to an acquaintance with him who is "a present help in trouble"—him who "hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light."

Be assured, my dear young friend, that a sincere and persevering habit of trying to be useful,\* will be attended with many advantages

\* It is almost unnecessary to remark, that I have no

to yourself. It will save you from that selfish indulgence in dress and in other things, which has been the beginning of ruin to many. It will teach you the real worth of money, and accustom you to a frugal and thoughtful use of it, which you may find of the utmost value to you in future life. It will strengthen all that is kind and generous in your disposition, by leading your thoughts away from what concerns yourself alone, to be occupied with the interests of your fellow-sinners. You will thus be furnished with something rational and improving, to talk about with your companions. And when, after many days, you have a mournful recollection of youthful friends that are gone, and youthful pleasures that are over, it will brighten your sadness if you can say, "Still my younger years were not spent in vain; there are some traces of them left; at least I was enabled to do some real good, which could not be swept away." You may live to see lasting fruit from some of your earliest endeavours; and even the remembrance of having once cheered a sorrowful heart, or lightened an oppressive burden, may help to sweeten your own cup of poverty or grief.

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idea of any one adopting *all* the plans I have suggested. I have named a variety of expedients, that each reader may select what she thinks the best suited to her circumstances.

But above all other advantages, is the possession of that love to the Saviour, which "constraineth" to deeds of benevolence, more effectually than any other motive or consideration. It is delightful to hear an amiable young person inquiring, "How can I do the most good to others?" but when the inquiry is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? what can I do for him who gave himself for me?" Oh, this discovers a real worth of character, infinitely more precious than the best and kindest natural disposition. Without that faith, which thus worketh by love, the most splendid charities are worthless in the sight of God; they may impart comfort to the recipients, and increase the conscious enjoyment of the giver; but, like the offering of Cain, "the Lord hath not respect unto them," because they are presented without any reference to the great atoning sacrifice. On the other hand, the youngest, the poorest disciple of the Saviour—she who can with difficulty find time to "give a cup of cold water for his sake, verily, she shall not lose her reward." To such an one, I need hardly say, "Do good, especially to them who are of the household of faith." You cannot have less in your power than the poor widow, whose all was two mites. He who graciously

commended her, is equally near to you, and looks with equal complacency on your most secret and humble efforts to comfort his people, or to advance his cause. And if it cost you labour and self-denial, if it even expose you to ridicule and scorn, to visit the believer's sick or dying bed, be not discouraged, "for inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these his brethren, ye do it unto him. In due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not."

## V.

WHY DO SO MANY YOUNG PERSONS, IN-  
STRUCTED IN DIVINE THINGS, CONTINUE  
DESTITUTE OF REAL PIETY?

“WERE there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?” So said the Saviour, when one solitary individual returned to thank him for a deliverance which extended to half-a-score. And are there not laborious and affectionate teachers, who are constrained to make a similar inquiry? If the superintendent’s book could be reviewed, and the list of names inspected, as far back as the commencement of the school—if even research were confined to those who have left school, during the last four or five years,—how many were taught! how few are practising the lessons they have learned! This, my dear reader, is a question of deep and painful interest to those who have laboured in instructing you; but it is also a question which concerns yourself. And whether you belong to the few or to the many, let me invite your attention, while we more closely examine it.

In doing so, I must allude to some things

which, if duty permitted, I would much rather pass over in silence. And, first, I will mention this,—that many parents who have sent their children to a Sabbath-school, are entirely regardless of religion themselves. Their conduct plainly testifies, that they consider religious observances as a mere convenience—a desirable restraint on young children, who would otherwise be troublesome; but a restraint to which they cannot expect they will submit, when they become old enough to act for themselves. Few persons will say this; but what else can be inferred from the conduct of multitudes? And what wonder is it, if their example is copied in their own families, and the Sabbath regarded as a day to be spent according to every individual's pleasure or inclination? But hence arises a serious evil, of which I have already complained; namely, the entire giving up of regular attendance on other means of grace, at the same time that the Sabbath-school is relinquished. A young person, however, who acts in this manner, is taking the most effectual means to destroy all the good she might have been expected to receive from previous instruction. She cannot completely banish from her memory the truths with which it was stored. But it is quite possible to *forget to think of*

what the memory nevertheless retains. The impression of that which is immediately heard and seen, is always likely to have more influence than that which is only remembered. And she who, in such circumstances, deserts the sanctuary, exposes herself to a constant, unbroken, unceasing current of example and conversation, that are worldly and evil in their tendency. She separates herself entirely from the notice and acquaintance of her former teachers; and if ever she should come in their way, the fear of being questioned, and the consciousness of deserving reproof, will inspire a wish to escape their observation. She hears sin made light of, and disguised with false names; it is spoken of as only a harmless compliance with custom, or as altogether a trifling matter, except as it may injure property or health. She hears serious religion, if not ridiculed, yet mentioned as merely a peculiar notion—the particular way of thinking adopted by certain persons, but not at all of paramount obligation upon others. And never hearing one admonition of an opposite kind, never having well-known truth pressed upon her attention,—though conscience tells her, that these current opinions are mere refuges of lies, yet, because they are most agreeable to her own inclination, she glides as completely into “the

course of this world," as any untaught or neglected individual around her. Every duty neglected, every sin indulged, paves the way for a farther and wider deviation. And thus it is, that a few months are often sufficient to blight a teacher's fondest hopes—transforming the regular, attentive Sabbath-scholar, into the habitual despiser of all that is held to be "decent and wise" by "the multitude who keep holy day." On the first or second Sabbath after leaving school, perhaps she thought it unnecessary to attend *all* the services of the sanctuary; or, some companion asked her to take a walk, observing, that *now* there was no one to find fault; she complied, but thought it would be long before she did so again. Ah! she knew not how readily she would yield to the next temptation; nor did she anticipate the prayerless, Christless, hopeless character of future life, stretching forward to the time when conscience, so long silenced, may let her go down to the grave with "a lie in her right hand."

Do you, my reader, belong to a family which calls not on God's name? You would not forsake the assembly of God's worshippers in public; but you are aware, that stated attendance there, is far from being all that is included in real piety. And you imagine, that insuperable

obstacles would present themselves, if you attempted anything more. The order of the household is well adapted to answer the questions, "what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" but not one arrangement is made, no space whatever is reserved for daily "seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." For you (perhaps the youngest in the house) to break through its long-established customs—to withdraw from the circle, for the purposes of private devotion—to refuse all share in trifling conversation or unnecessary labours on the day which God has hallowed—to walk, in short, "not after the flesh, but after the spirit,"—these are things indispensable to Christian character. And how can you possibly accomplish such an innovation? How can you bear the inquiries which would on all sides beset you—the watchful, if not scornful and teasing observation, which would baffle all your attempts to conceal the time and the place of your retirement—the angry remonstrances, excited by the fancied inconvenience, or the unusual movements you would occasion? You are not alone in such difficulties; many and many a time has that prophecy been fulfilled, "I will take one of a city, and two of a family, and bring them unto Zion." We are told of the Saviour

himself, that "neither did his brethren believe on him." He has plainly warned you, that if you will confess him before men, your own father and mother may be at variance with you; declaring, at the same time, that even filial affection must give way to his higher claims.\* Now, consider seriously, can you give any sufficient reason for loving earthly relatives more than Christ? Can you feel assured, that because of your peculiar circumstances, you may safely neglect the great salvation? When do you expect that it will be easier for you to serve the Lord? Is it after your beloved parents have passed into eternity, to share the awful destiny of those "who forget God"? Is it after your brothers and sisters have left the domestic hearth, confirmed in the habit of living "without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world"? Before that period arrives, you may yourself have incurred the fearful doom, of "the ground which, being often rained upon, bringeth forth nothing but briars and thorns; which is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."† But are you content to cherish such prospects for *them*? Oh, surely it cannot be *affection* that deters you from displeasing them. It must be selfishness—ungenerous, unthinking

\* Matt. x. 32-39.      † Heb. vi. 7, 8.

selfishness, that induces you thus to wait for a more convenient season. While you are madly risking your own soul, you are helping to ruin theirs. Whereas, an humble, firm, and modest attention to what conscience tells you is right, would speedily overcome the obstacles that now appear so formidable. Let your general conduct be such, that they could “find no occasion against you, except concerning the law of your God;” and, young and timid and unaccustomed to act for yourself, as you are, you may, by and by, hear them saying, “We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you.”

Another thing which is apt to have an unfavourable influence on young people, is this: *they see so many persons, who are respectable and prosperous, without real piety.* The honest, upright, industrious tradesman—the generous, kind-hearted master or mistress, whose servants can tell “what comfortable places they have”—sons and daughters, who are praised for their exemplary behaviour at home, and sought after as agreeable companions abroad,—these are all justly respected; they seem to be happy, and they have everything that this world can give to make them so. Yet they have no pretension to godliness: attention to its forms, is either made compatible with their pleasures, or dis-

pensed with altogether; and yet they appear quite satisfied with themselves, unconscious of deserving any blame. In former days, it was the same. David speaks of "the men whose portion is in the present life;" and Job tells of the wicked "who send forth their little ones as a flock, and their children dance." But "though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because they fear not God."\* Do you say, "These are not *wicked* people; how could you give so harsh a name to the amiable, the useful, and the virtuous?" My young friend, what will they be called, by the unerring Judge? Will he place them among the righteous? Can *you* say, that they are "righteous before God, walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless"? "They are they who justify themselves before men, but God knoweth their hearts." And if they are content with a righteousness which pleases men, they are such as the Saviour referred to, when he said, he "came not to call the righteous to repentance." In other words, they see no ne-

\* Eccles. viii. 12, 13.

cessity for coming as ruined sinners to Christ; they know nothing of that ardent gratitude for much forgiveness, which would make them "love much;" and therefore they "see no beauty in him;" they reject the best, "the unspeakable gift" of God, and thus disobey the voice from heaven which said, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Amiable and kind they may be, in all their intercourse with fellow-creatures; but their "mind is enmity against God,"\* and, however diligent in their respective employments, they are not serving *him* in anything they do.

And their danger is not confined to another world. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." They do not hear the thundering accents of that wrath, nor can they see the awful countenance of him who frowns upon them; and they smile as if secure. But "shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Does their criminal indifference alter their real situation? "Judge not, then, according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Say not, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart." For neither

\* Rom. viii. 7, 8.

riches, nor plenty, nor human esteem, can protect from God's anger, or give real happiness, without his favour. Neither is there any security for "continuance in well-doing," where the character rests merely on education, or on the favourable circumstances in which an individual is placed. The persons whose apparent prosperity is apt to afford you an excuse for neglecting true religion, have perhaps never been exposed to those temptations which deprave the lower and more ignorant part of the community. But, let a change take place in their situation, let vice put on some new and fair disguise, and what then? They have never learned to "watch and pray;" they have despised Him who "saves his people from their sins;" they are "entangled and overcome by the pollutions of the world." The respect and the approbation in which formerly they were held, are now remembered only to increase their present disgrace and wretchedness; and those who were the most ready to flatter them, in the time of thoughtless prosperity, would be the last to befriend, or to aid them in returning to virtue and to peace. Oh, if you would escape the misery of the most degraded being you ever shuddered to behold, become at once a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ—"obey from the

heart that form of doctrine which has been delivered to you," assured that in no other way you can be taught "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts."

But many, it is true, without this, retain their reputation unblemished, and go to the grave respected and beloved. Yet they may have springs of unhappiness, unknown or unnoticed by their admiring neighbours. A hasty temper, a covetous mind, a discontented or envious disposition, though carefully concealed, may embitter the sweetest cup, and darken the brightest sunshine. Above all, when sickness and sorrow approach, when their "flesh and heart fail," whither shall they flee for support or solace? They may talk of resignation; but it is either the sullen endurance of those, who submit because they must; or else, their grief is smothered, by plunging deeper into some other species of temporary enjoyment and occupation. It may be said of them, that they "died like a lamb;" but it was either in the quietness of delusion, or the insensibility of disease. My youthful reader, would you wish to "die the death" of the worldly, or that your "last end should be like theirs"?

Perhaps, in reply, you would tell me, that you know some people who are considered re-

ligious: they profess a zealous attachment to the doctrines of the Gospel; *but in regard to moral character, they are no better than others*—rather they are worse than some who make no pretensions to piety at all. And here again I am on delicate ground. “These things ought not so to be;” and yet, that they are so, cannot be denied. There are persons, very strict in abstaining from work on the Sabbath; their place in the sanctuary is never vacant, nor will they permit the absence of any one under their control. Yet this very attention to external propriety, instead of being enforced with mildness, as a reasonable service, is perhaps the subject of clamorous altercation; so that, even when they enter the house of God, the storm of passion has hardly subsided; and their home is peaceful, only when they are absent from it. They have never “put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, or long-suffering;” and their deficiency in these Christian graces, is most severely felt by those most nearly related to them. Some “withal learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.” So that all who know them, dislike and shun them, as makers of mischief, “whisperers

who separate chief friends." While thus they "walk disorderly, working not at all," or very slothfully, it becomes impossible for them to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Indeed, there are those to be found, so unworthy of the sacred name they bear, as to incur debts which they have no reasonable prospect of ever being able to pay. While instances are not wanting, of exorbitant charges, unfair dealing, and mean advantage taken, under the guise of a religious profession.

And now, having drawn such a picture, you are ready to ask, "With these characters before my eyes, what inducement have I to be more serious than my neighbours? Is it not better to follow the example of easy, cheerful, decent worldly people, than to be an indolent, ill-tempered, or dishonest professor of religion?" But stay, my young friend; would you throw away a purse full of money, because you found in it one bad sixpence? The genuine disciples of Christ "have their fruit unto holiness;" they are "created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works;" and they endeavour "by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Blessed be God, there are, in the midst of us, many such "living epistles, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God."

In regard, however, to the former class, how did you learn to condemn them? where did you obtain the knowledge that their conduct was wrong? Was it not from the Bible?\* The Bible not only tells you that they are wrong; it tells you also, what they ought to be. It says, that "they which have believed in God, must be careful to maintain good works." "Who shall abide in God's tabernacle? who shall dwell in his holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." Christians are required to be "not slothful in business—to owe no man anything—to do to others whatsoever they would have others to do unto them." They are enjoined to "think of whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." And it is declared, that "whoso is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." So that, you see, it is not religion, but the want of religion, which makes people unkind, or mischievous, or fraudulent. Be not, then, "overcome of evil,

\* See 2 Tim. iii. 1-5.

but overcome evil with good." Consider carefully the descriptions given in the Epistles of the New Testament, of Christian character, and the exhortations addressed to the first churches. Think what a blessed world this would be, if these precepts were universally obeyed. Your conscience, I am persuaded, is convinced that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Determine, then, to prove for yourself, "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Take care, that in your own case, "the tree be made good, that the fruit may be good also;" so that "those of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of *you*." If "iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold," instead of preventing you from embracing the Gospel, it should confirm you in its truth, for the Saviour foretold that it would be so.\* But it is a cause of deep lamentation to those who have really felt the power of his grace. Let them be able, at least, to point at you as "a pattern of good works;" count it a high honour that you can bear a part in vindicating the cause of God from unjust reproach. In so doing, you will find that "light is sown for the righteous;" and experience will convince you, that the person whose

See Matt. xxiv. 11-13.

"heart is sound in God's statutes," the person who "has respect unto *all* his commandments," has no need to be ashamed.\* Would not this be better than to "wrong your own soul, by forsaking wisdom and instruction"? The Saviour denounced a woe against some "who for a pretence made long prayers;" but not less dreadful is the destruction threatened to those "who cast off fear, and *restrain* prayer before God." There is but one place of punishment for both. And if you would not have your final "portion with the hypocrites," beware how you make their example an excuse for the sin of unbelief. For "that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Another great hindrance in the way of youthful piety, is *the influence of unsuitable companions*. It has been often remarked, that young people have more power over one another than all the authority of parents and superiors. A whisper, a look from a schoolfellow, is often sufficient to overthrow the effects of twelve months' instruction. The Saviour tells us of good seed which the fowls of the air devoured.

\* Psalm cxix. 6-80. The whole Psalm is particularly instructive on this subject.

And have not you sometimes left the school or the sanctuary with tearful eyes and serious thoughts, thinking you would get up stairs by yourself, and beg upon your knees for an interest in Christ. But some trifler joined you by the way—a flippant remark on the dress of one, or the wedding of another, diverted your mind into an opposite channel; so that before you got home, the good seed was devoured, and your desire for retirement quite gone. Nay, even while in the house of God, have you not been deterred from looking with fixed attention at the speaker, because *you knew that some one was watching, who would laugh at you afterwards?* Or, perhaps, it occurs to you at this moment, “What would such an one say, if I refused to walk with her on the Sabbath? and even if I spend only week-day evenings in her company, how she would stare, if I proposed to leave her earlier, in order to have time for reading my Bible! If I should refuse to join in something sinful, because that Book condemned it, she would never let me hear the last of it.”

Suppose, now, that you were offered a handsome fortune, or a situation securing comforts and enjoyments far above those you now possess, would you allow her bold and foolish remarks to prevent you seeking after it? would you re-

main as you are, rather than give up your occasional interviews with her? An inheritance is presented to you; you can be introduced into a family, named after one who sits upon a throne, and shortly to be removed to the place where there are pleasures for evermore. Will it be any compensation for the loss of that inheritance—will it reconcile you to exclusion from that happy family, that you secured the smile of a thoughtless companion, and retained your intimacy with her a few years longer than you would have done, if in early life you had determined to “forsake the foolish and live”? You shudder to think of such an alternative—you hope you shall be saved at last—but her conversation is so agreeable, she would be so astonished at the change, were you to become strictly religious—you would find it so difficult to tell her that you thought you had both been in the wrong. Oh, think again. *Would these difficulties hinder you from obtaining any present advantage which you really desired?* Try to imagine yourself in the presence of the only Being in the universe whose favour could save you from despair, and how you would feel when *he* disowned all acquaintance with you—ashamed of you, as you are now ashamed of him.

But, while you are making such foolish ex-

cuses, perhaps this companion of yours is doing the very same in reference to yourself. It is likely you have your full share of influence over her; if you truly love her, can you bear to think of contributing to make her miserable for ever? can you bear to think of exchanging your present friendship for mutual reproaches, and desperate, raging enmity? Do not waste time in studying what you will say to her, unless it be a firm refusal to violate your conscience, or do anything that would obstruct you in diligently using the means of grace. Let it be your chief concern to speak by your conduct; showing that you are determined in earnest to seek the Lord. And thus, perhaps, you may remove the chief obstacle which has prevented *her* from obeying his voice. At least, conscience will tell her that you are right. She will no longer have to blame you for encouraging her in sin. Observe, too, that if the intimacy has begun at school, the time of your leaving school is the most favourable for discontinuing it. You are no longer obliged to sit on the same form, or to meet statedly in the same room. Every step you take at present, just at the present stage of your progress, has a most important bearing on your whole future course. If you now, from choice, *seek* the company of those whose influence has

hitherto been unfavourable to your best interests, the probability is, that all your character and connexions for life will be of the same worldly tinge and stamp.

And let every reader beware of *forming* such acquaintances as will involve her in difficulties like these. However engaging an individual may appear—however you may be pleased and flattered by kindness and attention, nothing whatever can compensate for injury done to the soul. Do not trifle with the *little beginnings* of new intimacies. Be not in haste to accept a civil invitation; be not ready to indulge in free and friendly conversation with a casual acquaintance; form no engagement to meet again. Say not, “What harm can there be in such slight compliances?” Many of the closest friendships have sprung from a similar source; yes, and many of the most ruinous and miserable relations too. If you find it difficult to keep your distance from an obliging stranger, depend upon it, the difficulty of withdrawing from intercourse with a chosen companion, is a hundred times greater. Do not think it enough to be assured of an unblemished character for honesty, and industry, and steadiness. You who have been taught the love of Christ, and the worth of your soul, inquire farther than this,—“Shall I find any hin-

drance in striving to 'enter in at the strait gate'? shall I be habituated to such conversation as will make the subject of religion appear foreign and incongruous between us? shall I hear sin excused, or godliness undervalued? shall I be estranged from my former instructors, or come less frequently under their notice?" And just let me observe, that if you associate with such as are known to be careless and profane, the well-disposed will most likely shun your company; for they will naturally suppose, that you resemble those whom you have chosen as friends. So that you may not only be deriving positive injury from the one party, but losing the benefit which the other perhaps longs to impart, yet dares not offer. Oh, how much better to "give yourself first to the Lord, and then to his people by the will of God"! Then you would be the friend of Christ himself, and "a companion of all them that fear him;" you would have communion with "all who in every place call upon his name." Happy is that young person, whose friend will come to her in time of trial or temptation, as Jonathan did to David when he "went to him in the wood and strengthened his hand in God." For, as "iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

Another, and, to many, a fatal snare, is the fact, that *certain worldly advantages are more likely to be secured, by conforming to the ways of the world, than by following the rule of God's word.* For instance, how few of what are called "good places," are open to a servant who scrupulously follows that rule! How many employers prefer a journey-woman or apprentice, who will attend to customers, or even ply her needle, at a very busy time, during the sacred hours of the Sabbath! While others, from the very circumstance that business is suspended in the shop, make it a day of unusual business in the house, by the inviting and entertaining of company! How often is falsehood, in one form or another, made part of a young person's duty, by the orders, or to serve the interest, of a superior. And the accommodating, subservient, conscienceless girls, who will thus do anything and everything without objection, are rewarded with much favour and many presents, indulged with holidays, and recommended to higher situations. While, perhaps, the upright, godly individual, who fears God rather than men, must labour as a maid of all work, or pursue her business in its most unprofitable branches. Indeed, I have known cases in which, if a young woman was said to be a Methodist, or in the

habit of attending week-day sermons, it was thought quite a sufficient reason for not employing her. All this shows, how true it is, that "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Yet, I am sadly afraid it is partly occasioned by a want of consistency in some who have "named the name of Christ." If all those who object to commit sin for the pleasure of their employers, would be equally determined against it *when their own ease or inclination is concerned*, I am convinced that decided piety would be more valued and considered than it is in the choice of work-people or servants. If there were always "faithfulness in that which is least;" if there were a literal and undeviating attention to the exhortation given in Tit. ii. 9, 10; if there was a strenuous endeavour to excel in the performance of daily and common work, for the sake of "adorning the Saviour's doctrine,"—if these things were the *prevailing characteristics* of young professing Christians, it would be more strikingly seen, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise both of the life which now is, and also that which is to come." "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." A patient continuance in well-doing shall not lose its reward, even in the present world.

And even where malignant slander has "falsely accused a believer's good conversation in Christ," the promise in due time will be fulfilled, which says, "No weapon which is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." "Then she that is thine enemy shall see it; and shame shall cover her which said unto thee, where is the Lord thy God?"

But, allowing all the temporal advantages which are supposed to follow a disregard of God's will, "what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?" Would you deliberately exchange yours for gay dress, and dainty fare, and liberty to take your pleasure? The question is a shocking one; you think it much more serious than the case demands. You only want to share the good things which are enjoyed by so many around you; and when you are older, when you have got into business for yourself, when you have gained enough to be above the need of any one's favour, then you will "set your heart to seek the Lord." Well now, look round upon your neighbours and acquaintances, and see how many instances you can find, of a person giving her youth to the attainment of sinful prosperity,

and, in maturer days, taking up her cross, denying herself, and following the Saviour? If you do find such a one,—if possible, ask her opinion, take her advice on the subject; and see if she thinks she acted wisely, or advises you to follow her example.

But how is it, with the far greater number? They roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue. Their habits and arrangements have all been formed in such direct opposition to Bible and Sabbath claims, that they cannot read the one or observe the other, without an entire and extraordinary change of plans. Thus they are effectually screened from warning or reproof—conscience, if ever it was enlightened, becomes shrouded in deeper and deeper darkness; “having loved the wages of unrighteousness,” they argue like the idolatrous women of Jerusalem,\* that it is well with them when they forsake the Lord; and by avoiding every opportunity of serious reflection, they say unto him, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” Is not this a true description of many who are daily before your eyes? And some of them perhaps, were, like yourself, the subjects of prayerful, affectionate instruction,—their teachers hoped they were “not far from the

\* Jeremiah xliv. 16–18.

kingdom of God;" but, dazzled by the hope of gain or pleasure, they have "forsaken the right way;" and the hearts which were once tender and thoughtful, have been "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Yet, you are not to imagine that they have found all the profit they expected, even in a temporal point of view. Abundance of money does not always make people rich. A young woman who seeks her own pleasure on the Sabbath, is tempted to extravagance in dress: often, indeed, the gift of one showy article induces the purchase of another; the sums which might have been placed in a savings-bank, are thus squandered; and many a one, who was envied for her good fortune, is left, in the time of sickness or scarcity of employment, to wretchedness and want. Sabbath-breaking, in many ways, destroys the principles of morality: where dishonesty and falsehood are practised, they become habitual; and even the employer, who encouraged these sins for her own advantage, may be the first to discard a servant who commits them to the injury of *her* property, or the neglect of *her* business. Unfairness or deceit may be long unsuspected, but when once discovered, they will soon fail to secure success. And in a thousand other ways it may be proved, that David's

saying is true,—“A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.” “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow.”

Perhaps my reader has not been ensnared in any of these delusions. Her conscience will not listen to any of the excuses I have mentioned. She knows, that whatever others do, she should serve the Lord; but, surrounded by the thoughtless and the worldly, she dreads the *appearance of singularity*. If there was one neighbour, who would unite with her in conscientious obedience to “all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded;” if, among her companions in the work-room, there was one to share the trial of cruel mocking, she thinks she could venture to become a Christian! But, to bear it alone—to be the sole object of sneering remark and contemptuous wonder, in the circle where she is known,—oh, this she could not bear! True, my dear girl, if you will “live godly in Christ Jesus, you must suffer persecution.” But who is he that has so decreed it? Is he one who knows nothing of persecution and suffering? Hear himself answer the question: “I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was

none with me. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Is he anything like the task-masters of Egypt, or the Jewish scribes, who "bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, while they themselves did not touch the burdens with one of their fingers"? "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that are of no might, he increaseth strength. I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee, by the right hand of my righteousness." Does he sit upon his throne, too highly exalted to observe, or too unfeeling to consider, the pains endured in his service? "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the midst of the sea. We have not an High-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Never was one so entirely abandoned to the strife of tongues, and the clamour of pitiless reproach; for even his friends "forsook him, and fled." And under the load of that iniquity which "the Lord laid upon him,"

he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But, to those who take up their cross, and follow him, he declares, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee;" so that we may boldly say, "the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." If you are so entirely surrounded by the enemies of God, are not you most plainly and particularly addressed, when it is said by the Lord Almighty, "Come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters"? Surely, the consciousness that you were his—the secret and delightful assurance, that Jesus was present, to witness and approve your faithfulness—the hope, that he would openly honour and confess you, to the confusion of your boldest persecutors,—surely these might enable you to bear the empty taunts of a few foolish young persons, or ignorant old ones.

But, after all, whatever be the particular excuse you make, for disappointing the hopes of those who have been your "instructors in Christ," the grand reason is, that you *hate and dislike real religion*. Be not startled at this

assertion; for you could bring me passages from every part of Scripture, to prove that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." On this great doctrine of the Bible, you have been correctly and carefully informed. And yet, you loved your teachers; you loved to give them pleasure; and often you thought you would try to do as they wished you. You never made any objection to the truths they taught you; you admit them to be all right; and that the strictest personal piety is only what duty requires of you. Still you hesitate, and why? Because you see nothing valuable in the blessings of salvation—nothing desirable in the Divine favour—nothing attractive in the character and the promises of the gracious Saviour. It must be so; for Jesus says, "He that is not with me, is against me." If you really desired eternal life, there is nothing upon earth which would divide your choice for a moment. If you believed, that true happiness consisted in having peace with God, you would find no peace in anything else. And if the love of Christ once touched your heart, you would need no argument to convince you, that you must leave all to follow him. But He whose presence fills heaven with joy, is to you "as a root out of a dry ground." His birth put a new song into

angelic mouths; a celestial voice declared, that in him the infinitely glorious God was well pleased; and even those who had not seen him, “yet believing in him, rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Yet you—yes, you whose love he has even condescended to solicit, you are rejecting and despising him. Is this, think you, a small mistake, a trifling error? Is it nothing to refuse God’s “unspeakable gift”—to undervalue a treasure, purchased with blood, more precious than silver and gold—to say, you know better what will make you happy than the Being who made you? Is it nothing to view with indifference the Man of sorrows, who was acquainted with grief, yea, “numbered with transgressors,” and treated as one of them, for *your sake*? Oh, are you content to remain thus ungrateful for the most unbounded love—blind to the highest excellence, and insensible to the most bitter sufferings? How you would blush, to be convicted of so requiting any earthly benefactor! Surely, you have reason to “abhor yourself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Dismiss not these thoughts from your mind. Stifle not the conviction of guilt and shame. Hide not yourself in “a refuge of lies,” by thinking you are no worse than multitudes beside you. You *are* worse than many of them.

You are familiar with the history of Christ. The tenderness of his compassion, the meekness of his spirit, the perfect willingness with which he offered himself for sins, have been minutely pointed out to you. The impossibility of being saved, without an interest in his blood; the utter worthlessness of every fancied virtue, in the sight of God; the sin and the peril of unbelief; all these things have a witness in your conscience at this moment. *You can hear nothing new.* "There remaineth no other sacrifice for sins." "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby you can be saved," than the name of Jesus. There is not another gracious entreaty—not another faithful promise—not another awful warning, but what you have heard already. If you are "rejecting the counsel of God," declared to you so often by the living voice, you would not "be persuaded though one rose from the dead." "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." *Your heart will become harder by delay.* You are now reading these pages, and you feel that they speak the truth. You are conscious of danger, and feel, in some degree, that you are to blame. But so have many felt, who are now "twice dead, plucked up by the roots." You read of some, who were even "given up

to strong delusion;”\* “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” The Apostle warned the Hebrews, to take heed, lest any of them were “hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin.” And remember, the Lord hath said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man.” If now, while the impressions of early instruction are yet recent—if now, while you have but just ceased to hear the admonitions of your teachers, you yet remain in unbelief, what probability is there of your ever returning to God? You can plainly see, that as the distance widens between you and those who have spoken unto you the Gospel of God, their voice will sound fainter and yet more faintly in your ear. While He who at this moment makes you hear the call of mercy, “turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?” may, by and by, leave you, to “eat of your own way, and to be filled with your own devices.”

Perhaps you think your present circumstances unfavourable for becoming decidedly religious; but, be assured, *they will become much more unfavourable*. You have no friendships which might not be broken off, were you sincerely in earnest about salvation. But the time may come, when you shall be closely and unalterably con-

\* 2 Thess. ii. 10-12.

nected with the enemies of God—when it will be no longer possible for you to avoid their company, or to change your situation—but when, if you would begin to live in strict accordance with the Divine word, you must do it under the frown of those who are the daily and hourly witnesses of your conduct—perhaps in opposition to the commands of one who, in all things lawful, has a right to your obedience. *Now*, if you were “cast out” by worldly and trifling acquaintances, there are some who “watch for your soul,” and who would gladly become your counsellors and friends. But *then*, these may have been all removed by distance or by death; and, surrounded by those who know not what were the privileges of your youth, you may have mournful reason to exclaim, “No man careth for my soul.” *Now* you are young, and, it may be, have strength to labour; you have buoyant spirits and a light heart, with which to meet discouragements and difficulties. It is probable, you have none but yourself to provide for; and if your temporal interest should suffer “for righteousness’ sake,” there is no one else to be involved in your privations or your loss. But, think how it would be, if your spirits were broken, and your youthful vigour gone—if sickness or infirmity rendered many little comforts desirable, which, with

your yet unbroken constitution, you neither want nor wish for. Think how it would be, if you had a family dependent on you for support, and knew that your children's bread was earned by conformity to the world. Would there be less temptation to court the favour of superiors, or to labour exclusively for the "meat which perisheth," *then*, than there is now? Surely, to you, in a peculiar sense, is it spoken, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

There are sins and follies, too, of the most dangerous nature, which as yet present to you no attractions. "The desire of the covetous, which God abhorreth;" the craving for dishonest gain, leading to "many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition;" the intoxicating cordial, which "in the end biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder;" the fearful infatuation of that sin, which makes a woman first to be the victim of cruel treachery, and then to become cruel and treacherous, "loud and stubborn" herself; these I trust, are snares which at present would allure you in vain. But you know not how, in future days, "the enemy may come in like a flood;" you know not how the hideous tempter can

“transform himself into an angel of light,” nor how “pleasant to the eyes” that fruit will seem which is, in truth, “the gall of bitterness.” Neither can you conceive, how the practice of such sins sears the conscience “as with a hot iron.” The mention of these crimes, is sufficient to make you shudder; but are you more virtuous, more modest, more respectable, than many a one has been, who now “eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.”\* The once hopeful, susceptible youth, has reached that depth of insensibility, that “though the fury of God’s anger sets him on fire round about, he knows it not; and it burns him, yet he lays it not to heart.”† And if you will not now “walk in God’s ways, nor be obedient to his law,” what shall hinder *you* from sinking as low? “Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.”

Now then “is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation;”—this is the very hour in which you may become a “partaker of the divine nature,” thus escaping “the corruption

\* Prov. xxx. 20.

† Isaiah xlii. 22-25.

that is in the world through lust"—be made an "heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ," thus securing all that is truly valuable for time and eternity. But again, remember it is *now*. "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

## VI.

WHO WAS THE FIRST CHRISTIAN IN THE  
CITY OF PHILIPPI?

THERE was a time when the inhabitants of this world were few in number, and when all of them knew the true God, and the only right way of worshipping him. But no written record of his will was in existence; and as the people multiplied and removed to places remote from Noah's habitation, the correct remembrance of divine things was perverted and lost. It was thus that "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people,"—though we have no reason to suppose that this would have been the case, if they had been truly anxious to retain the light of truth among them. We are told, that "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge."\*

The Scriptures of the Old Testament were afterwards written "by inspiration of God;" but the art of printing was then unknown; there was no such institution as a Bible Society; and the possession of these writings was almost con-

\* See Romans i. 19-23, 28-32.

fined to one favoured nation. The Saviour, also, restricted his labours to the land of Israel, though he left an express command to his church, to "preach the Gospel to every creature." This Gospel, my young friend, has been preached to you; you know that it is extensively preached throughout our happy country. Did you ever inquire how long this has been the case? or how it happens, that a little island, thousands of miles distant from Jerusalem, is blessed with far more instruction than many vast regions, much nearer to that city? The churches you are accustomed to see, are ancient buildings; or, perhaps, you have heard your grandmother tell of persons known to her in the days of youth, who worshipped in the very sanctuary which you attend. So long, as it appears to you, have things been "as they are," that you almost forget they were not so always. You hear, too, of missionaries sent from England, bearing glad tidings to the dark and cruel heathen; and it hardly occurs to you, that Englishmen were once heathens themselves, needing such messengers to instruct them. Yet so it was. When the Saviour of mankind was crucified, Jehovah's name was unknown in Britain. Who first came here to tell of him? and who was the first man or woman who received "the truth as it is in Jesus"? To

these questions, history affords no certain answer. It is only by reading the narratives of similar events in other lands, that we can form some idea of what took place in our own. Many such narratives are furnished by the reports and chronicles of our Missionary Societies, and I would advise you to read these with much attention, if they are within your reach. But your Bible supplies materials for assisting your imagination on this point.\* The Acts of the Apostles, related in the fifth book of the New Testament, were all performed in connection with spreading the Gospel through the world.

There is, however, a difference between the state of Britain when first visited with the light of the Gospel, and that in which the Corinthians, Philippians, &c. were found by the Apostles. Philippi and Corinth, and most of the other places mentioned as the scene of their labours, were possessed of all that is decent, and even elegant, in civilised life; whereas, our forefathers were half-clothed savages, living in huts of the rudest construction. And what

\* The first chapter of John contains a beautifully simple account of what we may call the very first commencement of Christianity—the entrance of the very first members into the New Testament Church. And it strikingly illustrates the Saviour's own words respecting the progress of his cause, when he says, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

is still more important, in all those cities there were Jews, or persons professing the Jewish religion, who were acquainted with the Old Testament, and statedly met on the seventh day for the worship of God. The Apostles invariably addressed them, in the first instance; and they, of course, required much less explanation of the truths which were preached to them, than persons educated in, and "wholly given to idolatry." Yet, by far the greater number of those who became real Christians, were from among the idolaters; and, doubtless, many of them had previously acquired some idea of one living and true God, from their Jewish fellow-citizens. Be this, however, as it may, we are clearly taught, that *conversion*, or becoming a Christian, is exactly the same great change of heart in *every* case.

When you hear of Christianity being introduced into a country, and prevailing, till thousands of the people are called Christians, you are sometimes apt to forget, that these thousands were not all converted at once. They did not become subjects of Jesus Christ at one time, as our countrymen became subjects of Queen Victoria the hour that King William IV. died. Nations are made up of individuals; and every one individual, who is truly a Christian, must have

heard, repented, and believed, distinctly, personally, and for himself. I have suggested to you the case of Lydia, because it is so very simply and beautifully described; because she was savingly taught, under the very first Gospel sermon preached at Philippi; and because there is so much in her brief history to instruct and interest yourself.

The Scripture narrative respecting her, requires little or no explanation. She belonged to Thyatira, but was living at Philippi, and carrying on the business of selling purple cloth. Purple was a colour peculiarly esteemed in those days; and making or selling it, seems to have been a trade of itself. She "worshipped God;" and as she observed the Sabbath, it is probable she was one of those persons to whom we have already referred—a "proselyte" to the Jewish religion. She therefore knew that a Saviour had been promised, and that in prospect of his coming, the blood of animals was offered in sacrifice by Divine command. She was thus prepared to understand "the things spoken of by Paul." The things which he spoke at Philippi, were, doubtless, the same as he spoke at Antioch, in Pisidia. His first discourse there, is recorded at large in the 13th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; and if you read it, you

will find him saying, "We declare unto you glad tidings; how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," &c. But, though Lydia might know the meaning of such words, it appears that it was needful for the Lord to "open her heart,"\* in order to make her "attend" to them. At first sight, it may appear as if it were no great matter to *attend* to Paul's words; and you may be surprised that this was all the effect produced by the Lord's work upon her heart. But her attending was somewhat more than listening with attention. She attended to Paul, as a dutiful child or servant attends to a master or a parent—*for the purpose of doing what the parent or*

\* It is evident, that this opening of the heart was something which none but the Lord himself could accomplish. There are other passages of the New Testament, describing at greater length the success of the Gospel which the Apostles preached. These passages will more fully prove, that when a sinner's heart is really opened to the truth, it is one of the most "wondrous works of God;" and also, that the heart never will be so opened, unless his divine power does accompany that truth. See, particularly, 1 Cor. i. 18; iii. 5-7; 1 Thess. i. 5.

*master directs.* She was afterwards baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus; showed the reality of her love to him, by offering kindness to his despised ministers; and acted so, that they "judged her to be faithful to the Lord."

There is nothing more striking in all this, than the *benefit of a regular attendance on the worship of God.* Few sanctuaries have ever offered less to please the eye or attract the admiration of the thoughtless, than the one to which Lydia went. It is not even mentioned that there was a building at all. It was "by the river-side;" and there, to be sure, might be the beauty of wild flowers, shady trees, and sparkling waters. Learned men, however, have supposed, that there was an erection called an "oratory," or place for prayer. If so, it would only be an enclosure of walls, without any roof. The congregation consisted of women only; and there was no preacher with animated looks or persuasive voice, to vary the service or to explain the Scriptures. Yet did these women persevere in going; they "resorted thither" regularly and habitually. Are you ever tempted to say, "Our minister is from home, I do not know who will preach, I think I will not go this morning;" or, "There will be very few people there this wet day, and the place will look so

dull,—I shall stay at home;" or, "There's no sermon in the afternoon, only prayer, I'll go in the evening"? These, and similar excuses, are often made; but look at Lydia. What was there to distinguish that Sabbath morning from any other? or what reason had she to expect anything unusual at the well-known spot "where prayer was wont to be made"? In the course of regular Sabbath observance, she went, and she realised the truth of a promise, recorded expressly to encourage "the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord." She was brought to God's holy mountain, and made joyful in his house of prayer.\*

The presence of four strangers—Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke—must have occasioned surprise, and excited some curiosity in the small assembly. Yet, how little could they imagine the momentous consequences connected with the visit of these plain and humble men! How little were they aware, that "the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth," was about to exert his creating power in the midst of them! Is the sanctuary so associated with all your childish recollections; are the walls, the seats, and the countenances, so familiar to you, that you can scarcely feel it to be the house of God,

\* See Is. lvi. 2-8.

or exercise that "great fear which is due unto him in the meeting of his saints"? Oh, but you know not what wonders may be wrought in that very place, and by your very side. The hand which restrains the raging tempest and confines the rolling waters, may be working so mightily, that some one is ready to exclaim, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." That voice which "commanded the light out of darkness" may be speaking to one "dead in trespasses and sins," and the sinner may be awaking, arising from the dead, and obtaining light from Christ.\* While your eye discovers nothing of peculiar interest on which to rest, angels may behold that which will heighten their joys around the heavenly throne. How solemn, how awful would it be, to witness the raising of the dead, to be dazzled with the light of the Divine glory! Is it less solemn, should it inspire less of awe, to know that you are in the place where that glory is actually displayed,† and where such miracles do take place?

Yet, it is not always that even the heart in which the Holy Spirit is working, is at the moment fully conscious how directly and immediately this is the case. Lydia found her atten-

\* Ephes. v. 14.  
xviii. 20.

† Ex. xx. 24; Isaiah iv. 5; Matt.

tion completely engaged; she heard that which was deeply interesting to her; she received it with ready and simple belief, as addressed to herself; and, we may suppose, the service appeared to her more brief and more delightful than it had ever done before. Yet, perhaps, she was little aware that it was "the Lord's doing." Her feelings might resemble those of the two disciples going to Emmaus, who "knew not that it was Jesus" who walked with them; but who, when the interview was over, exclaimed with transport and surprise, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?"

Now, the grand question for you, my dear reader, is this, "Has the Lord ever opened *my* heart?" or, you may think it easier to reply, if I ask you, "Have you ever attended to the things spoken by your teacher or your minister?" I can imagine the look of satisfaction and pleasure with which you assure me, that you have often done so—that it is your general practice to do so. You have been required to give some account of what was addressed to you; and for that purpose, you carefully read the text, you keep your eye fixed on the speaker, you observe the divisions of the discourse, and when anything particularly strikes you as interesting, you

think with yourself, "I'll try to remember this; it is under the second or the fourth *head* of the sermon;" and then, when you get home, you recount in your mind what was spoken in the first, the second, the third place, &c., and what was the improvement made of the whole. This is attending to a sermon certainly; such habits of attention make it increasingly easy to remember and repeat what is heard from the pulpit or the desk; and where a teacher has been so happy as to have such attentive pupils, both she and they must have found it a pleasant part of their school exercise, to ask and answer questions on the subject. Not only so, but, as long as you live, you will feel the benefit of having early learned so to hear sermons as to retain the substance of them in your memory.

But yet, granting all this, I need hardly say, that much more is effected where the Lord opens the heart. It is of great importance that you keep your eyes, and your ears, and your memory open; for if you do not, the Word of God might as well be preached in a foreign language, unknown to you altogether. But it was Lydia's *heart* which the Lord opened. Of course, we are to understand, not merely that it was opened, but that the truth entered in. And if it thus reached that part of her which could "think

and know, rejoice and be sorry,"\* then it must have filled her thoughts, excited her desires, awakened joys, and produced sorrows, to which before she was a stranger. A memorable Sabbath morning that was to her; though, while it shone, she knew not how often and how fondly she would look back upon it in after days. Can you remember any such season? Was there ever a time, when, as you were listening from a sense of duty or the desire to gratify a parent or a teacher, you began to listen because you really longed to hear more of the things spoken—when you forgot that you were surrounded by a crowd of people, and listened to every word, as spoken to yourself? Did the terrors of the Lord ever seriously alarm you, or the glad tidings of great joy ever fill you with delight? Did you hear with so deep an interest, that you looked forward with eagerness to another opportunity of hearing the same truths, and, in the intervening season, found the things that had been spoken continually recurring to your mind and occupying your thoughts?

Is such the manner in which *habitually* you hear the servants of Christ? For, while I ask if you can recollect when you began thus to

\* See Watts' Catechism; question, "How do you know you have a soul?"

hear, it would not satisfy me to be told, that you "once heard a remarkably impressive sermon, which melted you into tears; that the last time your minister preached to young people, you thought he spoke most affectionately to *you*, and for many days you could not forget it." If the Lord has opened your heart, your impressions have been abiding; though they began in the heart, they have influenced every part of your conduct; you go with pleasure, not merely to hear a favourite preacher, but to hear the truth concerning Jesus, by whatever lips it is declared. It is impossible to doubt, that Lydia entertained a peculiar affection for Paul; and ever after she first attended to the things spoken by him, she would hail with peculiar emotions an occasion of hearing him again. And there may be some honoured servant of Christ, whom you regard with similar feelings, as having "begotten you in the Gospel." Yet if such be the case, the name of Jesus will be to you "as ointment poured forth"—the great charm of all preaching—your chosen, and favourite, and untiring theme.

Those who truly possess Lydia's faith, will count it a privilege, as she did, to declare themselves the disciples of Christ, by observing those ordinances which he has appointed in his church.

And though you are not the mistress of a house, where you can invite his ministers to "come and abide," yet, if your heart has been opened to love him, you will find means to show, that you love his people also. Do you prefer their company and their conversation to any other? Do you dare to meet them with a cordial smile, and a friendly salutation, even in the presence of those who ridicule and despise them? Do you frown upon every remark made to their disadvantage, though it may be disguised as harmless pleasantry, and uttered by the fascinating and the admired? Do you count it a privilege, to sympathise in their sorrows, or to minister, in the humblest degree, to their comfort and relief? Above all, is your daily conduct, your deportment in domestic life, so controlled by Christian principle, that it proves you "faithful to the Lord"? Your appearance in his house, may be such as to secure the approbation and excite the hopes of those who long for your salvation; but what is your character *at home*? Is your diligence in business, your minute attention to every direction, and thoughtful consideration of every matter entrusted to your care,—are these equally commendable with your attendance on public worship, or on social prayer meetings? Could your mother, or your em-

ployer, conscientiously testify, that you did your work “not with eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but as a servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart”? Do you, in short, habitually act and speak in such a way, as that you would at any time welcome a visit of inspection from your teacher or your minister? Examine yourself, my young friend; be honest in your search; take every precept of the New Testament in its plain and obvious meaning; and conclude not, that the things spoken in the sanctuary have reached your heart, unless they have made you a more dutiful daughter—a more useful and trusty servant—an upright and honourable dealer, in whatever business belongs to you.

But look again at Paul’s visit to Philippi. If the benefit obtained by Lydia was beyond her expectation, how much more the ultimate consequences of his appearance there with his companions! Probably, their arrival in the city was unobserved or unknown by any beyond the house, or the immediate neighbourhood, where they obtained a lodging. Except the quiet example of the women, who resorted to the river-side for prayer, there was nothing to distinguish the Sabbath from any other day. And, amidst the multitudes who were following

their ordinary pursuits, or frequenting the temples of "gods many, and lords many," if some did observe the few strangers gliding away from the busy scene, who could have imagined that their work and their memorial would outlive all that was splendid, and everything that was deemed important among that bustling crowd? It is true, they were speedily brought into public notice, but not in a way that was pleasing or desirable. The poor, misled, and possessed young woman, declared the truth respecting them; and it is impossible to say how many were induced, by her wild and frantic outcries, to follow these "servants of the most high God," and hear them declare "the way of salvation." Yet we cannot wonder, that Paul was "grieved in spirit," when, from day to day, his progress to the place of prayer was haunted by an attendance so extraordinary. By the miraculous power entrusted to him, he silenced her noisy testimony; but this immediately led to the violent apprehension of himself and Silas.

It appears, indeed, from the fortieth verse of the chapter, as if several more individuals, and among them some of the male sex, had already believed, to the saving of their souls. When, however, the two preachers were "thrust into the inner prison, and had their feet made fast

in the stocks," it seemed more unlikely than ever, that they should produce any considerable impression on the mass of idolaters around them. But, while these worshippers of false gods were rejoicing in their triumph, Jehovah himself asserted his power, and vindicated his servants. In a moment, he undid the strongest bolts and most ingenious fastenings; while the same influence which had opened the gentle heart of Lydia, brought the stern and cruel jailer to tremble at the feet of his injured prisoners. And it is instructive to observe, that the things spoken to him were precisely the same as those addressed to her. The scene was altogether different; his character and his habits were the very opposite of hers; terror, in his case, prompted the anxious inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" while of her, perhaps, it may be said, that the Saviour was "found of one who sought him not:" but no variety of circumstances can alter that one Gospel, which is to be preached to every creature. Neither is there any other way to obtain the blessings it reveals, than by *faith*. It was when the jailer "believed" the word of the Lord, that he "rejoiced."

Like Lydia also, he proved by his subsequent conduct, that his serious thoughts were some-

thing more than mere feelings of sudden alarm, to subside, like the agitation of the ground, when the earthquake was over. His name is not mentioned; so that we cannot ascertain whether he is afterwards referred to in the Apostolic writings; neither can we be sure, that Lydia was one of those women whom Paul acknowledged as having "laboured with him in the Gospel."\* But as she and the jailer are the only two whose conversion is particularly narrated, we may presume they continued to hold an important place among the believers at Philippi. It was in Lydia's house, that Paul and Silas addressed a parting and comforting address to "the brethren;" and having done so, they departed from the city immediately. We may suppose they left directions as to their future meetings, and probably sent other preachers to labour among them. It must have been previous to this, that the believing women already referred to, united their efforts with those of the Apostle himself. In what way they did so, we are not informed. We may, however, be assured, that they would labour in their own proper sphere, doing nothing inconsistent either with female modesty or with the claims of domestic duty. And, doubtless, their active zeal

\* Phil. iv. 1-3.

was one means of carrying on the work, which he and his companions had begun. For, in writing to the Philippian church, the Apostle especially commends its members, as being "much more" obedient to his precepts, in his absence from them, than even while he was present.—See Phil. ii. 12. Except a passing visit, seven years after, when Timothy accompanied him,\* it does not appear that Paul ever again personally ministered to them, of the word of life. Yet, in the space of eleven years from the time when he first preached at the riverside, the number of believers had so increased, and the church had become so regularly organised, that more than one bishop is named as connected with Philippi.—See Phil. i. 1. The Apostle, who had introduced the Gospel into so many places, seems to have retained a peculiar regard for the Christians there. The letter he addressed to them, is perhaps more full of commendation, and expresses more confidence in those to whom he wrote, than any other of his epistles. And it is interesting to observe, that he particularly refers to their "fellowship from the *first day*, until" the period of his writing to them (i. 5). Thus, an important portion of the Sacred Volume, destined for circulation

\* Acts xx. 6.

throughout the world, is associated with the quiet and unobtrusive circumstances in which the Lord opened Lydia's heart.

Now, my young friend, if yours has undergone a similar change, you will love to dwell on all such scenes. Next to your Bible, you will prize the records of Missionary zeal and success, whether at home or abroad. And besides an eager desire to peruse them, you will treasure them up in your mind, and feast your thoughts upon them, as a favourite and fruitful theme. But is it so? And if it is not, what then? If your heart has not been opened, it is shut—fast closed against the message and the messengers of Heaven. Nay, Christ himself says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock;” but while he calls, you refuse to hear his voice and open the door. Your memory is not deficient; it is well stored with the very things which were spoken by Paul. Neither, I hope, is your ear closed. You hear, with punctual attention, the truth concerning Jesus. You listen to the story of his wants and sorrows, his sufferings and his death; and if you witnessed the hundredth part of them in a fellow-creature, your heart would bleed with interest and compassion. But cold, and insensible, and impenetrable as a stone does that heart remain to him

who endured all these *out of love to you*. Oh, are you satisfied to be thus unmoved, and thus ungrateful to one who shed his blood for your sake?

It was “for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross, despising the shame.” The travail of his soul, the agony he endured, was beyond all conception; yet, he knew that he should “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” And, young as you are, humble as your lot may be, *you* might contribute to that satisfaction—*your* soul might form a part of that reward which is to be the recompense of his pain. Will you refuse to yield it? Have you no ambition to share the honour of requiting his love? His love shall not go unrequited; his pain shall be fully recompensed; but if you “despise him, you wrong your own soul,—all they that hate him, love death.” The heart that is not opened to receive him, shall be for ever shut against light, and peace, and joy.

But think also of the consequences that may be involved in your individual decision. You may not be, like Lydia, the first Christian convert in the town or village where you dwell; the age of miracles is past, and neither storm nor earthquake is likely to attest the truth of what is preached by the ministers of Christ; the

volume of Scriptures is completed, and your name will never be published to the nations of the earth. But not one heart can be influenced by the love of Christ without spreading and communicating the holy flame. Who are the most efficient Sabbath-school teachers? the most useful and devoted visitors of the afflicted? who are the "mothers in Israel," with wise counsels and holy example, directing those that inquire the way to Zion? Are they not, in general, those who have "feared the Lord from their youth"? those who, by giving their warmest affections and their best days to Him, have acquired a depth of principle, a steadiness of purpose, and a clearness of understanding, seldom otherwise attained? Keep in mind the pattern set you by the women of Philippi. And what is the character of every Christian female? Has she not that holiness of heart and life, which is "the salt of the earth," checking the progress of corruption around her, and conveying something of its own savour to all who approach her? Is she not enabled, so to exemplify whatever is "lovely and of good report," that she may truly be called "the light" of the circle wherein she moves?\* "Such honour have all the saints;" such honour may be yours.

\* See Matt. v. 13, 14.

Do but open your heart to the blessed news of salvation, and this real excellence, this sterling worth will belong to you.

Say not, I cannot open my own heart. Such was not the reply of the maimed and palsied to whom Jesus said, "Stretch forth thine arm—arise and walk." They believed that he who gave the command was able to remove their infirmity; and instantly as they obeyed his word, they found the needful strength imparted. Jesus "is able to save unto the uttermost." He opened the doors of the Philippian prison-house, and he can open your heart. If you feel that it is obstinately closed, look unto him, for he was specially appointed to "proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Seek his aid, yield to his power; and you will not only bear a part in the spread of his Gospel through the world, but when his dominion shall have become universal and complete, you shall be owned by him before assembled myriads—have a full share in the glory of his kingdom—and know, to your unspeakable and eternal joy, how immeasurably important is the conversion of one single soul.

## VII.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE VIRTUES, GRACES,  
OR DUTIES, IN WHICH CHRIST MOST RE-  
MARKABLY APPEARS AS OUR EXAMPLE?

WE should never speak of Christ, the Son of God, but with the deepest reverence and godly fear. "This is the will of Him that sent him, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Though he was made flesh, and dwelt among men, he was "Immanuel, God with us." And neither should his name be mentioned, nor his life on earth narrated, but with the recollection, that his great object in coming into the world, was to make atonement for sin. Everything that he did, and all that he suffered, were necessary to be suffered and done, to accomplish the salvation of sinners.

But the power and the wisdom of God, can fulfil many purposes in one. And while we are taught in the Bible, that "without the shedding of his blood," there could be "no remission" of sin, the same unerring authority declares, "He hath left us an example, that we should follow

his steps." Looking at his history in this light, it is a wondrous display of divine condescension. The ten commandments are a plain revelation of God's will, and of our duty. The various other writings of the Old Testament, are abundantly sufficient to make men acquainted with his holy character, and with his just requirements. But, in the human nature of Christ, we see a living picture of what was written at first on two hard and silent stones. He assumed a body like your own; he passed, like you, from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth; he became acquainted with hunger, and weariness, and pain; he felt sorrow, and anger, and shame; he mingled in family scenes, and entered into every-day life. Is there, then, my young friend, a situation in which you can possibly be placed, where his blessed example cannot guide you? And is it not most kind and gracious, that the glorious excellencies of Him who inhabiteth eternity—the perfect holiness of Him "whom no man hath seen, or can see," should thus be exemplified in such a manner, that a child can see, and admire, and humbly try to copy them? If, through ignorance or indifference, you have ever listened to the divine law, as containing only long words and hard sentences, look here, and you may see their

beauty; look at Christ's example, as that law in another form, and see if it is not "altogether lovely."

You will naturally look first at his earliest days. And here at once you will see, how appropriate to yourself is the pattern presented to you. "He was subject to his parents." This includes much more than mere obedience to their expressed commands. It gives us the idea of willing, habitual, and respectful submission to their wishes. And this feature of his character is specially mentioned, at a time when he had not only obtained the most flattering distinction, but had also asserted his commission to be "about business"\* far above any ordinary duties of the domestic circle. This does seem to me peculiarly instructive to young persons such as you. You are old enough to observe, that your parents, in common with the best and wisest of men, have their failings. They have given you, it may be, a better education than they received themselves; and you are aware, perhaps, that you understand some things of which they are ignorant. In religious knowledge, especially, you may happen to excel them; and you have acquired the habit of stated attendance on the means of grace, which are, unhap-

\* Luke ii. 49.

pily, too much neglected. These circumstances do not, in the slightest degree, weaken your obligations to observe the fifth commandment. But if you are ever tempted, by look or word, to express contempt or self-conceit—if any other feeling than that of genuine grief, is ever engendered in your bosom, by the sin of a parent,—then think of him who both enforced and exemplified the precept referred to. He obeyed those whom he had a perfect right to command; illustrating what the Apostle means, when he says, that the Lord Jesus “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” Far from being dependent, as you have been, on those to whom you owe your birth, it was in him an act of infinite condescension, that he submitted to be nursed, and cherished, and reared by their care. While they doubtless had their faults (and his holy nature was painfully alive to these), he had none—not one evil temper, or sinful propensity, to occasion or exercise maternal patience. And, in regard to superior wisdom, if the doctors in the temple were astonished at it, how far inferior must have been the knowledge of a simple carpenter! Yet Jesus relinquished the company of his learned admirers; quitted the place where he had loved to linger; and, going down to ob-

scure and despised Nazareth, "was subject unto his parents."\*

If it be possible for you to be ensnared, by a fancied superiority even to your parents; how much greater is the danger, of cherishing improper feelings towards those who are younger! You have a little brother, who teases you with silly and trifling questions; and instead of trying to turn his curiosity to some useful purpose, you are half disposed to exclaim against him, as intolerably stupid and tiresome. Or, a sister is put under your instruction, of slow capacity, indolent, and idle: you give her line upon line, precept upon precept; and still her lesson is

\* Lest any should suppose that John ii. 4, is at variance with the representation given above, I may observe, that Jesus, being about thirty years of age, had then entered on his public ministry, in which he was to act without the direction or authority of any human being whatever. "Jesus replied to her in a manner, which showed that she was in some way reprehensible, in supposing that her authority or influence was to be employed in directing his conduct as the Messiah. There is not, indeed, the least disrespect in the word 'woman,' with which he addressed her, as the greatest princesses were accosted, even by their own servants, in the same manner, among the ancients: and he afterwards used it, when speaking from the cross, with the most endeared affection and tenderness. Yet the whole reply was an evident and intentional discouragement to her, from interposing on such occasions. \* \* This answer of our Lord to Mary, seems to have been expressly intended, as a prophetic protest against the idolatries of the Church of Rome, \* \* especially the worship of the Virgin Mary."—*Commentary on the Bible, by Rev. Thomas Scott.*

misunderstood, her allotted task unfinished. Or, perhaps, you have an elder sister, or fellow-servant, who is overbearing towards yourself: you are fully convinced, that she is in the wrong, and that you are in the right; and it is very difficult to bear her contradiction, without irritation and impatience. Then, look again at him who spake as never man spake. Was his patience put to any such test? We are expressly told, that his own brethren did not believe on him.\* And though the inquisitive are not gratified with any detail of their early domestic history; yet it is easy to imagine, how his spirit must have been tried with them, daily and hourly. But, in regard to subsequent trials of patience, we are not left to our own imaginings. Even his disciples, who sincerely loved him, and who, for three years, were favoured with his private instructions—permitted to ask him confidentially, whatever they desired to know,—even they were marvellously dull of comprehension. They mistook the nature of his kingdom, and the design of his coming, and showed, in many instances, that their views were very different from their Master's.† Yet his reproofs were conveyed in the mildest terms; and some-

\* John vii. 3-5.      † Mark viii. 14-21; x. 13-15, 32-38; Luke ix. 54-56; xxiv. 10, 11, 21-27.

times, instead of directly reproof, he only took occasion to state the truth, which might correct the mistake into which they had fallen. There was one of the Apostles, who actually betrayed him into the hands of his enemies; and he who can read our most secret thoughts, knew from the beginning what a traitor he would be; month after month, while he was "eating bread with him," he knew that he would "lift up his heel against him."\* Judas's professions of friendship must have been above measure disgusting to one who "desireth truth in the inward parts;" yet never did he drop a hint of impatience, which might awaken suspicions of his treachery in the minds of the rest. And even when he received the perfidious kiss, which was the crowning act of effrontery on the part of Judas, he expressed neither violence nor resentment. When, in a most distressing hour, he heard himself thrice denied, by one who had promised to go with him both to prison and to death, he uttered not one reproachful word; he only "turned, and looked upon" the offender.

How often, too, was he surrounded by men who perverted his meaning, misrepresented his most merciful actions, and watched his words

\* Ps. xli. 9.

with malicious eagerness, for something of which to "accuse him." In the 22d chapter of Matthew, we have an account of three successive and most artful attempts to "entangle him in his talk." He answered them so that his crafty tormentors " marvelled, were astonished, and put to silence." Yet though he plainly told some of them, that they were hypocrites, it was with meekness of wisdom that he spoke to them, for their own good. Indeed, nothing is more striking, than the improvement he made, of frivolous or teasing questions, to convey instruction of most essential value. And would not the feeblest attempt to follow his example here, impart more real and lasting satisfaction, than the most triumphantly clever or cutting reply, which could only add fuel to the flame of another's anger and your own pride? However grievous may be your daily provocations, "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself unto Him that judgeth righteously." How full of meaning is this description! Conscious as he was of being entirely innocent—"holy, harmless, and undefiled"—his feelings must have been painfully alive to the false and insulting language

uttered against him; yet, instead of loud and indignant expostulation, he "committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously"—calmly and silently bore the "trial of cruel mocking," patiently waiting for the time when God should openly vindicate his character. And, remember, he had a perfect right to threaten; there would have been nothing but justice in the most awful denunciations he could utter. Provocation sometimes brings to your lips vain and empty threats, which have no other effect than that of making you appear ridiculous. But if he had threatened, he had power to execute. He had showed this, when, without even a touch from him, his enemies "went backward, and fell to the ground." Yet did he sit, quiet and submissive as a helpless lamb, while they spit in his face, tore his hair, lacerated and scourged his already wearied frame, and treated him with insult the most wanton and contemptuous. Truly had Isaiah predicted, that "as a sheep is dumb before her shearers, so he opened not his mouth." Once, under the influence of excruciating pain, he did break the silence, but it was to say, of those who were inflicting it, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, if these scenes were kept in view, you might well blush to speak an angry word, or wear a passing frown.

Jesus could frown, but it was upon *sin*. Being himself "separate from sinners," as well as infallible in his judgment even of secret thoughts and motives, he certainly gave reproof in terms which no sinful creature may presume to imitate. Yet is he an example to us, in *his sincere abhorrence of evil, and tender concern for the Divine glory*. We have seen with what unbroken meekness he endured his own accumulated woes; compare this with his severity and zeal, when he saw dishonour done to his Father's law. (Read Matt. xv. 1-20; xxiii.; John ii. 13-17.) Now, if you are a follower of Christ, you must answer the description given of the church at Ephesus,\* who "could not bear them which were evil." Yet our hearts are ever apt to deceive us, and perhaps in nothing more than this. To explain my meaning, I will tell you something of a young person known to me; and it is not unlikely that you are acquainted with persons of similar character. She made long and loud complaints of the family with whom she lived, that they were sad breakers of the Sabbath. They had so much company on that sacred day, that she could seldom get out in time for public worship, and still more rarely find an opportunity of quietly reading her Bible.

\* Rev. ii. 2.

These things were undoubtedly wrong, and she spoke no more than the truth when she said, "it was shameful for Sabbaths to be so profaned by those who ought to have known better." I have some reason to think, that this young woman was not always quite willing to work even on week-days. One thing, however, I can state with certainty,—when she did get to the sanctuary, she sat in the same pew with a neighbour's daughter, whose behaviour was often very irreverent while there, and who, as they slowly sauntered home together, talked on the most trifling subjects, taking sometimes the name of God in vain. Thus the third commandment was broken, as well as the fourth; yet my young friend never reproved her—never expressed dislike of such sinful practices; but, on the contrary, sought her company as often as she could. I need hardly say, her vexation was, not because the Sabbath was dishonoured, but because she was prevented from spending the day as she liked. Ask yourself, then, when you are displeased at the faults of others, whether you are indignant at the contempt shown for God's authority and for their own true interest, or *irritated by some inconvenience or disappointment occasioned to yourself*. The wisdom that cometh down from above, is "without par-

tiality.”\* And if the sins of a favourite companion do not awaken your displeasure as much as those of a superior or a stranger, you have yet to learn of Christ. It is worthy of observation, too, that his most awful threatenings were accompanied by the tenderest compassion for the guilty.† A genuine imitation of him, therefore, is far removed from the spirit which delights to repeat another’s follies, or condemns them in the tone of triumph and self-conceit.

Closely connected with this abhorrence of all sin for its own sake, is the avoiding one particular form of sin, so often condemned in Scripture; I mean, *deceit*. In this, our Lord presents a perfect pattern. We are repeatedly assured, that he was without sin, entirely undefiled by the principle of evil; yet his freedom from deceit is particularly specified. It was the subject of ancient prophecy (Isaiah liii. 9); and the Apostle Peter, who himself was blessed with seeing, what Isaiah only “desired to see,” declares that Jesus “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” This is a most comprehensive description. Many persons who never “tell lies,” are yet very far from that thorough uprightness of character which it denotes. What-

\* James iii. 17.  
xix. 41-44.

† See Matt. xxiii. 23-38; Luke

ever is spoken or done, with the intention of concealing the naked truth, or leading another to take an incorrect view of any matter whatever—that is deceit. And perhaps there is no sin which assumes such varied forms, or disguises itself in such fair colours. It takes the name of civility or politeness—a desire of pleasing, or a fear of offending—a wish to screen the faults of others, or to promote peace and prevent quarrelling. While the strongest temptation of all, especially to young people, is when the practice of guile appears to offer them the only way of escape from chastisement or blame. But let the occasion or the manner of it be ever so specious, the individual who uses deception, is not “following the steps” of Jesus Christ. Do not say, it is impossible for sinful creatures to copy this excellence of him who was perfect in holiness; for in asserting the blessedness of a pardoned sinner, David describes his spirit as without guile.\* And you know who it was, that received the honourable epithet of “an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile.” Take the Saviour in this respect, as your model; and you will find that unbending integrity,—if it does sometimes incur the frown of those who deceive one another, and love to have it so,†—

\* Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

† Jer. v. 31.

will in the end ensure you real respect and confidence. For "the lip of truth shall be established for ever; but the lying tongue is but for a moment."

In his love of devotional retirement, his observance of the Sabbath, and stated attendance on all the institutions of religion, the Saviour's example is decisive. It is, in these particulars, peculiarly striking; because he had no ignorance to need instruction, no depraved inclinations to subdue, nor was he in any danger of being ensnared by the world.

But, looking again at the prevailing feature in his history—viewing him as "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," the grace of *self-denial* is most remarkably exemplified. The earth is his, and the fulness thereof: he could have commanded the most splendid accommodations; yet, by his own choice, he had not "where to lay his head." There were only two occasions on which he exercised his right to use what belonged to his creatures, and then not for his own indulgence. He borrowed an ass on which to ride, in fulfilment of a well-known prediction of Zechariah the prophet; and the use of an upper room, that he might celebrate the passover. Repeatedly did he put forth his power, to satisfy the hungry multi-

tude;\* exhibiting thus his tender consideration for the feebleness of women and children, who composed a part of these assemblies; but never once did he perform a miracle to relieve his own necessities. When refused hospitality in one village, he meekly went to another. And neither the hunger that succeeded a fast of forty days—the weary faintness of a hot and toilsome journey—nor the prospect of contending a whole day with crowds of unbelieving disputants, without a morning meal,†—“none of these things moved him” to procure, by miraculous means, the smallest supply. In like manner, did he forbear to summon one of all the twelve legions of angels at his command, to protect him from the insulting treatment of a rude and offensive mob. He did show, that “the fish of the sea” were under his control, by making one of them the bearer of money, which his circumstances required; but it was for no self-gratification; it only served to exemplify his own precept, by

\* The occasions here referred to, present another lesson which we ought not to pass unnoticed, namely, his disapproval of waste. If you are ever tempted to be wasteful, either with your own property or that of another, on the foolish plea, that “there’s plenty more”—or, “such a little is not worth saving,” think of him who could multiply loaves at his pleasure, and yet suffered not a fragment of broken bread to be lost.

† Matt. iv. 2-4; John iv. 6-8; Mark xi. 12-19.

“rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s.” Now, you cannot mistake the lesson which is conveyed to you by all these things. A young person who studies the life of Christ as her pattern, will not hastily exclaim, that this or that annoyance “is really past bearing—more than any one could put up with—that she will never be able to get the time over,” &c. She will not cherish discontent, because her dress is not so gay, or her food not so nice, as she might like. Much less will she use any improper means to secure a wished for indulgence, or escape an unpleasant sensation. She will rather be disposed to lighten the most cheerless hours with such thoughts as these:—

“As much have I of worldly good  
As e’er my Master had:  
I diet on as dainty food,  
And am as richly clad,  
Though plain my garb, and scant my board,  
As Mary’s Son and nature’s Lord.

“The manger was his infant bed;  
His home, the mountain cave;  
He had not where to lay his head,  
He borrow’d e’en his grave;  
Earth yielded him no resting-spot—  
Her Maker—but she knew him not.”—*Conder*.

But there is another, perhaps a far more difficult form of self-denial, which shone conspicu-

ous in the blessed Saviour. He never permitted his own sorrows, either felt or anticipated, to prevent the most unwearied efforts in instructing and comforting others. Once, when, after great exhaustion, he had invited his disciples to "come into a desert place, and rest awhile," the purpose was defeated by the eager multitudes, who had thronged to the spot before him. Did he indulge in peevish complaints, that his retirement was invaded, and needful repose denied him? No; "he was moved with compassion—he healed their sick—and began to teach them many things." On an occasion to which I have already referred, when wearied with a journey, he held long discourse—first with a woman alone, and afterwards with other Samaritans, who flocked around him; declaring, when pressed to eat, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." As he approached his last and bitterest sufferings, the more affecting and remarkable did this feature of his character appear. The memorable night arrived, in which he was betrayed; and all the agonising hours that were at hand, lay open as a picture, to his omniscient view. He did at length exclaim, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and a foretaste of that sorrow must have embittered all the even-

ing. Who could have wondered, had he declined the company of his disciples altogether, or maintained in their presence a mournful silence? Yet it seemed to be his only care, to console and encourage them. As if they alone were oppressed with grief, he repeated, and varied, and multiplied the expressions of his tenderness. By the appointment of the Lord's Supper, he gave a token of love to his people in all ages. And while the few, who attended his footsteps in the garden, were so absorbed in their own troubles, as even to sleep while he agonised and prayed, he was careful both to secure their safety and to correct their rashness, when he was already in the hands of his brutal assailants. When his feeble and lacerated frame was sinking under the cruelty which would have compelled him to bear his cross, he turned to speak with compassion to the "daughters of Jerusalem." And not all the tortures of crucifixion, could prevent him from making provision for the future comfort of his honoured mother.

These are scenes so unparalleled in interest and importance, that it almost seems profanity to place the occurrences of common life in any sort of comparison with them. Yet we are taught, that in these very sufferings he has left us an example; and the Apostle Peter particu-

larly applies it to the case of servants who had unreasonable masters.\* It is a mistake to suppose, that this example is only to be appealed to in seasons of overwhelming tribulation. Through the mercy of God, such seasons are comparatively of rare occurrence in the days of youth. But be assured, the young person who seeks not to manifest the self-denying spirit of the Redeemer, under the influence of a slight indisposition, or a trifling disappointment, would be quite as little influenced by it in protracted sickness, or the loss of all things. Look at your present circumstances, your daily occupations, and consider how you can imitate Christ in this particular. Perhaps your health is not so robust as that of some others—you often feel rather poorly—not disposed for cheerfulness and activity; yet a little exertion would do you no real harm, and your mother has something for you to do,—try to accommodate her, and to do it so willingly as not to distress her with the idea, that it is more than your strength is equal to. It may be, you are required to finish an allotted task, before you can have permission to go out; a little brother, in the fulness of his glee, and quite ignorant of your particular reasons for haste, comes prattling to your side.

\* 1 Pet. xviii. 21.

You are unwilling to lose a moment—so eagerly bent on the desired pleasure, that you feel no disposition to talk to him. But it would be no great hindrance to tell him the story he wants, or to enter into the little interests which fill his mind as completely as any favourite project can occupy yours. You have met with an affront in the morning, and you almost conceive yourself justified in being sullen and silent all the day: but if you yield to this absorbing selfishness, you unfit yourself for rendering some valuable service to a neighbour, who had no share whatever in occasioning your vexation. Your own imagination can supply a thousand instances in which you can practise self-denial, by *preferring the good or the pleasure of others, to the indulgence of your own feelings or troubles*. And in regard to doing what is in itself unpleasant, or as you fancy, beneath you, think what it was for Jesus to wash the feet of his disciples. This was on that same sorrowful night, to which we have already adverted; and he expressly enjoined them to “do as he had done to them.” It was a menial office; far different engagements occupied his mind; yet he condescended to every particular—did all with his own hands—and emphatically showed, that he “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”

Now, I believe your conscience has gone along with me in all this. You have found it impossible not to admire the picture of excellence presented to you. You admit that it is intended as a pattern for imitation; and that it is the duty of believers thus to become "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." But many witnessed the perfection of his virtues, who yet saw no beauty in him, why they should desire him; and some, when they heard his spiritual doctrines, said, "this is a hard saying, who can hear it? they went back, and walked no more with him." The reason was, they misunderstood the design of all his privations, and felt no need of such an atonement as he was to make for sin. Are you one of the "whole, who have no need of the physician"? Or, do you feel your wretchedness as a sinner, and do you look at Jesus as standing in *your* place? have you seen, that the shame and disgrace to which he submitted, were yours? and do you follow him through all his course of sorrows, with adoring and grateful wonder that he should have endured them all for you? Ah! my young friend, this is the grand secret of imitating Christ. If you believe that "he once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring *you* to God;" if you regard him, as "his own

self bearing *your* sins in his own body on the tree,"—oh then, his example is irresistible. You will feel it a delight, to "walk even as he walked;" instead of being discouraged by the warning he himself has given, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," you will rather "rejoice if you be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." But if you know nothing of such joy; if it has no practical influence on you, to be reminded that "even Christ pleased not himself"—that "he came, not to do his own will, but the will of his Father who sent him,"—then remember, also, the positive assurance of an Apostle, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

## VIII.

WHAT REMARKABLE PROOFS OF THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST, ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE HISTORY OF HIS LIFE ON EARTH?

THAT Jesus Christ was "God with us," is a truth so plainly revealed in the Scriptures, as to demand the belief of every one who reads them. It is a truth, interwoven with all the instructions you ever received, and you never doubted it for a moment. Yet you will find it a most interesting engagement, to consider how it is *proved* to be true, by facts recorded in the Gospel history. Your teachers have ever encouraged you to "search the Scriptures" for yourself. And if I may judge of you by my own young friends, it was always a pleasant exercise to find passages on a particular subject.

Be not content, however, with the knowledge you have already thus acquired. "God, who cannot lie," has a right to be believed, if but once he should declare a doctrine or a promise. But the Bible is not a dry, systematic explanation of truth or duty—like a dictionary, where you can find the meaning of any word, if you know the letter of the alphabet with which it begins.

The volume we are speaking of, repeats the same things many times over, in many different forms; and in such beautiful variety are they scattered through the book, as to afford the fullest employment for a rational, immortal mind; and such a mind is yours. You are not now sitting down to commit to memory a Scripture lesson. You are able to do more than merely select those verses which contain the word salvation, or regeneration, or any other pointed out to you. You are done with tasks; but, as a free and a responsible being, your attention is called to that which God has revealed to you.

Our fair young Queen has her Ministers and counsellors, whom she privately consults on the affairs of her kingdom. But the far greater number of her subjects are entirely ignorant of her proceedings. Your name, for instance, she will never know; nor is it any concern of yours to understand the reason or the meaning of every law or proclamation that issues from the throne. There is not a child in this happy land, who does not enjoy the benefit of its wise and gracious laws; but all you have to do, is to obey them, and be thankful.

This, however, is not the case with the mandates of Him who is "King of kings and Lord

of lords." His will is, that every intelligent subject in his dominion should not only possess, but carefully study, the volume of his commands. The wise and gracious designs, which he has formed upon his heavenly throne, are laid open to the view of those who dwell upon the earth. And to the youngest, the simplest, the most obscure of his disciples—to *you*, if you will learn of him—Jesus says, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Surely, then, it should be esteemed a privilege, to inquire into the import of his word; and especially those parts of it which more directly refer to the great Redeemer himself. These are things which "*angels desire to look into,*"—how degraded, how perverted must be the mind of that sinner, who is content with looking *at* them—following the lines with a vacant eye, but never exercising thought or reason on their meaning and connexion! Gladly you have laid aside many childish things; you love to indulge the consciousness, that you no longer speak as a child or think as a child—then show that such is the case, by an enlightened and thoughtful consideration of those truths which God has spoken to you from heaven.

And no part of these is more interesting or more easy, than that which is given to you in the form of a narrative. The Apostle John expressly states the purpose for which he recorded the life of his Master: "these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Come then to his writings, and to those of his brethren, and seek an answer to the question, How do I know that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, the meek and lowly teacher, was God as well as man?

You will more easily perceive the importance of doing so, if for a moment you imagine yourself to have been living in Judea, at the time when he commenced his public ministry. Keep in mind, that the New Testament was not then in existence; you possessed only the Old Testament, containing promises of a Saviour to come. Your parents and neighbours often talked of these promises, and spoke of what was likely to happen, when "the Christ, the Messias" should appear.\* Possibly you had heard them say, that, about thirty years before, there was a report of a babe being born at Bethlehem, whose birth was announced by angels to some shepherds in a field. Or, if you lived in Jerusalem,

\* John iv. 25; vii. 31.

the prophetess Anna might have come to your father's house, and spoken of an infant she had seen in the temple, whom she knew to be "the Lord's Christ." But these things, as I have said, had taken place thirty years before. Some of the doctors, learned in the law, were once, at the conclusion of the passover, astonished by the conversation of a youth only twelve years old; but little more was heard of this extraordinary child. And though the preaching of John the Baptist, again excited an expectation that the ancient prophecy would be speedily fulfilled; yet, when a man called Jesus, said to be a native of Nazareth, of plain and humble appearance, arrived in the town where you dwelt, it hardly occurred to any one, that it was he of whom the angels sung, or that he was anything more than an ordinary teacher.

It was soon found, however, that "never man spake like this man"—that "he spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes." He performed miracles, too, such as had not been heard of from the beginning of the world; so that "there came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people."\* You heard one and another begin-

\* See, also, Matt. ix. 26, 31; Luke v. 26.

ning to inquire, "Is not this the Christ?" what if we have really lived to see the day, when "the Deliverer has come out of Zion, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"! But while a few were speaking thus, there were many who loudly and boldly contradicted them. They scornfully asked, "Shall Christ come out of Gallilee?" How can you imagine, that a carpenter's son—a man so poor, so unlearned—with no attendants but a few fishermen,—how can you imagine him to be "the Messiah, the Prince, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, who shall sit upon the throne of David, and of whose government there shall be no end"? Now, *you* know, that Jesus of Nazareth was not born there; and that it is quite a mistake to call him the son of Joseph. But these mistakes were generally believed. Some persons did not take the trouble to examine whether it was so or not; some wilfully misrepresented the matter, on purpose to prevent his claims from being received; while others, who could not help admitting them, kept their convictions a secret in their own minds, lest they should incur the scorn and displeasure of the Pharisees. If you had been just then rising into life, as you are doing now, there was no way to obtain satisfaction for yourself, but

closely to observe the character, and the works, and the sayings of Jesus; to see whether they answered the descriptions, prophetically given, of the Son of David; and whether, especially, they yielded any proof that he was more than a creature. And do you not see, that you have advantages for ascertaining these points, far greater than if you had literally seen and heard those things which prophets and righteous men desired to see and to hear, but were not permitted?

A Jewish maiden of your age, living at Nain, or Capernaum, or Bethsaida, might certainly have known enough of our Saviour's miracles, to convince her, that it was of him Isaiah spoke, in his 35th chapter. But few young persons could follow him from place to place; their knowledge of him was chiefly confined to what he did in their own immediate neighbourhood; or to the rumour, the floating report of him, that "went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about:" and it was three years, before the whole accomplishment of the things foretold had fully taken place. You, on the contrary, have a connected view of all that "he began both to do and to teach, until the day that he was taken up" again into glory. And, without being stunned by the noise of

angry disputants, or puzzled by their false and cunning misrepresentations,\* you can calmly sit down to investigate at once his complete history, from the manger to the cross. It is true, the writers of the narrative plainly tell you, that he who was "despised and rejected of men," was nevertheless "God manifest in the flesh;" and that he himself, on several occasions, declared it to be so. But they do not so often state this in so many words, as they give you the proofs of it in his history; and, therefore, it is as much your duty to examine these for yourself, as if you had merely been favoured, with a brief and passing visit, of him "who went about doing good;" who, even when "the people sought him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them, said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent." Remember, also, there are people in the world now, who admit that Jesus exactly fulfilled every prophecy respecting the promised Saviour; and yet still deny, that his nature was divine. With that exact fulfilment, so apparent in every circumstance of his life, but especially in his sufferings and death, I expect you are well acquainted. Our present

\* See Matt. xiii. 54-58; John vii. 11, 12, 40-53; viii. 52-59; x. 19-21.

question confines your attention to this one truth, that "Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

One of the first things mentioned in his history, is his healing of the infirm and the sick. Some of these cures are such as could not possibly have been accomplished by human power or skill. The palsied, the leprous, the deaf, the dumb, and the born-blind, were universally admitted to be beyond the reach of medical aid. But there is something in the *manner* of these miracles, which peculiarly marks them, as wrought by "the finger of God." Observe, for instance, how repeatedly they took place, without the Saviour in his bodily presence approaching the sufferers at all. The centurion's servant, the nobleman's son, the Syrophenician woman's daughter, were not only healed by the mere expression of his will, but at the very moment when he was pleased to declare that it should be so. In the servant's case, indeed, he did not even say that the centurion's request was granted; but they that were sent with that request, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick. And though he did not exert his power in this way, when informed at a distance of the illness of Lazarus

he showed his perfect knowledge of all that was taking place, by announcing to his disciples that Lazarus was dead.

There was an instantaneous completeness, too, in the cures performed by him, which is very remarkable. Two of those whom he relieved, were persons afflicted with fever. You have, perhaps, been so afflicted yourself; or you have known some friend or relative who suffered from such a complaint. By the blessing of God upon medical skill, the sufferer recovered. And probably there was a day, when it was said, "the fever has taken a favourable turn"—a time from which the patient might be considered as "in the way of mending." But instead of any sudden improvement, it might be, that suffering was more felt, than during the height of the disease; and strength returned, by such slow and imperceptible degrees, that many weeks elapsed before either work or pleasure could be engaged in as usual. Caution especially was necessary as to the kind and the quantity of food to be taken, lest while the frame was so feeble, the indulgence of appetite might produce symptoms more dangerous than the first. But look at Peter's mother-in-law: no sooner had she felt the healing touch, than she left her bed, and "ministered" to her bene-

factor and his disciples. She took upon herself the various little offices of serving up and presenting before them, such a meal as their exhaustion required, and the strict observance of the Sabbath permitted.

The little daughter of Jairus (not very far, it may be, from your own age) had not only exercised her anxious parents with days and nights of painful watching, but had filled the cup of her mother's sorrow, by expiring before her eyes. Yet when "her spirit came again," in obedience to him who has "the keys of death," it returned not to the enfeebled and emaciated body it had left. The trembling father needed not to gaze with doubtful eagerness on lips that scarcely could be seen to move; or check his own panting breath, that he might catch the first faint sound of hers. But with all the sprightliness of her most healthful days, "she arose and walked." While he, whose heart was ever as considerate as his word was powerful, "commanded that something should be given her to eat." She was restored at once to the very state of health and of enjoyment in which the first attack of illness found her. And while the sudden change might appear at first like a vision too bright to last, yet, seeing her partake, without injury, of her ordinary

food, they would rather begin to look back on the season of her sickness as a distressing dream, fading from their recollection in the reality of present and certain exultation.

And theirs was not the only dwelling gladdened on that day, by returning health. There was one, beyond the period of dependent childhood, perhaps long deprived of affectionate parental care. She had suffered, not for the limited duration of a fever, but through twelve tedious years of languishing had she known the heart-sickness of "hope deferred." Poverty was added to disappointment; and by the Mosaic law, she was forbidden to seek consolation in the "holy and the beautiful house where her fathers praised the Lord." She was "nothing bettered, but rather grew worse;" and such was the nature of her disease, that by medical skill, if even it should at length succeed, an *immediate* cure was alike dangerous and impracticable. But she was one of "the poor in this world, rich in faith;" "she said within herself, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway, the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." She could not merely say, that she felt somewhat revived—a little better than usual, but she was instantly, effectually, entirely cured.

Perhaps yet more wonderful were the miracles of our adorable Redeemer, on those who were paralytic and deformed, or deficient from their birth in one or more of their bodily senses. The science of modern times has accomplished much for the relief of the blind, but it has only served to discover more clearly the impossibility of giving speech to the dumb. It is now well known, that the want of speech, in persons dumb from infancy, arises from their being unable to hear. They have never heard the sound of language, and therefore they know not how to use their own voice. If their ears could be unstopped, they would learn to speak; but it would be slowly, and by degrees. This would be the *natural* course of things, but the Saviour's cures were *supernatural*. He did not make the tongue of the dumb to lisp, or to stammer, but to sing.\* They had never known the pleasure of either producing or listening to melodious sounds; but no sooner did they feel the impulse of gratitude for access to such various sources of enjoyment, than they "spake, and praised God," in fluent and harmonious strains. It is particularly mentioned by Mark, that the people "were beyond measure astonished; saying, He hath done all things well:

\* Isaiah, xxxv. 6.

he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." How appropriate to such an occasion, the words of Jehovah to Moses of old,—  
 "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?"

Imagine, too, the situation of her "who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up herself." Yet she was able, in some fashion, to walk; and distressed and disfigured as she was, she did walk to the place where Jehovah's name was recorded, knowing his promise, that there he would "come unto his people, and bless them." But there was another, and yet more helpless child of suffering, imprisoned on his weary couch for twenty years before *her* steps were straitened, by the cruel bonds of Satan. Think how the sinews must have been contracted, the bones distorted, the whole frame stiffened and bent, during these lengthened periods: yet, by simply "laying his hands on her, immediately she was made straight"—her form erect and perfect as ever. While, without even a touch, by his word of power alone, the limbs, unused for eight-and-thirty years, were brought at once into nimble and active movement. Witness, also, the man, whose desire to invoke

the Saviour's aid could not be gratified, but by the charitable assistance of his more vigorous neighbours: their ingenuity and perseverance in procuring for him the interview he desired, made it apparent that they were partakers of his faith; and surely their pleasure must have been of no common kind, when they saw him rise without their help, and become the bearer of the bed on which he had been borne.

Though somewhat less remarkable, the one shrivelled and powerless arm, which stretched forth at Christ's bidding, firm, plump, and healthful as its fellow, attested the presence of Him by whom we are "fearfully and wonderfully made."

But, above all the rest of his miracles, the resurrection of Lazarus, proved him to be the Lord of life and of death. Not only had the sorrowing sisters, assured that their brother was lost to them on earth, taken refuge in the distant prospect of his rising again at the last day; not only, as in the house of Jairus, had the hired mourners uttered their customary lamentations, and sympathising friends assembled to weep with those that wept; but the grave had received him within its bosom. And, far from indulging the least lingering hope that life might yet be recalled, Martha begged that the sepulchre might not be opened, lest the

sight and the odour of a decaying corpse should be alike injurious and distressing. You are aware, that when the breath has forsaken a human body, it immediately begins, by a process of putrefaction, to "return to the dust out of which it was taken" at first by the Creator's hand. And though, in our cool and temperate climate, the fond affection of survivors can be gratified, by retaining the precious relic for a few days in the accustomed chamber—though some will even watch the breathless clay, if perchance they may discover that life has not entirely fled; yet, as soon as symptoms of corruption are discerned, the tenderest affection must yield up the treasure—the last and faintest hope of restoration is dismissed as utterly groundless. In cases of sudden death, or of supposed drowning, there are various means which have been tried with success, to bring back the colour, and the pulsation, and the sensibility which had disappeared; but, to talk of attempting any such measures, when there are the evident, undoubted tokens of dissolution, would be treated by all sober-minded persons as perfect madness.

Under Judea's more powerful sun, this mournful certainty was rapidly completed, so that interment was usually necessary on the very day

when the spirit took its flight. When *four* days had elapsed, the nearest and most loving relative shrunk from having her dead brought again into her sight. But when Lazarus "came forth," there was neither taint nor blemish; the lips were no longer blackened, nor was the hand of marble coldness; the blood flowed with fresh and brisk circulation; and nothing was perceived that could prevent the mutual, rapturous embrace. Surely the delighted sisters, when their first astonishment gave place to calm reflection—surely they would exclaim, "Here is creating, new-creating power; the same power whereby man at first became a living soul."

Yet this wondrous work was but a prelude to the Saviour's own victory over death. He, "the Holy One of God, saw no corruption;" but most certainly and truly he was dead. And when the appointed hour arrived—the time predicted and determined by himself—he also threw aside the garments of the tomb, and left its rocky walls,—thus proving himself to be, as he had declared to Martha, "the Resurrection and the Life."

There are other proofs of his Divine majesty, so obvious, that you cannot fail to discover them. He "cast out the devils with his word," and restrained the rage of equally malignant hu-

man foes; for when their fury was at its utmost height, he passed through the midst of them untouched; and when, apparently defenceless, he did but speak to the armed band who approached him, "they went backwards, and fell to the ground." None but He "who giveth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater," could have multiplied a few loaves to be sufficient for the appetite of thousands. Though he wrought no miracle to satisfy his own hunger, yet he equally showed his power, by causing a verdant tree to wither away. And when money was wanted to pay a legal demand, he proved, that though then "a little lower than the angels, he had dominion over the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea."\* The waters themselves, and the stormy winds, were alike at his command. We cannot wonder, that "they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God;" for they must have been forcibly reminded of the Psalmist's devout ascription to the Lord God of Hosts: "Who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them."

\* Compare Ps. viii. 4-9, with Heb. ii. 6-9.

I have but hinted at these proofs of the Saviour's divinity, in the hope that you will pursue the subject farther, and make a diligent search for every incident in his history bearing upon it. I feel assured, that, in the course of your investigation, you will find an almost exhaustless treasure of interesting and delightful thoughts, amply sufficient to repay your labour, were there even no other advantage attending it. Employ your mind in trying to picture the various scenes:—The centurion exulting in the confirmation of his strongest faith—while his favourite servant, delivered from “grievous torment,” strove, by redoubled assiduity, to express increased affection and gratitude. The nobleman, eagerly hastening on his homeward journey—seeing his servants coming to meet him—their very countenances expressive of joyful tidings; and then the happy meeting with his family—their minute detail of all that had occurred in his absence—how anxiously they had watched the fever's unabated rage, till suddenly the maddened pulse became calm and regular, and incessant tossing to and fro was exchanged for quiet and natural repose. Oh, surely, the seventh hour\* would ever after be, to that believing household, a season of sacred and grate-

\* One o'clock in the afternoon.

ful recollection! And what a gathering crowd of neighbours! what mingled exclamations of wonder, and inquiry, and congratulation—when she, who had left her dwelling with eyes directed to the ground, returned erect and straight, looking up with ease into the clear blue sky, and praising Him who “raiseth up all those that be bowed down.” Imagine, if you can, the music of the woods and waters, the beauty of the flowers, the thousand delights of friendship and conversation, conferred at once on the eye, and the ear, and the lips, that had never enjoyed them before. How pleasant, how pure, how instructive is such a train of thought! how far above the wild, exciting dreams created by false and frivolous human fictions!

But is this all that I can promise you from studying the subject under consideration? Was this the highest purpose for which not fewer than four inspired accounts were given us of God’s “beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased”? Look again at John xx. 31, to which I have already referred you,—look especially at the last clause of the verse—“that believing, ye might have *life through his name*.” Ah, here is the grand point, the strong convincing argument why you should study the proofs of our Lord’s divinity—the stirring thought that makes

me so urgent in persuading you to do it. Were it not for this, you might naturally ask me, "Of what moment is it to me whether Jesus of Nazareth was divine or not? Persons of learning and of leisure may find pleasure in studying ancient histories, and examining the truth of what they contain; but for *me*, who have little leisure, and make no pretensions to learning, what inducement can there be for *me* to spend my time in this way?"

My dear young friend, do you wish to have life, eternal life? Do you desire an everlasting abode in that land, where "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick"—that bright world, where the day is never darkened by a cloud, nor the eye ever dimmed by a rising tear? Do you feel that you have a soul as precious as that of the noblest, the most educated, the most brilliant of women,—a soul which the riches of the wealthiest could not save from destruction? Then will you treasure up, as so many cordials, the proofs of our Lord's divine nature. For remember, the wonders he performed, though fraught with kindness to the individuals whom he relieved, were designed for a far more enlarged and permanent purpose of mercy. They were to prove, that Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost, all them that come unto God by

him." They were to encourage them that sleep to "awake, and arise from the dead, that Christ might give them light." They were to assure the sheep of Christ in every age, that "he giveth to them eternal life," and that, though weak in themselves, "they shall never perish, because no man can pluck them out of his hand."

Look, then, at every miracle, as something in which you have a personal interest—an invitation addressed to you in the most striking form, to commit *your* soul to an Almighty Saviour. In condescension to your ignorance and weakness, he has multiplied these evidences of his glory. They are presented in rich variety, combining majesty and might, with tenderness and love. If it be awful to think of a power which commanded alike the spirits of evil and the winds of heaven,—see that same power exerted in removing disease from the timorous, trembling invalid; while, if you are a partaker of her faith, his voice addresses you as well as her, saying, "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." Oh, if your conscience is alive to your guilt and danger, as a sinner against God—if you are sensible what a hard, and unbelieving, and impenitent heart you have—if you have tried, and found, that as soon might the leopard change

his spotted skin, as you turn that heart into a state of penitence and love, do you not rejoice to be assured, that Jesus the Saviour is divine—that his atoning sacrifice is therefore completely sufficient to “make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness;” while the most polluted soul that seeks his saving health, is as entirely subject to his skill, as the leprous flesh which became “fresher than a child’s;” or the pale and faded cheek, that bloomed again at his command.

Do you want a guide in your present slippery path—a friend on whom you can rely, that distance will not remove him, nor changing circumstances alienate his affection—a friend for whom you shall never wear the signs of mourning, nor weep to think that he is silent in the grave? Do you dread the sting of death, or the darkness of that hour when sight shall forsake your eyes—the forlorn solitude of that moment when your spirit must depart alone, into a region diverse and distant from all the scenes you have ever known or loved? Then turn with confidence to him who walked upon the stormy wave, that he might succour his timid and feeble followers—to him who appeared in the midst of them, when they had closed their doors, almost in despair of ever seeing him

again, that he might assure them of peace. Rejoice in the proofs you have received, that he, the Saviour of sinners, is also "the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary." To *you*, I need say nothing more on this point, for your interest will deepen at every step of your progress through the narrative; while with Thomas you exclaim, "My Lord and my God," or, with the pure delight of him "in whom there was no guile," "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel."

But where is the careless trifler, who often made her teacher sigh; or the correct and punctual learner, who yet ever sat unmoved by the most affectionate and earnest admonitions,—what attraction will this subject have for *you*? Probably none; for you have not now the motives which formerly induced you to learn your lessons as a task. You appear no longer in a class, where it would be affronting, were you to be behind the rest—where it would raise a blush on your cheek, were you to be reproved for inattention.

But if the history of our Divine Master has no *attractions*, remember it is full of *terrors*. You have found it easy to pass through a course of instruction from fellow-creatures, and to

treat their counsels with indifference to the last. But, "see that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not ye escape, if ye turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." Every miracle he wrought, was to convince you that he did come from heaven; and every evidence of his power to save, is equally an evidence of his power to punish. If even devils were subject unto his name, who are you that you should dare his indignation? And if, in the days of his flesh, he could smite his enemies to the ground, "who shall stand when he appeareth" "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"? Hear him say to those who insulted his apparent weakness, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." In spite of this warning, they persisted in their unbelief. Not even the quaking earth, and rending rocks, convinced them of their error. But they speedily found, that he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead." And to you, as well as to them, there is the prospect of a yet more awful event; for, "behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye

shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Be persuaded, then, to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." He is still as compassionate as when he wept over the city, where many of his mighty works were done, because its inhabitants repented not; and the record of these works is still held up to you, that you may see how "blessed are all they that trust in him." But, if still you refuse to bestow a thought on that which cost him tears and blood, there remaineth nothing for you but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."



