



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

The gate beautiful

James Russell
Miller

KC 9450



The Gate Beautiful

DR. J. R. MILLER'S BOOKS

A HEART GARDEN	JOY OF SERVICE
BETHLEHEM TO OLIVET	LESSON OF LOVE
BUILDING OF CHARACTER	MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE
COME YE APART	MINISTRY OF COMFORT
DR. MILLER'S YEAR BOOK	MORNING THOUGHTS
EVENING THOUGHTS	PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS OF
EVERY DAY OF LIFE	JESUS
FINDING THE WAY	SILENT TIMES
FOR THE BEST THINGS	STORY OF A BUSY LIFE
GATE BEAUTIFUL	STRENGTH AND BEAUTY
GLIMPSES THROUGH LIFE'S	THINGS TO LIVE FOR
WINDOWS	UPPER CURRENTS
GO FORWARD	WHEN THE SONG BEGINS
GOLDEN GATE OF PRAYER	WIDER LIFE
HIDDEN LIFE	YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS

BOOKLETS

BEAUTY OF KINDNESS	MARRIAGE ALTAR
BLESSING OF CHEERFULNESS	MARY OF BETHANY
BY THE STILL WATERS	MASTER'S FRIENDSHIPS
CHRISTMAS MAKING	SECRET OF GLADNESS
CURE FOR CARE	SECRETS OF HAPPY HOME
FACE OF THE MASTER	LIFE
GENTLE HEART	SUMMER GATHERING
GIRLS; FAULTS AND IDEALS	TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW
GLIMPSES OF THE HEAVENLY	TRANSFIGURED LIFE
LIFE	TURNING NORTHWARD
HOW? WHEN? WHERE?	UNTO THE HILLS
IN PERFECT PEACE	YOUNG MEN; FAULTS AND
INNER LIFE	IDEALS
LOVING MY NEIGHBOR	

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY

The Gate Beautiful

BY

J. R. MILLER

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "UPPER CURRENTS,"
"MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE," ETC.



New York

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
PUBLISHERS

Copyright, 1909, by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

Published, September, 1909

THE REASON WHY

THESE chapters treat of some of the simple, practical things of daily life. Nearly all of them have been written in answer to actual questions from persons either in perplexity or striving after better things in Christian Life. Life's questions are the same everywhere, and if these answers prove helpful to any the book will be worth while.

J. R. M.

Philadelphia, U. S. A.

KC 9450



46x226

TITLES OF CHAPTERS

I. THE GATE BEAUTIFUL	<i>Page</i> 3
II. THE CALL TO PRAISE	19
III. THE DESIRES OF THY HEART	33
IV. CALLED TO BE SAINTS	47
V. GUARDING OUR THOUGHTS	63
VI. POINTS OF DEPARTURE	77
VII. BUILDING AGAIN THE HOME NEST	91
VIII. "BEHOLD, THY MOTHER"	105
IX. WHAT GOD THINKS OF US	119
X. HATING ONE'S LIFE	133
XI. THE MAKING OF MEN	147
XII. CHRISTIAN MANLINESS	161
XIII. MISUNDERSTOOD	175
XIV. SERVICE DECLINED	189
XV. HOW CAN WE KNOW?	203
XVI. DOES GOD CARE?	219
XVII. THOU SHALT KNOW HEREAFTER	233
XVIII. THE PRACTICE OF IMMORTALITY	247
XIX. LOOKING UNTO THE HILLS	261
XX. NO MIRACLE, BUT POWER	275
XXI. THE WORK OF THE LORD	289

The Gate Beautiful

[1]

*"Into the secret chamber of my heart,
Wherein no mortal enters, Lord, come thou
And make thy dwelling place ere day depart !*

*"O thou who didst create the human heart,
Didst thou not make one sure place for thyself ?
It is high sanctuary where thou art !"*

CHAPTER FIRST

The Gate Beautiful



THE Gate Beautiful in the temple cannot certainly be identified. We know it was very costly, made probably of Corinthian brass and in the highest style of art.

Everything about the temple was beautiful, and this gate was probably one of the most splendid ornaments of the house. God loves beauty. If he did not, he would not have made this world so full of lovely things. Everywhere we go we see beauty. The blind, whose eyes are closed, are sore losers in their great deprivation.

The Gate Beautiful has many interesting suggestions for our thought. It was the gate into the temple of God. Everything about God's worship should be beautiful. God himself is beautiful. When Charles Kingsley was dying, his daughter saw his

The Gate Beautiful

lips moving, and bending her ear close to him, heard him say, "How beautiful God is!" Some people think of God as terrible, as a being who is angry, vengeful, not a gentle friend, but a stern, severe judge. They think of him with fear. One who thinks of God in this way wrote, "I love Jesus Christ, but I cannot love God." Jesus was beautiful—gentle, compassionate, loving, pitiful. The children loved him and nestled in his arms. None were afraid of him. But God is the same. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jesus was the human expression of God. It is God's beauty that we see in the face of Jesus Christ.

Since God is beautiful, we should make his house beautiful. When David had built for himself a palace of cedar, his heart smote him that while he had such a fine dwelling for himself, God was living in a weather-beaten tent. He resolved to build a glorious temple for God. An English writer says, "It is ever a fatal sign when men permit the house of

The Gate Beautiful

God to be meaner than their own." We should make our churches beautiful in every line and feature. We should keep them clean, bright, attractive. It is dishonoring to God to let his house fall into decay, to allow it to have broken windows, stained walls, unswept floors, faded carpets, tawdry furniture. The Beautiful Gate should always open into a beautiful sanctuary. God will meet his people in a tent, in a hall, in a barn, in the rudest place, in the open field, if that is the best they can do ; but we should always prepare for the meeting place with him the most beautiful temple we can provide.

The worship of God should be beautiful. In one of the Psalms the poet speaks of "the beauty of holiness." When we enter at the Gate Beautiful into the Lord's house, our behavior should be beautiful, and every part of the service we render should be in keeping with the sanctity of the place. We are in the presence of Almighty God. In Isaiah's wonderful vision the prophet saw the seraphim, each with six wings. With two of their

The Gate Beautiful

wings they covered their faces — reverence; they were not worthy even to look upon the divine splendor. With two they covered their feet—humility; they would hide their unfitness in God's presence. Then with two they did fly—service; going instantly wherever they were sent. We should be reverent and humble and obedient before God.

We need often to remind ourselves of this duty of reverence for God's house, "lest we forget." We should have the same spirit in all religious meetings, as well as in formal church services. One of the Hebrew prophets has this word to which we should always listen when we enter any room where God is being worshiped: "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." Every part of our worship should be rendered to God. Jenny Lind, when asked the secret of her wonderful power in song, swaying thousands, answered, "I sing to God." When we sing in worship, we should sing to God. When prayer is offered, we should be sincere—we are talking to God.

The Gate Beautiful

“Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.”

The Gate Beautiful, through which we enter into the temple, suggests that we should make our Christian lives beautiful. God is beautiful. Holiness is beautiful. It is not enough that we worship in a beautiful house, and that our worship shall be orderly, devout, reverent. Our character also must be beautiful. Some of the ancient Christian fathers taught that in his personal appearance Jesus was not lovely. They seem to have interpreted a word in Isaiah to mean this: “His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” They said that his face was repulsive. “Base of aspect,” said one. “His body devoid even of human loveliness,” said another. But this was not true. Jesus was beautiful. The heart makes the face, and his heart was full of all beautiful qualities. We are to be like Christ, not in our faces, but in our lives. He was gracious, and we are to be gracious.

The Gate Beautiful

He loved, and we are to love. St. Paul, in one of his great pictures of worthy Christian life, names "whatsoever things are lovely" as part of his description of a true life. Only lovely things should be in our life. The beauty of Christ should be upon us. One who bears Christ's name and is not beautiful in his spirit, is dishonoring the Master.

In St. Paul's great chapter about love, he mentions some qualities that are not part of love. Love is not provoked—bad temper is not beautiful. You do not admire a man who flies into a passion of anger at the slightest provocation. Love doth not behave itself unseemly—that is, not unbeautifully. Selfishness is not beautiful, greed is not, irritability is not, anger is not, dishonesty and falsehood are not. We admire the man or the woman who bears insults patiently, quietly, meekly, who, when reviled, reviles not again, who overcomes evil with good.

The Beatitudes show lines and traits of

The Gate Beautiful

beauty. The Beautiful Gate opens for us to-day to all beautiful things in life, in disposition, in conduct, in behavior, in character. George Macdonald says, "I should like to know a man who just minded his duty and troubled himself about nothing; who did his own work and did not interfere with God's. How nobly he would work—working not for a reward, but because it was the will of God! How happily he would take his food and clothing, receiving them as gifts of God! What peace would be his! What a sober gaiety! How hearty and infectious his laughter! What a friend he would be! How sweet his sympathy! And his mind would be so clear he would understand everything. His eye being single, his whole body would be full of light. No fear of his ever doing a mean thing—he would die in a ditch, rather. It is fear of want that makes men do mean things."

The life of faith is always beautiful—unbelief is never beautiful. Peace is beautiful—unrest, distraction, anxiety, fret, worry, dis-

The Gate Beautiful

content, are unlovely. We should set for ourselves the ideal of beauty for every act, every word, every disposition, every feeling and thought of our lives.

At the Beautiful Gate Peter and John saw a beggar. For years this man had been brought every morning by his friends to this place, and left there all day to ply his task. No doubt he was there when Jesus used to pass and repass, entering and leaving the temple. Perhaps he had reached out his hand oftentimes and may have received alms from him. But not having faith to ask for healing, he had remained unhealed all the while. So year after year multitudes of people lie unblest and unhealed about the very gates of God's sanctuary, while the Healer is continually passing. It is not enough to live near a church, even close to a church door. Some one tells of a sexton who has cared for one church more than thirty years, and yet is not a Christian.

The beggar saw Peter and John coming up to the church door. He did not know who

The Gate Beautiful

they were, but he reached out his hand for alms. He expected to get a little money. He did not know they were able to do something far better for him than drop a coin into his hand. So always in our prayers we ask for little things, bits of coin or bread, or some mere earthly thing, not knowing, not realizing that there are infinitely better things we might ask for and get. We are fooled by life's illusions. The things we think are the most important are really the least important. We kneel in the morning and ask for daily bread, for little things—pleasure, comfort, health, a day of success—these are good enough things in their way, but think of the things we might ask for and get, when it is God at whose feet we are bowing.

Many people pay no heed to beggars, do not even deign to give them a kindly look or a gracious word. How do we know who this beggar may be? At least we are sure that he is a child of God, though perhaps a prodigal child. The beggar that sits by the wayside and holds out his hand to you may meet you

The Gate Beautiful

in heaven some day, wearing white garments. At least you know what Jesus said, "I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me."

Notice the fine courtesy which Peter shows to this poor beggar at the Gate Beautiful. We need not always give money to beggars—Peter gave no money to this man. Nevertheless he did not ignore him, did not pass him by with contempt. Peter was not too fine a gentleman to stop and have a little talk with the beggar. He did not forget that he, too, was a man, a gentleman, with a human heart under his rags, a heart that would be hurt by a rough word, by a discourtesy. Peter's treatment of this beggar was very beautiful. It showed nobility that was very Christlike. We should treat even a beggar as we shall wish we had done if we learn some day that he was an angel in disguise, or Jesus himself.

The Gate Beautiful

Peter's way of helping was also beautiful. "Look on us," he said kindly. The beggar began to hope for money. Instead, however, of giving a coin, Peter said, "I do not have any silver or gold." Yet he did not pass the beggar by because he could not give him the money he wanted. He said, "What I have, that give I thee." Then he said to the lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

There are many people who cannot give money even to those who need money help; yet they need not conclude that they can do nothing at all. Indeed, money is usually the poorest alms we can give. Kind words are better, love is better. So far as we know, Jesus never gave anyone money, yet there never was such a giver as he. He gave love, he gave sympathy, he gave thought. It is not money people usually need most, even when they think nothing else will do. What they really need is sympathy, cheer, encouragement. In one of the Psalms is the striking expression, "Blessed is he that consid-

The Gate Beautiful

ereth the poor." It is not, "Blessed is he that giveth to," but "he that considereth the poor." Many who give largely to charity never consider the poor, never give them a moment's thought. They fling the beggar a coin, but they have no interest in him, not a particle of sympathy with him. To consider is to think about, to take up the case and ask what it is best to do for the person. To consider the poor is to become their friend, to love them, to make plans for their good.

What did Peter do for this lame man? He bade him to walk. So the man stood up and walked away. If Peter had given him a coin, it would only have helped him along a little farther as a beggar. But when he healed him, the man did not need to be helped any more. He was now able to take care of himself. Was that not a truer, better, wiser, kindlier way to help him than to have left him helpless, giving him only a little temporary relief?

There is something else that Peter did. He

The Gate Beautiful

gave the man his hand. The human is needed as well as the divine. It is only a pitiful mockery to pray for one who needs help, and then do nothing for him. We must take him by the hand and help him.

The Call to Praise

[17]

*"The truest words we ever speak
Are words of cheer.
Life has its shade, its valleys deep ;
But round our feet the shadows creep,
To prove the sunlight near.
Between the hills those valleys sleep—
The sun-crowned hills,
And down their sides will those who seek
With hopeful spirit, brave though meek,
Find gently flowing rills."*

CHAPTER SECOND

The Call to Praise



HERE are in the Bible many more calls to praise than to prayer. Prayer is continually urged. It is essential. It is the Christian's vital breath. The man who does not pray cuts himself off from the source of all good. A day without prayer is a day without protection, a day of peril. Prayer is essential. Yet praise would seem to be no less a duty than prayer.

Everything that hath breath is commanded to praise God, and not only things animate, but things inanimate—"all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapor; stormy wind, mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars." The poet in one of the Psalms calls upon all that is within him to praise God's name. He thinks of the powers and capacities of his nature and would have them all

The Gate Beautiful

waked up to join in the song. He exhorts himself also not to forget God's benefits. What are some of these?

*"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ;
Who healeth all thy diseases ;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction ;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and
tender mercies."*

These are only a few of God's benefits. They are coming to us continually. Nothing but good ever comes to us. It would seem that there never could be anything but praise in our hearts. Yet listen on any day, the fairest day of the year, the day when the sun shines the brightest and the skies are bluest, to the complainings, the murmurings, of the people you meet. It seems that almost nothing goes well with them. The habit of discontent has grown so strong in them that they are never quite pleased or satisfied with anything. In the most perfect circumstances they always find some flaws. In the most lovely character they discover some lack or blemish. The

The Call to Praise

trouble really is, however, in the persons themselves who complain and not in the providence that blesses their lives. If they were in heaven, and had the same dispositions they now have, they would find something even there to fret them or irk them and would not be altogether happy.

What such people need is not more agreeable circumstances, all things different to suit their tastes and whims, but a new heart, being born again with a contented mind, a praising, thanksgiving spirit.

The fact is, there are a thousand beautiful things in any outlook on life we may have, to one unpleasant thing. We should be able easily to forget the one little thorn in such a mass of roses. "Forget not all his benefits," the lesson runs, but this is the very thing we do—we forget God's wonderful mercies, the countless blessings that flood our days with sunshine and strew our nights with stars. An hour's pain, even a moment's twinge of suffering, blots out the memory of a whole year of best health.

The Gate Beautiful

There is a legend of two angels that come from heaven every morning and go on their rounds all day long. One is the angel of prayers; the other the angel of thanksgivings. Each carries a great basket. Soon the angel of requests has his basket filled to overflowing. Everybody pours into it great handfuls of requests. But when the day is ended the angel of thanksgivings has only two or three little contributions of gratitude in his basket.

This is not a caricature. Most of us do more or less praying, but it is nearly all the unloading of burdens, fears, wants, and clamorous requests for favors, with only here and there a feeble word of thanks for blessings received. Some ingenious gatherer of statistics tells us that during a recent year thousands of letters from children, addressed to Santa Claus, reached the Dead Letter Office before Christmas, but that in the whole month after Christmas only one letter came addressed to Santa Claus, with a message of thanks. Ten lepers were cleansed, all receiv-

The Call to Praise

ing the same great blessing, but only one of the ten returned to thank the Healer. Where were the nine?

We must confess that we are pitifully wanting in gratitude. Thanksgivings languish on our lips. Some of us do little but complain. Nothing altogether pleases us. We have no eyes for the good things of divine love which really flood our lives. We ought to pray for a power of vision that will enable us to behold the beauties of this world, for a love that will show us the noble and worthy qualities in the people about us, and a faith that will help us to believe in the divine goodness in the events which seem to be most unkindly.

The praising spirit is essential in him who would do his best work in any line of life. It is said that Leonardo da Vinci held a lyre in his hand while he painted. Music inspired his art. This was one of the secrets of his superb work as an artist—his heart was glad and praising. No one can do good work with a sad heart. You need not go with a grieving

The Gate Beautiful

spirit to comfort one who is in trouble, for you can help him only with cheer. If you are in sorrow, another's grief will not comfort you. He who would come to you as an up-lifter, must have joy to bring to you. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," said Nehemiah to his people when he found them weeping, and exhorted them to a better life. They must dry their tears if they would attain anything noble and beautiful.

It is always so. No life ever reached its best possibilities in sadness. The men who have done the noblest and worthiest things, who have achieved the most, whose work shines as beautiful and radiant in the world, carried a harp in their hands. They sang at their work. Pessimism has never done any lovely things; only he who works with a song adds to the brightness and beauty of the world. Gloomy people are perverting their powers, growing thorns instead of roses. The joyless man is a misanthrope. He makes it harder for other people to live, makes them less strong to bear their burdens. He chills the

The Call to Praise

ardor he ought to kindle to a redder glow. He is a discourager and thus a hinderer of every man he meets.

On the other hand, he who sings as he works is a blessing to every man. He does better work himself, paints more beautiful pictures, sings sweeter songs, is a better teacher, a better lawyer, a better merchant, an infinitely better physician. No man should ever go into a sick room as a doctor who has not music in his heart. No man is ever fit to be a preacher who is not a joyous man, a praising man.

Carlyle has a strong word on the value of singing at one's work: "Give us, oh, give us the man who sings at his work! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible to fatigue whilst he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness; altogether past calculation are

The Gate Beautiful

its powers of endurance. Efforts to be permanently useful, must be uniformly joyous—a spirit all sunshine—graceful from very gladness—beautiful because bright.” Joy is a splendid inspirer.

The emblem of Christian life is light, and light means joy, praise. There used to be people who thought that solemnity was an essential quality of religion. The man who smiled on Sunday desecrated the holy day. He who was glad-hearted in worship lacked reverence. There are some persons who would banish flowers from churches. But there is really no piety in long-facedness. Indeed one of the first things required in Christian life is joy. It is named as second among the fruits of the Spirit. Jesus said he would have his joy fulfilled in his followers. If you would become a beautiful Christian, you must be a joyous Christian. Joy is always lovely. It shines. It is fragrant. It makes the air brighter and sweeter. It is a wondrous inspirer of life. You can do twice as much work when you are glad and praising as when you

The Call to Praise

are gloomy and downcast; and you can do it twice as well.

The other day a Christian woman told of starting out sad and heavy-hearted in the morning, with no song, no praise, not a thought of gladness in her heart. Everything dragged. There seemed nothing worth living for. Circumstances were distressing. There appeared only blackness before her eyes. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, something happened which changed all the outlook. Light broke in upon the gloom. The friend said that if an angel of God had come into the dreadful tangle with light and song the effect could not have been more marvelous. It was joy that came, and the joy changed everything. The life was saved from despair. The clouds and shadows rolled away and the blue sky hung everywhere. The same miracle-story is told in a little poem from one of the magazines:

*"Going up the hill, I found it long,
Until I met a merry song
That kissed mine eyes to blind me.*

[27]

The Gate Beautiful

*It mocked at me, and turned and fled,
But played on, fluttering overhead,
Till I forgot I went footsore,
And the dusty hill that rose before
Was the blue hill far behind me."*

A writer tells of a boy who was sunny and brave. He met the ills of life, which too many people regard as almost tragedies, with courage. Nothing ever daunted him. Where most boys are afraid or break into tears, he was undismayed and untroubled. But one day something serious happened. He and a playmate climbed a tree. Just when our little philosopher had reached the top, his foot slipped and he fell to the ground. He lay there, evidently hurt, but uttered no cry. It was the playmate that screamed. The doctor found the leg badly broken. The boy bore the setting patiently without a whimper. The mother slipped out of the room to hide her own tears—she couldn't stand it as well as her boy did. Outside the door she heard a faint sound and hurried back, almost hoping to find him crying.

The Call to Praise

“My boy!” she said, “do you want something? I thought I heard you call.”

“Oh, no, mother,” he said, “I didn’t call. I just thought I’d try singing a bit.” And he went on with the song.

When you have pain, or struggle, or a heavy load, or a great anguish, don’t complain, don’t cry out, don’t sink down in despair, don’t be afraid—try singing a bit. Trust God and praise.

The Desires of Thy Heart

*“Cast out all envy, bitterness and hate;
And keep the mind’s fair tabernacle pure.
Shake hands with Pain, give greeting unto Grief,
Those angels in disguise, and thy glad soul
From height to height, from star to shining star,
Shall climb and claim blest immortality.”*

CHAPTER THIRD

The Desires of Thy Heart



THE test of one's character is in the things one delights in. Hence also one's desires are prophetic of one's future. We will grow into that which we long for. In one of the Psalms we read, "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he will give thee the desires of thy heart." Most of us would like to have this promise for ourselves. In the Arabian Nights' Entertainment is the strange story of Aladdin's lamp. The son of a poor widow in China became possessed of a magic lamp and ring, which commanded the services of certain powerful genii. By rubbing the lamp with the ring, Aladdin got whatever he wished, and grew rich and great. But that is only an impossible story of magic. Yet here is a promise which seems to tell us of a way in which we can get everything we wish.

The Gate Beautiful

“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he will give thee the desires of thy heart.” It is not by rubbing a ring on a lamp that we can get what we desire. Religion is not magic. Simon Magus thought it was, and tried to buy the secret for money. But it is not thus that desires for life’s good things can be gratified. We all have wants which it would please us beyond measure to have supplied. It would mean a great deal to us to know a way in which we could have all our desires realized. And that is what we seem to have here. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he will give thee the desires of thy heart.”

What is it to delight ourselves in the Lord? It means to love God, to love to please him, to love his ways, his service, his will. We know what it is to delight ourselves in a human friend. We love our friend so much that when we are with him we are perfectly happy, have no wish ungratified, need nothing else to complete our contentment. This is the ideal in marriage—that the two who wed shall delight in each other. They should

The Desires of Thy Heart

meet each other's desires and yearnings. They should be one in interest, in purpose, in all the aims of life. A young woman, considering the question of marriage and speaking of the young man she had in mind, writes: "I love him very dearly, and yet I hesitate to give my life into his keeping. He is noble, kind, worthy, but in some respects he is far from being the man I always had in mind in thinking of marriage. There is something lacking in him. There is a need in my life which is not fully met in him—perfect union in consecration to God." Evidently there is not yet full, undisturbed delight in this friend. There is not full accord, there is not perfect confidence, there is not absolute trust. All these elements are essential in perfect delight in a friend.

To delight in God implies also all the qualities of love, trust, confidence, accord of will. Connected with this promise in the Psalm is a cluster of counsels which belong together—"Trust in the Lord," "Delight thyself also in the Lord," "Commit thy way unto the

The Gate Beautiful

Lord," "Rest in the Lord." You cannot delight yourself in the Lord if you do not trust him. Trust implies confidence. John leaned upon his Master's breast that dark night of the betrayal. The distress of the disciples was terrible. It looked as if all their hopes had fallen into ruin. Yet behold John leaning on the Master's bosom, calm, quiet, unafraid. Jesus sought to quiet his disciples, that same hour with the words, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." They were to trust without question, without doubt, without fear. Trust is necessary to delight.)

"Commit thy way unto the Lord." There will come hours of uncertainty in every life, hours when we shall not know what to do, which way to take, where to find help. Then we learn that the Lord is not only our Saviour from sin, but also the God who orders all our ways. There seem to be a great many people who trust God for the salvation of their souls, but who have not learned to trust him with the choosing of their ways,

The Desires of Thy Heart

the direction of their affairs, the care of their lives. They worry continually. We have not learned the full meaning of trust until we have formed the habit of committing our ways without question unto the Lord. The reason for worrying, which is so common a habit, is that people do not roll their way upon the Lord. If only they knew the blessed secret they would not worry any more. Think what it would mean to worrying people if they understood this, if instead of being anxious about every little thing, they would take it to the Lord and leave it there. If we commit our way unto the Lord, we will not go on making blunders, we will no longer spoil the web by ignoring the pattern and weaving our own way.

Another of the words of trust in the old Psalm is, "Rest in the Lord." A marginal reading is, "Be silent to the Lord." Never answer the Lord in the way of protest against his guidance, never question the wisdom and goodness of his providence. Never in the day of cross-bearing or trial ask,

The Gate Beautiful

“Why?” Some of us are not silent to God when he does things that are hard, when he leads us in the ways that are rough and steep. To be silent to the Lord means complete submission to his will, without question, without doubt, without fear. “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

These are suggestions of the meaning of the words, “Delight thyself also in the Lord.” We are to be at home with God. The ideal home is a place of perfect love, perfect accord, perfect confidence. There is no strife, no doubt, no fear, no bitterness. Men are telling us these days that we should get and keep our lives in tune with God. This means that we should fall in line with God in everything. We are not to demand that God shall bring his way down to suit our whims and fancies; but rather that we shall always bring our feelings, our desires, our ambitions, into harmony with his will.

The lesson is not easy. A good man said the other day, “It takes a long time to learn to

The Desires of Thy Heart

be kind." It takes so long, indeed, that not many persons really ever learn it. (There are not many kind people—that is, people who are always kind to everyone, to disagreeable people as well as those who are agreeable, to enemies as well as friends, to bad as well as good—and that is what the New Testament means when it tells us to be kind. It takes a great while to learn to be kind.)

The same is true of every phase of the will of God. It takes a great while to learn to be patient, to learn to be absolutely true, to learn to trust God, to be rejoicing followers of Christ, to be helpers of others. Nevertheless, these are the lessons that are set for us and which we are to learn. It will take all our life to learn them well, but really to learn these lessons is better than all riches, all power, all fame.

This is what it is to delight ourselves in God, to find our joy in him. The promise is that if we have this delight in him, God will give us the desires of our heart, the things we long for. This may seem rather an unusual

The Gate Beautiful

promise, but it is really given over and over again in the Bible. The Lord said to Solomon, as he began his reign, "Ask what I shall give thee." Anything Solomon would choose for his life portion, God said he would give him. In the New Testament, we have this from the Master himself: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Could any promise of God be fuller, more unreserved, more absolute?

We must remember that one condition is, "Delight in the Lord." You love God supremely. You have committed your way to him without doubt or question. You are trusting him without fear. You are being silent to him, accepting his will for you without a murmur of insubmission, never asking why or how. This attitude of mind and heart will make all your desires holy. It will silence in your heart all unworthy wishes. It will quell

The Desires of Thy Heart

all sinful longings. You will not long for evil things, or for worldly things. You will seek God's guidance in all desires for earthly things. (It is not always the things we want that we ought to desire—the things we want might work our ruin if we had them.) We ought to desire the things that will bless us in our inner life, and make us beautiful and Christlike. We cannot ourselves be sure as to the wisdom of our desires and therefore we must refer them to the will of God. When the promise is given that God will give us the desires of our heart, it is implied that these desires will be such as God approves.

Desires turned toward God are prayers. Some people suppose that they are praying only when they are on their knees, or speaking to God in some reverent attitude of devotion. (But many of the most real and most acceptable prayers are never voiced in words.)

They are only breathings of the soul, longings of the heart, yearnings and aspirations which cannot be put into language. One of the Lord's Beatitudes was for those who have

The Gate Beautiful

longings in their hearts, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Hungerings and thirstings after God, desires to be better, longings for more holiness, wishes for closer communion with God, are prayers which God promises to answer. Hunger is a mark of health. Not to hunger any more indicates illness. It is so in the body, it is so in the mind, it is so in the soul. The true spiritual life is full of longings.

We should remember, too, that whether we will or not, the things we desire are really given to us. We get them into our life, and they make us what we are. It is so of pure and good desires.

*"The thing we long for, that we are,
For one transcendent moment."*

A holy longing makes us holy. Longing for Christ brings us into Christ's presence and fills us with his spirit, his love. Longing for righteousness makes us righteous. But the same is true also of evil desires. If we let

The Desires of Thy Heart

sinful wishes into our mind and cherish them, we will grow corrupt in heart. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If you, by day and by night, cherish wrong desires, impure feelings, unholy imaginings, you will get your desires, and your life will rot. Let wrong, lustful desires stay in your mind, and you will soon be, in the sight of angels, a mass of corruption and death. We should keep a double watch upon our thoughts and desires, for they are making us the man or woman we shall be by and by. Keep your thoughts clean and white and they will build up in you a temple of snowy purity. Keep your desires fixed upon holy things, right things, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, then you will have the desires of your hearts—God will give them unto you—and they will build up your life into beauty and holiness.

The great need for us, therefore, is that we cultivate our desires into holiness and Christ-likeness. What are the dominant desires in your heart to-day? What are you living for?

The Gate Beautiful

What are your most earnest wishes? When you are alone, and your mind is free, where do your thoughts turn? If the Lord came to you in a vision, as he came to Solomon at Gibeon, and said, "Ask what I shall give you, what I shall do for you," what would your answer be? If you delight yourself in the Lord, then he will give you what you desire.

This is a thousand times better than Aladdin's lamp. Abide in Christ, let Christ's words abide in you, and no desire of yours will remain unsatisfied. That will be happiness. All life will then be a song—fullness of good here, eternal blessing in heaven.

Called to Be Saints

[45]

*"Never in a costly palace did I rest on golden bed,
Never in a hermit's cavern have I eaten idle bread.*

*"Born within a lowly stable, where the cattle round me
stood
Trained a carpenter in Nazareth, I have toiled and
found it good.*

*"They who tread the path of labor follow where my feet
have trod;
They who work without complaining do the holy will
of God.*

*"Where the many toil together, there am I among my own;
Where the tired workman sleepeth, there am I with him
alone.*

*"I, the peace that passeth knowledge, dwell amid the
daily strife,
I, the bread of heaven, am broken in the sacrament of life."*

CHAPTER FOURTH

Called to Be Saints

IN the Roman Catholic Church the act of canonization is the enrollment of beatified persons among the saints. It cannot take place till more than fifty years after the persons have died, except in the case of martyrs, nor until the most searching investigations have been made into their life and character. In the New Testament, however, the word saints is used of living believers. (The meaning is not that the Christians of those early days were perfect. They were faulty, incomplete in life and character, just as Christians are in every age.) All who love and follow Christ are called to be saints. The form of Christian life changes from time to time. The type that stands in highest honor in these days is the strenuous. Activity is the word. (People who do things are the people

The Gate Beautiful

who count, not only in business and in all secular lines, but also in religion. It is not the saint of the closet, the devout man who spends hours at his devotions, in pious meditations, in secret prayer. The man who is commended to-day as the greatest Christian is the man who is always abounding in the work of the Lord. The best Christian life is the one devoted to service of love. We say we are saved to serve. We say our mission is to carry the gospel to every man, to make disciples of all the nations. We are to go about doing good. Richard Burton writes of The Modern Saint:

*No monkish garb he wears, no beads he tells,
Nor is immured in walls remote from strife;
But from his heart deep mercy ever wells;
He looks humanely forth on human life.*

*He looks not holy, simple is his belief;
His creed for mystic visions do not scan;
His face shows lines cut there by other's grief
And in his eyes is love of brother-man.*

Called to Be Saints

*Not self nor self-salvation is his care ;
He yearns to make the world a sunnier clime
To live in, and his mission everywhere
Is strangely like to Christ's in olden time.*

Dr. James Denney says, in speaking of the Life of Christ as it appears in the Gospels: "The only Person whom the New Testament calls the Saint of God lived in the fields and in the streets, mingling in the common life of man at the common level; and what strikes us most as we contemplate Him is not a monotonous and conventionally expressed sanctity, however deeply felt, but the spontaneity, the liberty, the unexpectedness, and yet the thorough naturalness of such a life."

One of the great present-day words of saintliness is Brotherhood. It is not a hard word to pronounce—it is rather musical. It is coming to be a fashionable word among Christian people. Orators like to use it—it is an inspiring word. It is something we ought to practice. Men are talking in these

The Gate Beautiful

days about practicing the presence of God, living every moment as if they saw God beside them. A little book has been published on the practice of immortality, thinking of the little common days as segments of eternity, of eternal life, as if we really believe we shall live forever. Some one writes also of practicing the Incarnation. The Incarnation was God coming down and living in human flesh, the highest, the most divine, coming down to help the lowest. We open the New Testament and we see the Eternal God comforting a sorrowing mother, taking a cooing baby in his arms, looking into its deep eyes, and laying his hand on its head; we see the infinite God curing a blind man by putting clay on his eyes, healing a lame man by a touch or by a word. This is very beautiful, very wonderful. Now practice the Incarnation in your own life. That is what the law of love requires. The angels must look upon manifestations of love in self-denial and service as finer than the finest displays of eloquence or skill. An act of love,

Called to Be Saints

says St. Paul, is greater than tongues of angels, exhibitions of vast learning, the giving of a fortune in philanthropy, or dying as a martyr. .

Thus saintliness is shown in love, in helpfulness, rather than in the practice of devotions. Not that we are to be less prayerful, or to cease to read the Bible—waiting upon God is always essential in the life that pleases God. We cannot be saints and not commune much with God. Before there can be activity in Christian service, there must be a true abiding in Christ. Our Master himself abounded in the work of the Lord. He was intensely active. But he also spent much time in prayer. He arose a great while before day, that he might be a long time with his Father before going out to the day's tasks. Saintliness begins, therefore, in devotion, in communion with God. But its manifestation is in active life, in service.

Another essential mark of saintliness is holiness of life and character. No accusation is made against the church by the world more

The Gate Beautiful

frequently than this, that the professed followers of Christ are not living up to their profession. Is the accusation just? "You are not as good as your Book," said a great Hindu. "If you were as good as your Book, Christianity would soon conquer India." What does our Book require of us? First of all, Christ demands implicit obedience. ("If ye love me, keep my commandments." Saints are those who ask always for the will of the Lord, and instantly do it.)

Christ wants to see the print of the nails in our hands. What does this mean in life? The cross meant love, love that stopped at no sacrifice. It meant vicarious suffering—Christ gave himself for his people. We sometimes get sentimental ideas of the cross and of the print of the nails. The old monk said he had looked so long and so intently at the crucifix, that the nail marks came into the palms of his own hands. But that is not what Christ means. If to-day and to-morrow you deny yourself to do some service of love for another; if, to rest one who is overwrought,

Called to Be Saints

you take his place and do the work yourself,) Christ will see the prints of the nails in your hands. When the young minister nursed the poor woman's baby himself that the weary mother might get out in the fresh air for an hour, when the Prime Minister was missing from Parliament that he might visit and pray beside the poor old dying crossing sweeper in his garret, the Master saw the marks of his cross.

Saintliness is shown also in the culture of a life. The Bible speaks of the beauty of holiness. Sometimes, however, what is called holiness by men is not really beautiful. The Pharisees in our Lord's day thought themselves holy. They were very exact in certain forms of obedience, in some respects going beyond what the law required. They tithed everything, even down to the tiny anise and cummin, little garden herbs, giving every tenth sprig to God, but they failed utterly in the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy and faith. They made long prayers in the streets and in the synagogues, assumed

The Gate Beautiful

attitudes of great piety and devotion, and were rigidly severe on other people who did not follow all the Pharisaic rules. Then they were hard in their dealings. (They oppressed the poor, they crushed the downtrodden, they were unjust, grasping, cruel. Their holiness was not beautiful. God does not care for long prayers, much church going, approved orthodoxy, strict Sabbath keeping, with meanness, selfishness, backbiting, criticism, dishonesty, in the everyday life. True saintliness is beautiful. "Whatsoever things are lovely," is one of the marks of the life that pleases God.

It is not religion for a boy to join the church and come to the communion, and then tomorrow get angry when he is beaten in a game, or sulk when some other one gets something he wanted. These are not beauties of holiness. The work of a church in all its departments is the making of beautiful lives, not good lives only, but beautiful as well. There are some who cannot be condemned on moral grounds, but are not attractive Chris-

Called to Be Saints

tians. (They are honest, upright, just, but are not kind, thoughtful, winning in their spirit, not lovable.) Christ himself was the finest Christian gentleman the world ever saw. He was gentle to all men. He did everything in a gracious way. Let us strive to attain the saintliness that Jesus commends in his teaching and illustrates in his life.

There is too much counterfeit saintliness. It lacks love. It is orthodox in doctrine, but it is not pleasant to live with. It is clean cut as a marble statue, but it is as cold as marble. Saintliness that pleases Christ is flesh and blood, not stone. It is human, it is Christly, it has the whole Thirteenth of Corinthians in it. It has a heart, is self-forgetful, is lowly. Many things spoil saintliness. It is spoiled by pride. One of the secrets of saintliness is the absence of self-consciousness. He who knows he is doing good is not doing the highest good. Moses wist not that his face shone. The saintliness that is most divine is unaware of its radiance.

Saintliness must be helpful. Nothing is made

The Gate Beautiful

beautiful merely for its own sake. Fruitfulness is the test of a Christian life. Fruit is beautiful as it hangs on the tree or vine, but who ever supposed beauty to be the chief purpose of fruit? It is not for the tree's adorning—it is to feed hunger. Saintliness is not merely for spiritual adornment. We fulfill God's purpose for our lives when our holiness, our goodness, our spiritual beauty, make us helpful to others, make our lives useful.

Some one says, "God is loving service." This is really only an expansion of St. John's definition, "God is love," for love is service. Love that is not service is not genuine. Christ loved and served to the uttermost, withheld nothing. There is no true spiritual culture which does not add to our power of serving others. The prayer of saintliness should always be:

*"If there be some weaker one,
Give me strength to help him on;
If a blinder soul there be,
Let me guide him nearer thee."*

Called to Be Saints

*" Make my mortal dreams come true
With the work I fain would do ;
Clothe with life my weak intent,
Let me be the thing I meant ;*

*" Let me find in thy employ,
Peace that dearer is than joy ;
Out of self to love be led,
Until all things sweet and good
Seem my nature's habitude."*

(There are many more saints in the world than we think. Some people are pessimists concerning goodness. We think most people are bad, very few, at least, good. We may not claim sainthood for all men and women, but let us think of the homes of any Christian community, and the good that is in them, the love that is ever ministering. (Think of the mothers always serving and blessing their children, of the wives who live for their husbands, of the way many husbands care for wives who are frail or invalids, of the noble service thousands of children render to their parents. Think of the sacrifices cheerfully

The Gate Beautiful

made, of the devotion almost divine, of the tenderness shown by those who care for the weak and feeble, and the marvelous patience of those who endure pain, loss of rest, trial of all kinds, in serving others. Think of the way thousands of men pour out their lives year after year in caring for their families, working long hours, and then working over hours to add to their income, how they deny themselves, how they scale their own indulgences down to the last penny, that they may feed and clothe their children and educate them. Think, too, how the poor help each other. Think of the heroisms of labor, of the way men risk life to save other lives. Every day you read of the way some brave fellow throws himself into peril that a train may be stopped, a runaway horse halted, a child snatched from death on the street; of the way a doctor puts his own life in jeopardy for his patient; of the way a nurse offers herself to prolong a life. Everywhere we see the conscious and unconscious saintships which redeem this world from the accusation of

Called to Be Saints

selfishness, lovelessness and godlessness which are made against it.

We need not say that men are not sinners. They are bad enough—we are all bad enough—but we should magnify the blessings of the divine redemption and the wonderful love seen in the common life of the common days. For all these heroisms of sacrifice in the home, on the sea, on the street, and in all life, get their inspiration from the cross of Christ.

We are called to be saints. We may be only at the foot of the mountain now, but we are yet to reach the summit. Every moment the call breaks anew upon our ears, bidding us press forward. This ought to keep us courageous and determined, so that we never lose heart, never be content to stay on low levels, but always be reaching up to the possibilities of sainthood.

Guarding Our Thoughts

[61]

*"These are the sins I fain
Would have thee take away:
Malice and cold disdain,
Hot anger, sullen hate,
Scorn of the lowly, envy of the great,
And discontent that casts a shadow gray
On all the brightness of a common day."*

CHAPTER FIFTH

Guarding Our Thoughts



IT is a busy hive we have in our brain, where our thoughts play. They never rest, never sleep, keep no Sundays. We cannot tell whence they came, these rushing swarms of thoughts, sometimes bright like sweet singing birds, and sometimes black and sad. Did you ever try to control your thoughts, to direct them, to keep them in regular order, to shut out the dark thoughts, the evil thoughts, the bitter thoughts? Thought mastery is the highest attainment of life. We may think it is impossible to keep out the wrong, the unworthy thoughts. But St. Paul gives us the secret: “The peace of God shall guard your thoughts.”)

Have you ever considered the importance of thoughts in your life? Your thoughts make you. They are the builders which build up

The Gate Beautiful

the fabric of your character. The thought habits you are forming these days will make your disposition, shape your character, build your manhood or womanhood, for all future. Let your thoughts in the early years be occupied with yourself, your brightness, your beauty, your attainments and achievements, the worthy things you do, and you are making of yourself for coming days a vain egoist, a paragon of self-conceit. If you allow your thoughts to run in the line of discontent and unhappiness, of complaining and criticism, of dissatisfaction with your lot in life, of impatience and fretfulness, you will build all these unbeautiful qualities into the man or woman you will be in a few years. If you think cheerfully, contentedly, happily, if your thoughts are trained and disciplined to courage, hope, joy, to self-forgetfulness, to kindness, if you habitually think of brave things, lovely things, noble things, you will make for yourself a life strong, rich, courageous, loving and true.

Charles Kingsley says, "Think about your-

Guarding Our Thoughts

self; about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you, and then to you nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch; you will make sin and misery for yourself out of everything which God sends you; you will be as wretched as you choose, on earth or in heaven either."

But think of others and think lovingly and generously of them, and you will make your own heart a flower garden and will be a benediction wherever you go.

St. Paul gives us a splendid programme for our thought life: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"—the good, the true, the beautiful, the praiseworthy things. Do not think on things that are false, dishonorable, unjust, impure, unlovely, of evil report. Some people see always and think only of things that are un-

THE SUNDAY

... newspapers only
... is a necessary gos-
... its lovely side
... and the stars.
... and the street
... the pleasant
... day, not of
... School
... for you

... the stars,
...
...
...
...
...

... control and school
... out unworthy
... by many con-
... allow ourselves to
... allow ourselves to do,

Guarding Our Thoughts

but we are not restrained in the same way in the matter of our thoughts. Nobody sees them, and so it does not seem to matter. An angry man will not speak the wrathful word that is trembling on his lips, for people would be shocked and would condemn him; but nobody can hear the wrathful thought that is in his heart, and so he does not try to restrain that. Thoughts are invisible and elusive. They are light and airy. They do not seem to be within control. Nevertheless, we can control them if we will, and we are responsible for them. "There is no sin in a thought," says some one. Yes, it is a sin to think evil. If you cherish anger, envy, resentment, you are sinning against others. If you allow unclean and impure thoughts to nest in your mind, you are simply making it a den of unclean things. Bad thoughts are sinful. The beloved disciple said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." Hatred is only a thought; thus even an evil thought is a sin. You are responsible for your thoughts.

The Gate Beautiful

“But,” some one says, “the evil thoughts are already in. You have opened to them, and now your mind is in their possession. How shall you expel them?” If your house has become full of fumes of smoke or gas, what do you do to get them out? You open the windows and let the pure, fresh air come in from outside, and soon the house will be sweet again. If your mind has become full of evil thoughts, open the windows and let in heaven’s sweet breath. We cannot keep our mind empty, however. We cannot help thinking. “Nature abhors a vacuum.”

If you have formed the habit of thinking evil thoughts, impure thoughts, it is not enough to shut the door to keep out all such evil thoughts in the future. You must bring in sweet, good, pure thoughts, to take the place of the evil thoughts. Begin to think about good things. Read good books and get their noble thoughts into your mind. Associate with worthy people, choose good friends. Read the Bible, and meditate upon its holy words. Read clean, pure, inspiring books.

Guarding Our Thoughts

Get Christ into your life, and think on his beautiful character, his love, his grace. So will you get your heart entirely free from bad thoughts by having it filled with good thoughts.

St. Paul has a word about overcoming evil with good. If your heart is filled with a feeling of anger against another, overcome it with an opposite desire of kindness. A joyful thought will drive out a sad one. A generous impulse will correct a hurt feeling. Some boys had played a game. One little fellow came home gloomy and cast down. His side had lost. But that was not the cause of his dejection.

"Mother," he said, "God was on the side of the bad boys to-day, and they won. You see, we fellows thought we would try awfully hard and not get mad or cheat or say bad words, and not one fellow did. But the other side did. They swore and got cross and cheated, and they won. God was on their side, and it wasn't fair."

The mother was perplexed—she could not

The Gate Beautiful

comfort her boy. The father came in presently, and the mother drew him aside and quietly told him of the state of things. Presently the father said:

“Well, my boy, I hear you won out to-day.”

“Well,” in a very solemn voice, “you heard wrong, because we were beaten.”

“But I heard there were two games. I heard that you lost the match, but won the big, important thing—you conquered yourselves. You didn’t beat the other fellows, but you conquered your tempers and bad language. Congratulations, my boy; I am proud of you.”

The boy’s face began to change. “Why, that is so, father,” he said happily. “I didn’t think of it in that way. God was on our side, after all, wasn’t he?”

A well-known author, writing of Alice Freeman Palmer, tells of the almost marvelous influence upon him of a little talk with her, at a critical time in his career. He was in a despairing state regarding his literary work.

Guarding Our Thoughts

Somehow Mrs. Palmer instinctively perceived his state of mind. "Then," he said, "she began at once to kindle me, and before I knew what was happening, I was afire to do a man's work again." A few strong, cheerful words from that rich-hearted woman changed the depression of the man into hope and life. A thought of encouragement drove out the thought of dejection. There are some people who wherever they go are encouragers of others with their brave optimism and with their unconquerable faith, and no thought of weakness or failure can live in the tonic air of their victorious life. No one can measure the influence of strong, good lives over those who are weak or tempted, or those who are discouraged.

Thoughts of love and power cure the infirmities of those who are under the influence of chafing tempers, of unhappy dispositions. There are some people with whom it is not easy to live. They are critical, censorious, unhappy, always finding fault. Perhaps they have been soured by wrongs they have en-

The Gate Beautiful

dured. It is not easy to live with such people sweetly. Even in a home it is not easy always for the members of a family to live together without friction or mutual offense.

There is one secret—love, love that beareth all things, endureth all things, never faileth.

The good must overcome the evil.

It is the peace of God which St. Paul says will guard our thoughts. He is speaking especially of anxiety, and the meaning is that the peace of God will keep us from all worry, all pain, all foreboding. We cannot be anxious or chafe or doubt or be in distress about our food, our raiment, our health, our affairs, if this marvelous peace of God fills our hearts.

The whole problem, then, is how to get the peace of God. Never by fleeing from our troubles, our dangers. In one of the Psalms, the writer wishes he had the wings of a dove, that he might fly away into the wilderness to a shelter from the wind and stormy tempests, but there is no such shelter in any wilderness. The only way is by ac-

Guarding Our Thoughts

cepting the will of God, and then fleeing to God himself.

“How shall I quiet my heart? How shall I keep it still?

How shall I hush its tremulous start at tidings of good or ill?

How shall I gather and hold contentment and peace and rest,

Wrapping their sweetness, fold on fold, over my troubled breast?

“The Spirit of God is still, and gentle and mild and sweet;

What time his omnipotent, glorious will guideth the worlds at his feet,

Controlling all lesser things, this turbulent heart of mine

He keepeth as under his folded wings in a peace serene, divine.”

Points of Departure

[75]

*“One stitch dropped as the weaver drove
His nimble shuttle to and fro,
In and out, beneath, above,
Till the pattern seemed to bud and grow
As if the fairies had helping been—
One small stitch which could scarce be seen;
But the one stitch dropped pulled the next stitch out,
And a weak spot grew in the fabric stout;
And the perfect pattern was marred for aye
By the one small stitch that was dropped that day.”*

CHAPTER SIXTH

Points of Departure



THE way of life is straight. It does not wind about. It does not make a zigzag path. Our experience in passing through the world is variable. To-day we have joy, to-morrow sorrow. Now the road runs in the sunshine, again it takes us into the storms. We pass through a thousand vicissitudes every year—health, sickness, pleasure, pain, ease, hardness, prosperity, adversity, gain, loss; but all the while the path of duty is direct, straight as an arrow's flight.) Yet in every life there are points at which it is easy to depart, when there are strong temptations to turn aside. There are certain points, too, at which many persons do turn aside.

The first leaving of home is a time full of danger. Home is a warm sanctuary of love. Especially is a true Christian home a place of

The Gate Beautiful

sacred fellowship. Many of the departures from the right path date from the day when a boy leaves his mother and goes out into the world, where, henceforth, he will not have her guidance.

Going away to school is for many a time of danger. The life of the old home begins to seem narrow when young people are out in their new environment and look back upon it. It is laughed at and represented as not up to date. Its habits of prayer, for example, are sneered at. Many young people find a serious testing waiting for them the first night in the boarding school or dormitory, when the retiring hour comes. Will they keep up the old home habit of kneeling by the bedside in prayer? Many battles are fought at that hour—many fought, how many sadly lost!

Marriage is another time of danger. It is a time of joy. It ought to be a time of blessing. It ought to be the gate into a life of ideal beauty. Nothing good that has been learned in the years before should be lost when two young people leave their old homes and enter

Points of Departure

a home of their own. Every beautiful thing they have been taught to do they should continue to do in the holy life they now begin together. It is told of a Christian girl recently married, that the first evening the young couple were in their own house, when they were sitting down to their first meal, the wife quietly said: "In my old home we never began a meal without first either bowing our heads and asking grace, or having a silent grace. It must be the same in my home." So the two reverently bent their heads and sought God's blessing on their first meal. That is the way it always should be when two Christian young people begin their life together. Sometimes this beautiful custom is not observed, and the event is grieved over by angels as a point of departure from God.

Sometimes prosperity proves to be a point of disaster to a life. The man who in the days of bare and pinched living, when there was no luxury, and sometimes was want, was faithful to God, when money increases and life grows sumptuous, forgets God and turns away from

The Gate Beautiful

the divine commandments. Or sometimes adversity brings defection. Most people have the impression that trouble always makes people better. The other day, one speaking of a man whose life for a number of years has been very bad, said, "I have been praying God that he might become sick or might have some great sorrow, for I think that would save him." But it might not—it might lead him still farther away from God. Bereavement, which ought to soften hearts and sweeten lives, has sometimes failed to bring the mourner nearer to Christ, or to restore faith and prayer in the home. Sickness has oft-times left one less prayerful than he was before, and with a life less beautiful.

One said the other day in talking to a friend, "I have given up God." The friend spoke of prayer. "You have not given up prayer? Do you not pray any more?" "No," the person replied, "I used to be an earnest Christian, but five years ago I had a great disappointment, a crushing sorrow. While it was imminent, I prayed God most earnestly to save

Points of Departure

me from the calamity. He did not do it, and I have never believed in him nor prayed to him since. I do not think God cares."

The losing of a friend may prove the occasion of turning aside. Moses said to his people in his farewell address, "I know that after my death, ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn yourselves from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days." The day a strong, guiding friend was taken away has proved to many the beginning of departure from God. A man with a great temptation said to his friend, who was trying to help him in his struggle toward a better life, "If I could only live with you, or even come to you always when I am tempted I could live nobly and worthily." The friend said, "Come to me any hour, day or night, when you need me, when you feel the temptation coming on, and we will talk and pray together." For several years he went often to his friend and lived bravely, not once failing. Then the friend died, and almost at once the man sank

The Gate Beautiful

away into sin and failure. He had depended too much upon the human friend and not enough on Christ.

There is not a day which does not bring some opportunity or occasion of turning aside. Business is right, if it be a right business, but continually men are tempted to depart from the right way in business. Owen Wister, in one of his books, says, "The American had rather be rich than good, and he is having his wish." Pleasure is right. Our Master wants us to enjoy ourselves, but there are good people who are led away from God by pleasure, perhaps by its excess, perhaps by its charm, its enamoring. God is driven out of many hearts by amusements, which perhaps are altogether harmless in themselves. It is in the absorption that the danger is.

What in all life is more sacred than friendship? Of course friendships are sometimes formed with unworthy people, and these cannot but lead away from God. There are friendships which one cannot have and main-

Points of Departure

tain friendship with Christ. Such friendships never can help one into true and noble life. But pure, true and worthy friendships may also become the means of turning lives away from God. It should not be so. When two Christians love each other their love should make their lives purer, richer, better. But sometimes a friendship becomes so intense, so absorbing, so satisfying that it leads to the forgetting of God. Only the other day one said: "Before I was married I loved Christ and was active in his service. I was so happy with my husband, however, after my marriage, that my need of Christ seemed to grow less and less, and soon, instead of an hour for my Bible and prayer, only a few hurried moments were given, and after a while Christ was left out of the day altogether." Too often this is the story.

There is another way also in which our dearest friends may become hinderers of our Christian life. Jesus says in one place, that in certain experiences, a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He is referring to

The Gate Beautiful

persecutions for his sake. There is another way, however, in which this may become true. Our dearest friends may unwittingly become our enemies, doing us the gravest harm. Their love for us may tempt us to slacken our love for Christ. We remember how Peter, in his intense love for Jesus, sought to keep him from doing his Father's will. When Jesus told his disciples that he must be crucified, Peter sought to hold him back from his cross and cried, "Lord, this shall not be unto thee!" Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Thus Peter's friendship was doing Satan's work—tempting Jesus. There are friends who, because of their love, seek to dissuade those they love from service for Christ that demands sacrifice. Thus love may become a peril, and lead men to turn aside from complete consecration. A Christian mother has been known to keep her son from becoming a missionary, causing him to turn aside from the life to which the Master had called him. A young Christian wife has been known, by her love for her husband,

Points of Departure

to influence him to give up his devotion to Christian work and to cease his self-denying service.

Turning aside in whatever line of life usually begins in a small and imperceptible way. No one turns entirely away from right in a moment. When one seems to depart suddenly from close following of God to complete desertion, there has always been a slow and gradual departure preceding the final breaking. The first turning was so slight that it was scarcely noticeable. It was only an imperceptible relaxing in the stringency of obedience. Still, it was a departure, and what is once given up is never reclaimed, and next week there is a still further relaxing.

Take the matter of honesty. A man's simple promise is as good as his note. After a time he begins to be a little less exacting with himself. He has debts and he neglects to pay them on the day they are due. He begins to be less watchful in his business dealing. In a few months he is quoted on the street as unreliable, then as slow, and at last as a man

The Gate Beautiful

who will pay only under compulsion. His turning away was gradual. He failed in a trifling matter and did not catch himself up, and now his one-time splendid name for honesty is gone.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a word which explains this process. The writer says we ought to give earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. Drift is just the word. The boat is not moored and drifts out to sea. Lives continually fall into some current and drift away. (They are not quite so conscientious in their habits as they were last year—drifting. They are not quite so loving as they were, not so patient, a little more irritable, not so kindly, so forbearing, so sweet in spirit, so ready to serve—drifting.)

It is the beginning of the departure against which we need to guard. "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left," is the word of caution. That is, do not deviate in the most minute degree from the right. (It is the beginning of evil we need to avoid if we

Points of Departure

would never reach the final step. It is the little deflection against which we must watch if we would never find ourselves in open rebellion against the right. A little girl was overheard telling her mother about a naughty child that grew naughtier and naughtier till at last he struck God. It is thus always that sin makes its progress. It begins only with a shade of departure, but ends in defiant rebellion.

The safety of Christian life depends on the avoidance of the first steps away from God. To make this course really effective, we must take it in a positive way. Instead of being satisfied with not growing less beautiful in Christian life, we should seek to make ever a progress toward higher, better things. We can always live better than we have yet done. We can make to-morrow better than to-day. Not one of us has reached the possibilities of our lives in attainment and achievement.

Scientists tell us of certain birds which in their wild state do not sing, but which have in their throats fine song muscles, showing

The Gate Beautiful

that if they had had favorable environment, they might have been good singers. There is no one who has not more life muscles than he has learned to use. We have capacities for obedience, for service, for beautiful living, for usefulness, which lie undeveloped in us. Instead of letting ourselves slacken in the doing of our duty, we should set ourselves ever a higher work and every day add a line to the quality of our life and the worthiness of our character. There is a little prayer in an old Psalm which would lift us ever upward. "Lead me in the way everlasting," it runs. The way everlasting leads ever toward God.

Building Again the Home Nest

*"Hurt as it may, love on, love forever ;
Love for love's sake, like the Father above,
But for whose brave-hearted Son we had never
Known the sweet hurt of the sorrowful love."*

CHAPTER SEVENTH

Building Again the Home Nest



EDDED life should always be happy. That is the ideal. Love should reach its holiest and best in the marriage relation. There St. Paul's vision of love should be realized: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Marriage, in its full beauty and blessedness, is not something one can come into in a day. Like all holy friendships, it must be a growth. President King says, speaking of personal association in friendship: "He who would grow into larger and richer friendship must recog-

The Gate Beautiful

nize first of all that, if his friend is in truth worthy of such a friendship as he seeks, the great way is by personal association. One cannot grab up and hurry off with the fine fruits of friendship. No friendship that counts for much with either men or God can become one's own without the giving of time, of thought, of attention, of honest response."

Marriage, as the highest and best of all friendships, is no exception. It takes time for even the truest and wisest lovers to be fully, wholly married. Then there must be constant, patient, thoughtful culture. Something new must be discovered every day by each in each. The possibilities of happiness in marriage are simply infinite.

Phillips Brooks' picture of growth in friendship through personal association finds its most perfect realization in marriage: "Surely there is no more beautiful sight to see in all this world—full as it is of beautiful adjustments and mutual ministrations—than the growth of two friends' natures who, as they grow old together, are always fathoming with

Building Again the Home Nest

newer needs deeper depths of each other's life, and opening richer veins of one another's helpfulness. And this best culture of personal friendship is taken up and made in its infinite completion the gospel method of the progressive saving of the soul by Christ."

Such words give us a glimpse of the possibilities of marriage, what it may attain to, what every wedded pair should strive to realize in their own case. But there are marriages which do not reach such an ideal. Young people entering marriage must remember that a sweet and happy home is not necessarily the sequel to a brilliant wedding. It does not come as a matter of course after vows, wedding ring, benediction and congratulations. A happy wedded life must be made by the parties themselves. No one, not even God, can make it for them. A beautiful house with luxurious furniture and appointments does not guarantee it. Love is the essential element, but love, holy and tender as it may be, needs cultivation. Then wedded love requires infinite care that it be

The Gate Beautiful

not marred, that its sweetness be not disturbed. It is a heavenly plant which earth's frosts may hurt or earth's droughts may wither.

Sometimes the home nest gets ruffled. Something goes wrong and there is unhappiness instead of happiness. It ought never to be so. Wedded life ought to be so true, so constant, so patient, so unselfish, that nothing could ever mar its happiness. (Wedded love ought to be equal to any sacrifice that may be required of it, and no sacrifice is too great to be made that the home gladness be not broken.

The following letter was sent by a friend to one home into which trouble had come. The young husband and wife had been married for several years. They were both Christians. Two little children had come into their home, bringing joy and gladness. They had been very happy until recently. Then something had happened which caused misunderstanding. No matter which was to blame, but the difference was not settled in Christ's way, and

Building Again the Home Nest

the trouble grew until it became very serious. Then a friend sought to save the home, and the two were brought together. The letter was sent to the wife. It was received so gratefully and proved so welcome and so helpful in restoring the happiness of the home that, with very slight changes, it is given here in the hope that it may help to build again some other home nest, or help in saving happiness that is in danger of being destroyed:

“MY DEAR FRIEND:

“You do not begin to understand my loving interest in you and your husband, and my desire for the complete restoration of the happiness of your home. It must not be possible for you two dear lovers to fall apart. Nothing really serious has happened to mar your fellowship. You have not understood each other quite perfectly—that is all—and you have not had quite patience enough with each other, so things have gone wrong a little, and your relations have become a bit tangled. But it is going to be all right now. You will

[95]

The Gate Beautiful

not let anything so small do you both and your home such harm.

“Longfellow tells of going out one morning, after a heavy night storm, and walking through his garden. Under a tree he saw a birds’ nest lying on the ground. He pitied the birds, and stood there thinking sadly of their misfortune. But while he was musing in his sad mood, he heard a chattering overhead, and, looking up, saw the little birds busy building their nest again. They were not defeated nor greatly discouraged by the disaster.

“That is what I am sure you and your husband are doing already. The storm came and swept your nest to the ground. Yesterday it seemed to you that it could not be restored. But now you have taken time to think, and are bravely building the nest again. And it is going to be more beautiful, and fuller of love, joy and song, than ever it has been before.

“It may not seem very easy to save your home after all that has happened, but no mat-

Building Again the Home Nest

ter what it costs, it will be a thousand times worth doing. Love is the sweetest thing in the world, but love is not easy. It means much self-denial, much forgetting of one's own wishes, much restraining of one's own impulses, much curbing and checking of one's own feelings. St. Paul tells us that 'love suffereth long, and is kind; . . . doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' It is not easy to love in this way. It takes the grace of God in our hearts to enable us to love after this fashion.

"You and your husband love each other. You have not forgotten the lover days. When you were first married, your love was deep and tender. Somehow you have not always been happy since. Little things have come in to make you unhappy some days. But your love is really true and strong as ever. It would break your hearts to be separated. All you want is to get this love into the common

The Gate Beautiful

relations of your lives. You have not quite learned yet how to deny yourselves and give up for each other.

“A few years ago a happy young wife told me this story. She had been married about a year. She was recovering from typhoid fever, and I was talking with her. She picked up from a table a little illuminated card, bearing the words, ‘What would Jesus do?’ and said, ‘I want to tell you about this card, for it saved my marriage and my home.’ Then she gave me this story: ‘When my husband and I were married we were both hasty in temper and speech. We had many a little tiff before our wedding, and the first evening we had quite a serious quarrel, which, however, was soon over, like all our differences. When we had come into our new home, we had a disagreement one day at luncheon. My husband left the table in anger, and went out without kissing me good-by, and I came up to my room to cry. After a time of tears, I got up and my eye fell on this card. I had never noticed the words before, but now the ques-

Building Again the Home Nest

tion spoke right to my heart and demanded an answer, "What would Jesus do?" I began to think and to try to answer. What would Jesus really do? He surely would not do as I am doing—be so impatient and irritable, so easily vexed, so hasty and exacting. I fell on my knees and fought the battle out. I settled it there and then that I would never again have any angry words with my husband, that I would be patient, loving and sweet in spirit and in speech.

"I rose from my knees, washed away the tears, dressed for dinner, and when my husband came home, I met him at the door in a most loving way. After dinner I brought him upstairs and showed him this card, telling him the whole story of what I had done. He saw that he, too, had been hasty, quick in temper, sharp in speech, willful and impatient. We knelt together and told Christ all about our mistakes, asking his forgiveness, and promising never again to repeat the mistakes.'

"The lesson never has been forgotten by these two lovers. They are among the hap-

The Gate Beautiful

piest young people in the circle where they belong. The little card has indeed saved their marriage and their home.

“I have told you this little story in the belief that it will help you. You are a Christian. To be a Christian means that you will do what Christ would do if he were in your place. Perhaps you have not always thought of this, and sometimes have been hasty and impatient. Love does not demand everything of the other person, but it does demand everything of itself. It ‘seeketh not its own.’ It ‘beareth all things.’

“There are wondrous possibilities in your married life. You two dear young people may be the happiest in the city, and your home may become the sweetest, happiest home in all the community. All you need in order to realize these possibilities is love worked out in thought, in word, in act, in disposition. Do not blame each other when things go awry—blame, each, yourself. Never allow yourself to be vexed or hurt, at least to show it, no matter how much you think you have been

Building Again the Home Nest

wronged, or how unjustly you think you have been treated. Love each other as Christ loves you. Repay unkindness with kindness. If you think you have been unfairly treated, or unkindly, be especially kind in return. That is the way to pay back an evil thing done to you.)

“God bless you. I believe that a year from now you will tell me you have had the happiest year you ever have had; that the nest which the storm tore down has been built again, and is more beautiful than ever it was before.

“Faithfully your friend.”

“Behold, Thy Mother”

** ‘When school is out,’ she said, ‘once more I’ll rest
My tired head upon my mother’s breast,
And feel her tender cheek against it pressed,
And there, at last, I shall find perfect rest.’”*

*“We sigh for the touch of a vanished hand,
And we think ourselves sincere;
But what of the friends that about us stand,
And the touch of the hand that’s here?”*

CHAPTER EIGHTH

“Behold, Thy Mother”



ONE of the words from the cross was “Behold, thy mother!” The word was spoken to John, the beloved disciple. Mary was standing near the cross. The sword was slowly piercing through her soul, as Simeon had foretold that day when the mother was giving her child to God in the temple. Think of the anguish of her heart. Yet she was silent—the deepest grief is always most quiet. She could do nothing to soothe or help. She stood by his cross, watching. Oh, friendship, constant, faithful, undying! But what of the love of the dying Son for his mother? His own anguish was unspeakable those hours. Did he think of her then? Or was his pain so absorbing that he forgot her? She was standing near his cross—did he notice her? Here is the answer: “When Jesus

The Gate Beautiful

therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother!"

Jesus had always cared for his mother. She was the first friend he ever had. The mother is always her child's first friend. Only a few times is the veil lifted to give us glimpses of this mother and her child. We know that Jesus was the ideal son in his love and faithfulness. (Few things in this world are more beautiful than such friendships as one sometimes sees between mother and son.) The two enter into the closest friendship. A sacred and inviolable intimacy is formed between them. The boy opens all his heart to his mother, telling her everything; and she, blessed woman, knows how to be a boy's mother, and how to keep a mother's place without ever startling or checking the boy's confidences, or causing him to want to hide anything from her.

It is almost certain that sorrow entered the Nazareth home while Jesus was only a boy. Joseph is not mentioned after the visit to

“Behold, Thy Mother”

Jerusalem, when Jesus was twelve, and it is supposed that he died soon after that, leaving Mary a widow. No doubt Jesus became his mother's caretaker. He was the eldest son. He had learned the carpenter's trade, and day after day, early and late, he wrought with his hands to provide for her wants. The thirty silent years of preparation closed, and Jesus went forth to begin his public ministry. The Father's business now filled his hands—he was the Messiah—but we are sure that his love for his mother never failed. Love for God does not keep us from loving our mothers and friends—it makes us love them all the more. Doing the Father's work does not make us less interested in the duties of earthly life—it teaches us to do all duty better.

It is beautiful to see this love manifesting itself in his dying hours. His heart was full of love and sympathy as he saw his mother so stricken with grief, and then thought of her as she would be when he was gone, desolate and bereft. Thus far, he himself had been near her in all her need; now, when the burden

The Gate Beautiful

grew heavy, he would not be with her. One of the bitterest elements in the experience of death is the thought of those who will be left behind when we are gone. One tells of a man, a happy Christian, with wife and children in his home, who lay very sick. The doctors said he could scarcely recover. When they told him so, he showed no fear of death, but there was his young and tender wife, who had leaned on him in loving trust, and there were his children, who needed a father's care. He looked into the eyes of the woman who sat beside his bed, and said, "Ah, the outlook is very bright, very bright, only—how will it fare with you and the boys?"

It was a feeling much like this that was in the heart of Jesus that morning on the cross, when he saw his mother standing close by. He had a vision of her loneliness when he would be gone. He knew how she would miss him. Before he went away, he must provide a shelter for her. So he committed her to John, who was standing by her, asking him to be a son to her henceforth. He thought not only

“Behold, Thy Mother”

of his mother's physical needs, but of her heart's longings as well. She would find love and all gentleness in John's home. It would not be merely a boarding house, where daily food would be given to her, and where she could sleep at nights. It would be a home in which there would be sympathy and tenderness. He knew his mother would be reverently cherished in John's house as long as she lived. “Woman, behold thy son!” Part of the anguish of dying was now gone from the heart of Jesus; his mother would have shelter and most tender care.

While this picture of Jesus and his mother is before us, it is natural that we should think of our mothers, too, and of our duty to give them love and thought and gentle cherishing. “Behold, thy mother!” When Jesus spoke these words to John, he was giving him another mother to care for, to watch over, to shelter, to comfort. To be a friend of Christ is to stand ready to use all we are and all we have to help his friends. It was a most sacred honor to John to be chosen from all the

The Gate Beautiful

Master's friends to be intrusted with the care of Christ's own very mother.

"Behold, thy mother!" Think what we owe to our mothers. They tell us that into the strings of some old Cremona violin, the life of the master who has played upon it for years has passed, so that it is as if his very soul breathed out at every skillful touch of the instrument. This is only a poet's fancy; but when a child in a mother's bosom is loved, nursed, caressed, held close to her heart, prayed over, wept over, talked with, days, weeks, months and years, it is no mere fancy to say that the mother's life has indeed passed into the child's soul and breathes out in the child's life.

We grown-up people do not begin to know what our mothers have done for us, how they have given their lives to us and for us. The debt of a child to a mother is one that never can be fully discharged. It dates from the first moment of being; it accumulates as the days go on. There are the years of infancy with their solitudes, their broken nights and

“Behold, Thy Mother”

toilsome days, their unsleeping watchfulness, their patient nursing. There are the years of training and teaching—think how much a child has to be taught in its first five years. There are the times of sickness when the lamp never goes out and the pale, weary watcher accepts no relief till the danger is past.

There is a story of an artist who wanted to freshen the old mother's photograph, taking out the lines and wrinkles, to make it look brighter and younger. “No, no,” said the son. “Leave it just as it is, lines and all.” Then he explained how the lines and traces of age in his mother were the most sacred things in the picture. They were the etchings of suffering and endurance, the grave records of love's cost, when the woman was mothering her children. Not a line or a mark must be taken from the old photograph. It would not be a true picture of the mother if these traces of pain were washed out.

The son was right. Old age, with its decrepitude, its bent form, its faded, shrunken cheeks, is not dishonorable when the years have been

The Gate Beautiful

filled with love. Wrinkles and lines made by care and self-denial are honorable credentials, records of holy service of love. Perhaps your mother is prematurely gray, has lost somewhat of the freshness of her earlier years—is crippled, partly paralyzed, her hands feeble and trembling, her speech uncertain; have you ever thought that these physical effects are the results of her toil, loss of rest, self-denial for you?

“Behold, thy mother!” Look at her if she is living, think of her reverently if she is gone. Sometimes we forget. Sometimes one hears of men and women even forgetting their mothers, leaving them uncared for, to suffer want, while they themselves have plenty, and could easily supply their simple needs. Then sometimes mothers are well enough cared for so far as earthly comforts are concerned and yet neglected, starved, so far as love is concerned. We sometimes hear of people setting apart a day in the year when they wear a white flower as a mark of honor for a mother. That is well. But while your mother lived, did you strew

“Behold, Thy Mother”

the path of her feet with flowers? If she still lives, do you honor her with flowers of love? Do you show her kindness? Do you speak gently to her, and make her glad with your love?

The white flower is an emblem of her purity. That is well. A true mother is like an angel of God in the whiteness and luster of her life. In the schoolroom of the little Princes of Germany, it is said this incident occurred: The teacher was saying that all people are sinners. The little Crown Prince wanted to know if this was true of people of royal rank, or only of the lowly. “Of all,” said the teacher. “Well,” said the little Prince, speaking slowly but very positively, “my father may be a sinner, but I know my mother is not.” God bless the true mothers, with their white lives. Wear the white flower in honor of your mother’s purity of soul.

But the white flower you wear ought also to be an emblem of your own life. In no other way can you honor your mother so well as by a spotless character. There are too many chil-

The Gate Beautiful

dren who are kind to their mothers in a way, doing many things for them, giving them presents, then breaking their hearts by lives of sin. The mother of Jesus had poignant sorrow that day when she stood near the cross and beheld her son in anguish there. But there were no bitter drops in her grief. His life had been all holy and pure. He had never done an unkindness. He had never spoken a harsh word.

If boys and young men would honor their mothers in the true way, they must do more than wear a white carnation on their breast one day in the year. They must wear the white flower of a blameless life all the days of all the years. A mother said the other day to a friend, "I would rather a hundred times he had been brought home to me dead." Her boy of seventeen had been brought home the night before, drunk. A boy who loves his mother should never give her such grief as that to bear. The boys do not know how proud their mothers are of them, what brilliant dreams they dream for them as they

“Behold, Thy Mother”

think of their future, how they pray for them, how they love them. They must not disappoint their mothers.

Perhaps your mother is gone. She cannot see how you live: At least so far as you know she cannot see. One friend asked another, “Do you think our mothers in heaven see us here, and know how we live?” The friend replied thoughtfully, “I do not know. But let us live always as if we knew they did.” That is a safe rule of life.

“Behold, thy mother!” One of the great things Jesus did that day when redeeming the world was to think of his mother, and provide that the cold storms should not blow sharply upon her frail, sorrowful life. If this was a fit thing for Jesus to do for his mother, it is a fit thing for us to do for our mothers, if we have them yet with us. Then, if your mother is in heaven, and you cannot go to her with any fresh honor, find some other one to whom you can show kindness for your mother’s sake.

Jesus asked John to take his place, and love

The Gate Beautiful

and honor his mother for him. There may be somewhere an aged mother, or a mother feeble and lonely, who has no child of her own to show the kindness of God to her. Jesus says to you, "Behold, thy mother!"

What God Thinks of Us

[117]

*"God reads—and very truly reads—
Our motives under all our deeds :
And if, with purpose pure, to-day
I seek—but seem to miss my way,
Yet am I, in the courts above,
Judged by the perfect law of love !"*

CHAPTER NINTH

What God Thinks of Us



ONE of the most important questions we can ask ourselves is what God thinks of us. Dr. Stalker has pointed out that in every man there are four different men—the man the neighbors see, the man one's most intimate friends see, the man the person himself sees, and the man God sees. The community knows us only in a general way, superficially. What people think of us we sometimes call reputation—what we are reputed to be. It is a composite made up of all that people know about us, gathered from our conduct, our acts, our dispositions, our words, the impressions of ourselves we give to others.

A man becomes known, for example, as honest, because he pays his debts, never defrauds another, never fails in any financial obligation. Men learn to know that he can be de-

The Gate Beautiful

pended upon. They say his word is as good as his oath, his simplest promise as good as his bond. Or, he gets the reputation of not paying his debts, of not meeting his obligations, of not being dependable in financial ways. One man through years of life becomes known as generous, kind, liberal, faithful in his friendships, obliging, self-denying, charitable. Another wins the reputation of being close, mean, grasping, miserly.

Thus the knowledge the community has of a man is only superficial. It is evident that the world's opinion about people is not infallible, is not complete, is not final. A person may be better than his reputation; his manner may do him injustice. Some men, by reason of their shyness, their awkwardness, or some limitation in power of expression, fail to appear at their true value. The world knows only a man's outward life, and there may be good things in him which it does not know. Then some people, on the other hand, are not as good as their reputation. Their photograph flatters them. What they pretend to be exceeds the

What God Thinks of Us

reality. They practice tricks which give a glamour to their lives, so that they pass in public for more than they are. They wear veils which hide defects and faults in them, and thus they seem better than they are. Hence we cannot accept the judgment of the community regarding anyone as absolutely true, fair, and final.

There is another photograph—what our intimate friends think of us. They know us better than the people of the community do. They understand us better. They see us with love's eyes, without prejudice. They know the good things in us, which only close association could bring to light. They saw us in some times of sore testing, when we showed ourselves true and faithful under difficulty or at great cost. A woman who had been married a little more than a year wrote to a friend, "I thought I knew my husband perfectly before I married him, but I did not—I did not half know him. He had faults of which I never dreamed—I thought he was perfect, but he was not. Then the year has also

The Gate Beautiful

shown in him constant new revealings of beautiful and noble qualities, of which I had no conception. I knew he was good, but I did not know the thousandth part of the goodness I am now discovering in him."

Those who know us intimately find the worst in us, of course, but they also find the best. Friends ought to learn to be very patient with each other. We may not always expect our mere neighbors to look upon our faults graciously, with tolerance, but we have a right to expect our close friends to deal leniently with us. "Love suffereth long," says St. Paul, "and is kind." Especially in the sacred life of the home should love suffer in silence and patiently and not judge harshly. In an English religious paper which has a department for questions and answers, this appeared:

"I live with a brother and a sister, both of full age. But we do not lead the happy life we should live. My sister has got into the habit of thinking that pretenses, subterfuges, prevarications, are not lies in God's sight, and

What God Thinks of Us

that fidelities in common things are of little account. I get so impatient with her. Yet I do not know but my impatience with her is as bad in God's sight as the faults I see in her. Should I just be quiet when I see it all, and leave it to God? How, then, can we have sisterly communion with this barrier between us? "

Surely this is not the best that the grace of God and the love of Christ can do or ought to do with Christian lives in the sacredness of the home. To be Christians ought to bring us so close together that we shall never judge each other any more. Instead of one sister seeing great blots and flaws in the other, all should have that inexhaustible love which sees its own imperfections, but sees only the good things in the other. In the closeness of the home relation it is easy to discover faults and criticise each other. It is easy to overlook the good and the beautiful, when defects are so manifest. But the very essence of love is to cover up mistakes and shortcomings in others, and to see everything in the light of patience

The Gate Beautiful

and forbearance. Even in ordinary relations with others, a loving nature should always look for the good and overlook the blemishes. A great warrior had an ugly scar on one cheek and the artist who painted his picture so posed the emperor that the scar was not seen. So should we treat our friend, or even our neighbor. But especially at home, which is to be love's garden, should the flaws be veiled and the lovely things be brought out in full light. Whatever the world's judgment upon men may be, is it not time that the friends of Christ should cease to deal unfairly, unjustly, unrighteously with each other? Yet the judgment of even the truest, closest friends is not final. There is a third tribunal—our own conscience. There is the man we ourselves see. St. Paul could say, "I know nothing against myself." That was a great thing for him to say. Many of us do know things against ourselves, things that others do not know. We are conscious of faults which even our nearest friends do not see in us. When others are praising us for something we

[124]

What God Thinks of Us

have done we know that it is overpraise they are giving us. We are not as good as those who love us think we are. Few of us would like to see our thoughts written out on a white page to be read of all men. We are aware of evil in ourselves that others, even those who know most of us, do not suspect.

On the other hand, when people blame us, say evil things of us, charge us with doing wrong, it is a comfort for us to know in our own hearts that the things they say are not true. It gives peace to our spirits to be able to say we know nothing against ourselves.

But there is another man in us—the man God sees. And this is most important of all. We do not know all the secret things of our own hearts. There is an Eye that sees deeper than ours. We may claim to be without fault, but we must know what God has to say. St. Paul says, “I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” Even conscience may err. St. Paul knew this by terrible experience. It is before God that we are really living our

The Gate Beautiful

life. It is pleasant to have people commend us when we have tried to do our duty. It gives us great joy to have the approval of our own hearts. But if we do not have the commendation of the Master, human praise and self-approval amount to nothing. "What does God think of you?" is always the final question.

Some one may say that since God is so holy, and sees into the depths of our being, and perceives every blemish, it is impossible for us to win his commendation. But holy as he is, God is merciful, gracious and compassionate. He accepts our service not for itself, but for what it means in the way of desire and intention.

It is easier to live for the eye of God than for the eye of man. David, when the Lord gave him the choice of three penalties after he had sinned in numbering the people—seven years of famine, three months' flight before his enemies in war, or three days' pestilence, answered, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great; and let me

What God Thinks of Us

not fall into the hand of man." Men are cruel. They judge often harshly. They know only part of the truth concerning us. They are not patient with our infirmities. But we are safe in the hands of God. He knows the worst in us and our deeds, but he also knows the best. Christ has been tempted in all points as we are, and has suffered, being tempted; he understands, therefore, the power of temptation and can pity us in our weakness and faintness. He knows when our repentance is true, and when we really love him though we have so grievously sinned. Peter, when the question was put to him after his fall, "Lovest thou me?" could make his appeal to his Master's own knowledge: "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." We may safely make our plea before God himself, rather than before man.

We may trust our lives, therefore, to God's judgment, even if they are full of defects and flaws. He knows all, and will bring to light all the hidden things. Many of the most beautiful ministries of love are hidden. We

The Gate Beautiful

scarcely know that we are of any use in the world. We sometimes think that when the King comes, he will have no reward for us, we have done so little for him. We do not begin to know how many lovely things we have done. We have wrought humbly, quietly, obscurely. We sometimes think our efforts have failed—we do not see the harvest—but some day all these hidden things will be brought to light—our dreams of good which have missed fulfillment, the things we wanted to do and were not able to accomplish, the kindnesses shown to people almost unconsciously. Not one of these things is lost. The Master will say to this and that lowly one, in the great day of revealing, “I was hungry and ye fed me.”

St. Paul assures us of praise from God. “Then shall each man have his praise from God.” Think of having God praise you. “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” “Thou hast been faithful.” There are some faithful Christians who do not often get a word of praise from human lips for what they do.

What God Thinks of Us

They hardly ever hear a sentence of commendation. Nobody ever brings them a rose. Nobody tells them they are doing good in the world. In their own lowly way they make countless lives better and happier, their burdens lighter, and yet they rarely ever hear a "Thank you." It will be very sweet, in the day of revealing, for these plain, humble ones who give out their lives in love, and scarcely know they are doing anything for Christ—it will be very sweet, when, before all the universe, the secret things they have done shall be brought out and they shall receive their praise from God.

Hating One's Life

[131]

*"Somebody near you is struggling alone
Over life's desert sand ;
Faith, hope and courage together are gone :
Reach him a helping hand ;
Turn on his darkness a beam of your light ;
Kindle, to guide him, a beacon fire bright :
Cheer his discouragement, soothe his affright,
Lovingly help him to stand."*

CHAPTER TENTH

Hating One's Life



JESUS said, "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." In what sense are we to hate our life? We are not to despise our life, regard it as of no account. Sometimes we hear discouraged and despairing men say, "My life is of no value. I cannot be of any use. I can never do anything worth while. I may as well die." Jesus did not mean that we are to hate our life in this way. God never made a life that needs to be useless. Jesus said elsewhere that we may not accept even the whole world in exchange for our life. The Bible says that man is but a little lower than God. We understand what Jesus thought of the worth of human lives, when he laid down his own life to redeem them. It is a sin to hate one's life, to esteem

The Gate Beautiful

it as of no value, to throw it away. We ought to love our life, prize it and keep it, cherish it and guard it.

What, then, does Jesus mean when he says, "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal"? He means loving life more than duty, more than obedience to God's commandments. To hate one's life is to give it up gladly in service of others, even to lose it in saving others. An English medical journal recently reported that Dr. Waddell was attending a poor woman's child with diphtheria when the operation of tracheotomy was necessary. The instant clearing of the tube became a matter of life and death, and at the risk of his own life, the doctor sucked the tube free of the diphtheritic membrane. The child recovered, but the doctor contracted the disease. He hated his life, that is, he thought it not too valuable to sacrifice in the doing of his duty as a physician. The records of every day are full of incidents in which, in hospitals, in homes, on railway trains, in mines, and in

Hating One's Life

all kinds of service, men and women are illustrating this lesson. The highest example the world ever saw was in Christ's own case, when the Son of God hated his own life in order to save the world.

It is easy enough to think of this law of life in a large way, as a theory. Now and then there comes an opportunity also to illustrate it in a grand way, as some nurse does, as some doctor does, as a mother does, as an engineer on a railway train does. But how are we going to live this life in the common experiences of every day? We ought to try to interpret this law of the cross so as to make it applicable in the home, the neighborhood, the school, the business office. Victor Hugo attempts it in speaking of the philosophy of life. He says: "Men hate, are brutes, fight, lie, leave their dream of beautiful life unto the shadows. But share you your bread with little children; see that no one goes about you with naked feet; look kindly upon mothers nursing their children on the doorsteps of humble cottages; do not knowingly crush the hum-

The Gate Beautiful

blest flower; respect the needs of birds. Be like him who has a watering pot in his hand, only let your watering pot be filled with good deeds and good words."

The keynote of the lesson is self-denial, which is not merely doing without meat in Lent, giving up some customary indulgence for a few weeks, sacrificing a few things you do not care much for to get a little money for the missionary collection. There are few farces enacted in the world equal to the emptiness of pious self-denial, as it is played by a good many people, for example, in the Lenten days, meanwhile living selfishly in all the relations of the common days.)

Hating your life means, among other things, stooping down and considering the needs of little children, and the loneliness of old people. It means thinking of persons no one else is likely to think of or care for; being patient with disagreeable people, even cranky people, and kind to them; going far out of your way to be obliging to one who perhaps would not go out of his way an inch to do a good turn

Hating One's Life

for you; not noticing slights, inattentions, offensive things, or even slurs; striving to be more Christlike to the person who treats you ungraciously; saying particularly kind things of the person who has been saying unkindly things of you.

One of the magazines recently told the story of the way a young man gave himself. He was poor, and had a great desire to get an education and to become a lawyer. He saved enough money by hard work and close economy to carry him through college in a self-denying way. In his first year he made a friend, a young man, brilliant, and noble as well, who also had all the money he needed. The two were roommates and became close personal friends, in spite of their difference in position. During the first summer vacation, the father of the well-to-do boy died, leaving his son no money, however, to continue his course. The young man wrote to his friend and told him he could not return to college, and that he must abandon his dream of obtaining an education, and go to work. The

The Gate Beautiful

friend wrote to him about in this way: "You have fine capacity and will make a useful man if you have education. I have found out that I would make only a fourth-rate lawyer at best. It will be far better for you to be educated than for me. I have money enough saved to carry you through college. You must take my money and complete your course. I inclose a draft for the amount. I will drop out of sight altogether and lose myself. Do not try to find me—it will be of no use. Do not refuse the money—you never can return it to me." That was self-denial of the noblest kind.

"Impracticable," some one says. No; it is not impracticable, at least in spirit. You do not begin to know how many chances you will have every day next year of hating your own life in this world, abandoning things pleasant and agreeable, and giving yourself, to help some other one upward. In the home life, the chance comes every hour, the chance of giving up your own way to make another happier, of keeping gentle and sweet instead of becom-

Hating One's Life

ing irritated and provoked; of speaking a soft answer instead of a cutting one; of taking the heavy end of some burden, that a frailer one may not be crushed; of giving cheer to one who is discouraged, thus saving him from despair.

There are a hundred opportunities every day of dropping yourself out and putting another in the way of receiving a favor which otherwise would have been yours, of laying selfishness on the cross and nailing it there, and showing love instead. There is an almost infinite field of opportunities for hating your own life, denying yourself, sacrificing your own feelings, impulses, desires, preferences, to make life easier, happier, more joyous and more worth while to others. Helen Hunt Jackson says—

If I can live

To make some pale face brighter, and to give

A second luster to some tear-dimmed eye,

Or e'en impart

One throb of comfort to an aching heart,

Or cheer some wayworn soul in passing by;

[139]

The Gate Beautiful

If I can lend

A strong hand to the fallen, or defend

The right against a single envious strain,

My life, though bare

Perhaps of much that seemeth dear and fair

To us on earth, will not have been in vain.

There is another sphere of opportunities for living out the doctrine of the cross in everyday life. "Do justice and judgment," runs the Bible teaching. Do you ever think how grievously some of us fail in being just to others? We are unreasonable, exacting, unfair, partial in our judgment. We criticise others unmercifully. We commend very few people; we condemn almost everybody for something. What unchristly judges of the acts of others we are! Then do you ever think how little of real forgiveness there is among us, even among Christian people? We talk much about forgiveness, and we pray it every time we say the Lord's Prayer—"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," but how much Christian forgiveness do we practice? No doubt it is hard to forgive one who has

Hating One's Life

treated us unjustly, unkindly, meanly. Forgiveness is not a natural disposition or act—it is divine—it is Christ working in us.

Yet this is part of our lesson. Not to forgive is to love your own life, and that is to lose it. To forgive is to hate your own life, not insisting on having your own way, or demanding your rights; but to bear the wrong, the insult, the injustice, to return good for evil, to turn the other cheek when one cheek is already smarting with the smiting. What a good world we Christians would make of this old earth if we would only get the law of the cross into our lives! What heart-burnings we should cure! What hurts of love we should heal! One of the fine things attributed to Lincoln is, "Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow." That is one of the ways of hating one's own life in this world. It is very easy to plant thistles instead of plucking them up. It is easy to pluck up roses instead of planting them. It is

The Gate Beautiful

easy not to deny ourselves, but just to let the old unregenerate self rule our spirit and go on with our bitter jealousies, envyings, resentments, injustices, believing evil of others, judging others.

We ought to think a little of the outcome. "He that loveth his life loseth it." If we love self, we shall lose all. If we hate our life, we shall keep it. The life given up and devoted to God and duty, sacrificed in doing good, coming to nothing perhaps before men, shall grow into eternal blessedness, shall rise to nobleness, beauty, splendor of life, in the heavenly glory. A man said recently: "I have worked all my life, but have never got ahead, have never gathered any money. There has always been some human need waiting when I had begun to accumulate a little, and I had to use my savings to give help." That man has made a great deal of money, but he has little in hand. He has hated his own life and has given all to help others. Yet he has not been losing—he has been keeping his life for eternity. Christ says of those who serve him

Hating One's Life

and follow him, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." Think of being with Christ when you have finished your life of serving, self-denial and sacrifice in following him here. Think of where you will be and what you will be after you are dead.

*"Think that the grass upon thy grave is green ;
Think that thou seest thine own empty chair,
The empty garments thou wast wont to wear,
The empty room where long thy haunt hath been ;*

*"Think that the lane, the meadow and the wood
And mountain summit know thy feet no more,
Nor the loud thoroughfare, nor sounding shore—
All mere blank space where thou thyself hast
stood.*

*"Amid this thought-created silence, say
To thy stripped soul : What am I now and
where ?*

*Then turn, and face the petty, narrowing care
Which has been gnawing thee for many a day,
And it will die, as dies a wailing breeze,
Lost in the solemn roar of bounding seas."*

The Making of Men

[145]

*" 'Tis the front toward life that matters most—
The tone, the point of view,
The constancy that in defeat
Remains untouched and true ;*

*" For death in patriot fight may be
Less gallant than a smile,
And high endeavor, to the gods,
Seem in itself worth while ! "*

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

The Making of Men



THE tree registers its age by annual circles of growth. The year that leaves no mark cannot be a worthy year. Phidias put himself under still severer test. His motto was, "No day without a line." He must be a little better artist every evening than he was in the morning. Life that is not growing is decaying. Some people do not like to admit their age—they cannot endure the thought that they are growing older. But our only concern need be to put so much true and beautiful living into every passing year that the coming of a new birthday shall never fret us. We should be truly ashamed of any birthday, however, which marks an empty year, with nothing worth while in it to show that we have lived.

The one real business of life is making men.

The Gate Beautiful

St. Paul tells us this in a noble passage in which he is speaking of Christ's work after his ascension. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some pastors and teachers. The purpose of all this giving of divinely endowed ministries was for the perfecting of saints, unto the work of ministering till we all attain unto a full-grown man. Thus the mission of the church is the making of men. Its ministrations are for our perfecting.

It is for this that we are to read the Scriptures. The Bible shows us God. It keeps ever before us the life of Jesus Christ, who was the manifestation of God. It makes known to us the will of God. It keeps us familiar with the true standards and ideals of living. It is for this also that we are to pray. Prayer lifts us up into communion with God and kindles longings and aspirations in our hearts. It brings heaven down into our earthly lives and thus helps toward our growth. Perfection seems beyond our reach, but every day should bring us a little nearer to it. Life is a school and we are always to be learners. We have to

The Making of Men

learn to be content, to be patient, to be kind. All heavenly virtues and graces are lessons set for us, and as we learn them we grow toward perfection.

Another part of the work of the church is to train us in the work of ministering. To minister is to serve. We are to learn to be always doing good. There are human needs and sorrows about us continually and part of our business in this world is to be helpers of need and comforters of sorrow. No man is growing toward full manhood who is not becoming more sympathetic toward all human conditions and more helpful toward all who are weak or in want. It is important that Christians shall be honest, true, just and upright, patriotic. But they may be all this and yet not reach up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ in loving and serving others.

*"Just the art of being kind
Is all this sad world needs."*

Some people become discouraged because they seem to be effecting so little in impressing or

The Gate Beautiful

influencing others, but oftentimes the things which appear to us so small are really of greatest value in the end. He who gives but the faintest touch of beauty to another life does something which will last forever; and he who strives to do good, though he seem to fail, is rewarded. There is a legend of a monk, Fra Bernardo. The monastery to which he belonged had vowed to erect a carved altar at Christmastide. All the monks had finished their part save Fra Bernardo. On Christmas Eve he knelt and told his Lord that he had failed—he had tried to do something worthy, but he had no skill. Then he prayed once more that he might be given skill to carve his heart's dream of beauty that very night, that he might not altogether fail, for he loved his Lord. In the morning the monks found Fra Bernardo in his cell,

*“ Dead, smiling still, and prostrate as in prayer ;
While at his side a wondrous carving lay—
A face of Christ sublimely tender, sweet.
The work of Fra Bernardo was complete.”*

The Making of Men

So will it be with all who appear to fail but who continue to strive and do their best. At the last it will be seen that what seemed failure is full of the beauty of Christ. God finishes the work his faithful ones try to do for him.

Christ takes us, first, as children, with our life immature, undeveloped, imperfect, but his work in us will not be complete until we have become men, strong, tall, noble, full-grown men. The sculptor, before he strikes a blow upon his marble, has in mind a vision of what he means to make, and every stroke is toward the fashioning of the stone into the beauty of his thought. God likewise has a plan for every life. It is never haphazard work that he does at any point. From first to last he seeks to bring the man in us up to the grace, strength, and nobleness of full-grown manhood.

This making of men is not all done in church services, at prayer meetings, at communions, in places of devotion. Christ is making men all the while, in their homes, out in their

The Gate Beautiful

places of toil and struggle. The business of the carpenter, we should say, is to make the things carpenters usually make. But in Christ's purpose it is the making of a man. The business of the farmer is to till his soil and gather good harvests. But God's higher thought for the farmer in all his work is the making of a man. The merchant supposes he is conducting his business for the convenience of his patrons and for his own enriching. But if meanwhile he is not himself being built up in strength and beauty of character, not growing toward Christly manhood, he is not entirely successful, is not quite reaching God's thought for him, however prosperous he may be in a commercial way.

The same is true of all kinds of callings and occupations. A man was not thought about in God's plans and then made, endowed with gifts and faculties, primarily that he might be a builder, erecting so many houses in his lifetime, or a painter, ornamenting a certain number of buildings, or an artist putting on canvas noble pictures which shall win him

The Making of Men

fame and give pleasure and ennobling of mind and heart to those who look at them. A man's carpentering, his building, his painting, his farming, his work as an artist, as a teacher, as a merchant, as a seaman, all the things he does among men are only incidents in the real work of his life—his growing into ideal character.

Religious teachers speak of certain exercises—prayer, Bible reading, acts of devotion, the sacraments, as “means of grace,” acts of worship in which we receive divine blessing and are helped in spiritual growth. We may add to this list of means of grace all life's affairs and occupations. It is in these that we have the opportunity of applying the truths and principles we learn in the Holy Scriptures, and of putting in practice the lessons we are taught by the great Teacher.

All of what we call our secular life is really a sort of scaffolding on which we work day after day, while we are rearing, beautifying, and at last finishing within, the temple of our own life and character.

The Gate Beautiful

Thus the making of men is the ultimate end of all life, and the test of all that we do is not the material results achieved, the things people see and note in footing up what we have done, but the results we have wrought in ourselves, in our own life. St. Paul has this truth in mind when he says that the things which are seen are temporal, while the things which are not seen are eternal.

The personal experiences of life are also to be thought of as all belonging to the processes in which God is at work on us, training and disciplining us into full-grown men. Many have sorrows, sufferings, losses and distresses in their common days. Some find life very hard. It may be sickness, with its pain and depression. It may be bereavement which brings loneliness and sorrow. It may be loss of money which sweeps away the earnings of years and leaves want. It may be the failure of friendships which have not proved true, making the heart sore and empty. Some people are heard asking why it is that they must suffer so if God really loves them. We may not

The Making of Men

try to answer the question, for we may not attempt to speak for God. But we may always say, "God is making us."

Michael Angelo, as he hewed away at his marble, would watch the clippings fly under the heavy strokes of his mallet, and would say, "As the marble wastes, the image grows." In the making of men there is much to be cut away before the hidden beauty will appear. The marble must waste while the image grows. We never need be afraid of the hard days and the painful things. If the marble had a heart and could think and speak, it might complain as the sculptor's cutting and hewing go on so unfeelingly, but when at last the magnificent statue is finished, the mystery of the hammer and chisel is made plain. This is what the artist was doing all the while. God's ways with us in his providences are incomprehensible. But when the life stands at last before God, complete, there will no longer be any amazement, any asking why. In all the strange and hard experiences God has been making men of us.

The Gate Beautiful

Knowing this, we should be able to submit our lives to the divine will and discipline, cheerfully and implicitly, however painful it may be for us. Many people seem never to think of themselves as being thus in the process of making. They live aimlessly, without a purpose. We should be done forever with indolence or haphazardness in our living. We should learn to work with God in his purpose for us in every day's work and experience, seeking to become ever somewhat better men, to come a little nearer to the full-grown manhood which is Christ's final vision for us.

If we grasp the truth that the purpose of God for us in all our experiences is the making of us, it will greatly simplify our life. It will make plain to us the meaning of many things which now trouble and perplex us. It will give us an inspiring thought concerning the meaning of our common work, our business, our occupation and calling. It will give a unity to the meaning of all our experiences. None of them are accidental. They are not derelicts drifting into our lives and harming

The Making of Men

or destroying us, as the derelicts on the sea harm or wreck vessels in their course. Whatever may be the source of the hard things, they are taken into the hands of Christ and do their part in the making of us. Nothing can harm us if we believe on Christ and are faithful to him.)

"The wind that blows can never kill

The tree God plants ;

It bloweth east, it bloweth west ;

The tender leaves have little rest,

But any wind that blows is best.

The tree God plants

Strikes deeper root, grows higher still,

Spreads wider boughs, for God's good will

Meets all its wants."

Christian Manliness

*"Give us men !
Strong and stalwart ones ;
Men whom highest hope inspires,
Men whom purest honor fires,
Men who trample self beneath them,
Men who make their country wreath them
As her noble sons
Worthy of their sires !
Men who never shame their mothers,
Men who never fail their brothers,
True, however false are others ;
Give us men—I say again,
Give us men !"*

CHAPTER TWELFTH

Christian Manliness



WHEN St. Paul would stir up Christians to their best, he bade them quit themselves like men. He meant that if they would be manly and act manfully, they would be worthy Christians. No ideal is higher than just to be a man. What is manliness? There is no one exact model. No two men are precisely alike, for every man has his own individuality, which modifies the expression of his life. Besides, no man at his best is any more than a fragment of a man. We find some lines of beauty in almost every man, but in no one do we find all the qualities of ideal manliness. It has been suggested that if it were possible to gather, through all the centuries, from all the individuals of the whole human race all the fragments of manly character that through the ages have existed in all, and combine these

The Gate Beautiful

in one composite character, that would be the ideal man.

While men differ in their individual lives, there are certain great qualities which are essential in all noble manhood. Truth is one of these. God desires truth in the inward parts. He wants truth in all the life. It is a great thing to be able to say of a man that you may depend absolutely on any statement he makes to you. What he tells you of another person or of any event or occurrence, you may be positively sure is a fact.

Then anything a man promises to do, he should do. He should never break a promise to anyone, however unimportant the thing promised may be. Failing to keep one's word may be counted a little thing, but it is really a great thing. If it is only a penny you agreed to pay, pay it the day you said you would. If it is only a postal card you promised to write to-morrow, write it. Let your word be absolutely kept in the smallest matter. Fulfill your lightest engagements. Do always precisely what you said you would.

Christian Manliness

Honesty also is essential in manly character. And the time to begin to build honesty into a character is in boyhood. A dishonest boy will not grow up into an honest man. We should make it absolutely impossible for us to touch or even to think of touching or even desiring anything that is not our own. An explorer in the Arctic regions tells of burying a box of fish in the ice, meaning to send for it later. He did not return to the place for a considerable time. Meanwhile a famine came on. The people knew where the food was concealed. Yet in all their suffering no one touched it. "Why did you not eat the fish?" asked the explorer in surprise, when he came back and found the food still where he had left it. "It was not ours," was the answer, "and we could not touch it." That is the law of honesty. What is not ours, we should never think of appropriating, whatever our need.

Justice is another essential quality of manliness. Justice is part of love. We should never wrong another. The Golden Rule should dictate all our treatment of others. We should

The Gate Beautiful

never take advantage of another's ignorance of values to drive a sharp bargain. We should never put blame upon others when probably the fault was ours as much as theirs. Or if it was the others', it is the Christian way to take it upon ourselves. We always judge unjustly when we judge harshly. We do not know in our judgments of others the secret cause of the unbeautiful thing—the mood, or temper, or fret, which displeases us so in them. We blame others, too, when, if we knew the facts, we would pity them. Or it may be something we condemn in another, which, if we saw it in its full light, would reveal beauty, a splendor of self-sacrifice. Some young men censured one of their number for niggardliness, because he dressed plainly and lived cheaply. Later, they learned that he was caring for an invalid and suffering sister, and that it was in order to provide comforts for her that he stinted himself. Then they honored him as a hero. We may set it down as a rule that harsh judgments are never just. If we would always be just to each other, we

Christian Manliness

must never judge them, but must love them rather, dealing charitably with them, leaving judgment to God, who knows all, and never can be unjust.

Purity is another quality of manliness. The New Testament has a great deal to say about cleanness of life. This is not a clean world through which we are passing. It is full of evil. Yet the problem of Christian living is to go through the world, keeping our garments clean. "But," some one asks, "how is it possible for anyone to do his work in this world, living amid unclean things, and never take any stain on his own life?"

Some one answers in this way. Just out of reach from his window, the writer says, stretches a wire which carries a heavy current of electricity for light and power. If he could lean far enough out to touch it, death would come to him swifter than a tiger's leap. Yet the doves light on that wire every fair day and are not harmed. Why would the wire mean death to the man if he could reach out from his window and touch it, and why is it

The Gate Beautiful

a safe resting place for the doves? The secret is that when the doves sit there they touch nothing but the wire. But if the man reaches out of his window and touches the wire with his fingers, he would also be touching the walls of his house, and would thus form a circuit and the deadly current would flow through his body.

We may touch the worst evil in the world without harm or pollution so long as we are given wholly up to God. But if our own hearts are in contact with sin, clasping it and cherishing it, we cannot move safely through this evil world. Jesus said of his disciples, when he sent them out to carry the gospel to men, "They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them." A man who is given up wholly to Christ can go through this world serving his Master and blessing his fellows, and nothing shall harm him.

Beauty is another quality of true manliness. It is not enough for a man to be true, to live honorably, to be just, to be pure and clean—

Christian Manliness

he must also have in his life whatsoever things are lovely. All God's works are beautiful. He never made anything that was not beautiful. It is sin that spoils everything. There are many lives that are not lovely in every feature. You see things in others which you cannot admire, things which are not beautiful. Fretting is not beautiful. Bad temper is unlovely. Discontent, jealousy, irritability, unkindness, selfishness are unseemly. It is the work of grace to make lives beautiful. All that grace does in us is toward the fashioning of beauty in us.

On a florist's signboard are the words, "Ugly corners made beautiful." The florist had reference to what he could do to beautify an ugly spot or a piece of landscape. He would trim out the weeds, plant flowers and shrubs, and transform a wilderness into a garden. That is what grace can do in our lives, our homes, our communities and in the world. Some men seem to think that the fine and graceful things are only for women, not for men. But Christ was a man, a perfect, com-

The Gate Beautiful

plete man, and there was not a single unlovely thing in his life. He was strong, but also gentle. He was just, but kindly. He was firm, but patient. He was righteous, and his indignation burned like fire against all hypocrisy, all oppression of the poor, all injustice, but his tenderness never failed. Fine manliness is beautiful, like Christ's own. We should seek ever for beautiful things, and wherever we find anything lovely, we should at once take it into our life. We should make our religion beautiful in every feature. Only thus can we truly honor Christ in this world. Our lives are the only Gospels many men read. Let us be sure we do not misrepresent the Master whom we would recommend and show to the world wrong examples of him.

Love is also essential to manliness. There is no complete manliness that is not loving. God is love, and we grow into true Godlikeness only as we grow in lovingness. One writer says, "If we knew our brother as God knows him, we should never dare to despise him any more." God sees something to admire and

Christian Manliness

love in the most faulty and imperfect man in all the world. Christ saw in the worst man that which made him willing to die for him. Men should love one another. They should be friends to each other. They should help each other to live. Some of your brothers find it hard to be good, to be true, to be beautiful in spirit. Some men have fallen into bad habits and it seems that they cannot overcome them. They want to, but the chains are steel. Help them.

Some men get discouraged. Their work is hard, their battle fierce, and they scarcely ever hear a word of cheer. Fulton, the great inventor, near the close of his life, wrote this pathetic sentence: "In all my long struggle to work out the principles of the steam engine, I received innumerable jeers, opposing arguments, prophecies of failure, but never once an encouraging word." There are many men battling hard, striving to live well, to attain something worth while, who are left unhelpt, with only discouragement, and with rarely ever a word of cheer. There is nothing

The Gate Beautiful

that Christian men can set themselves as a task that will mean more to their brothers than to become encouragers, givers of cheer. Some one suggests a new Beatitude: "Blessed are the cheer-makers, for they shall be called the sons of the morning."

Love is an essential quality of the finest manliness. Unlovingness is always unmanly, because it is always unchristlike, undivine. Then it is also a mistake. It always does harm in two ways. It harms the person to whom it is done, and it also harms the person who does the unloving thing. Charles Kingsley says, "Whenever we have failed to be loving, we have also failed to be wise; whenever we have been blind to our neighbor's interests, we have been blind also to our own; whenever we have hurt others, we have hurt ourselves much more."

We do not begin to understand what our lives mean to others who see us and are touched by us. It is possible to do too much advising or exhorting of others, but we never can do too much beautiful living. One can send a blessed

Christian Manliness

influence out through a whole community, just by being a splendid man. He may not be eloquent or brilliant; he may not be a statesman, an architect, a distinguished leader, a noted physician or surgeon, a gifted orator; but simply to be a worthy, noble, good man, for ten, twenty, thirty years in a community, is an achievement gloriously worth while. Men who are living nobly do not begin to know how many others are living well, too, just because they are.

It is a great thing to believe in others. We cannot do anything for others by doubting and distrusting them. Men are coming to know that the only way to help others is to love them and believe in them. Aldis Dunbar, in *The Century*, writes of what believing in another will do for him:

*Because of your strong faith, I kept the track
Whose sharp-set stones my strength had well-
nigh spent.*

*I could not meet your eyes if I turned back :
So on I went.*

The Gate Beautiful

*Because you would not yield belief in me,
The threatening crags that rose, my way
to bar,
I conquered inch by crumbling inch—to see
The goal afar.*

*And though I struggle toward it through hard
years,
Or flinch, or falter blindly, yet within,
“You can!” unwaveringly my spirit hears :
And I shall win.*

The noblest thing a man can do in this world is to be a man, such a man as God has planned in his thought for him to be. He need not be a famous man, a man noted among men, one whose praise is sung on the streets, but a man who is true, brave, pure, just, beautiful and loving, a man who lives for God and for his fellows.

Misunderstood

[173]

*"The life of man
Is an arrow's flight
Out of darkness
Into light
And out of light
Into darkness again ;
Perhaps to pleasure,
Perhaps to pain.*

*"There must be something,
Above, or below ;
Somewhere unseen
A mighty Bow,
A Hand that tires not,
A sleepless Eye
That sees the arrows
Fly, and fly ;
One who knows
Why we live—and die."*

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

misunderstood



HERE is a strange story or tradition of a stone which was originally meant for an important place in the temple, but which was misunderstood and rejected by the builders. When the temple was about to be finished, one stone of peculiar shape was needed to complete it, and this stone could not be found. There was great excitement. "Where is the capstone?" the builders asked. The ceremonies waited while search was made everywhere for the missing block. Some one suggested, "Perhaps the stone which the builders condemned and threw away among the rubbish is the one needed now for the place of honor." It was found and brought, and it fitted perfectly. The stone was misunderstood by the builders. It came nigh being missed altogether, and if it had been there

The Gate Beautiful

would have been an unfilled space in the wall and an incomplete building.

Continually the same occurs in life. There are many people who do not seem to fit into any place among men. They do not appear to have ability for anything worth while, to possess qualities which will make them of value to the world. They are not brilliant, or strong, or skillful, nor do they seem likely to do anything to distinguish themselves. Perhaps they seem peculiar, eccentric. Yet later, they develop strength, ability, wisdom, even greatness, and fill important places in the world. In a recent book, a number of pages are devoted to an account of eminent men for whom in their early years their friends and teachers predicted failure. They were dullards, not showing capacity. Afterwards, however, when they found themselves, these men became distinguished.

Parents need not be discouraged if children at first seem unpromising, not caring for study. There may be hidden in their brain and heart possibilities of power which will be

misunderstood

brought out in certain circumstances, afterwards fitting them for important duties. God knows what he is doing when he is making men. He never makes one he has no place for in the world. Even if it is a broken life, there is some place for it, some work it is specially fitted to do.

This truth is illustrated in life's common relations. There are many who are misunderstood and unappreciated, who do not get their proper meed of praise and commendation. It is so in many homes. There are men who do not half understand the nobleness of their wives and the delicate beauty of their lives, nor appreciate the worth of self-denials and self-sacrifices which they continually make for their homes and for those they love. There are many women who receive little commendation, who rarely hear even a kind, approving word, but who are honored by the angels because of the genuineness of their service and its lowliness and unselfishness. They have not found their true honor on earth, but some day it will be seen that their lives are for high

The Gate Beautiful

places in the temple of God that is slowly rising.

A great many people everywhere—men as well as women—are not well understood. They have peculiarities which neutralize some of their good qualities. They are uncouth and unattractive in some ways. People do not see the good that is in them, do not value them at their true worth, underestimate and misunderstand them. Here is a man whom many of his neighbors do not like. Something in his manners offends them, excites in them unkindly thoughts toward him. They say that he is not sincere, that he does not mean what he says. They judge him as lacking the elements of character which are essential to the best and most beautiful life. Yet those who know the man's inner life are sure that his neighbors are mistaken in their judgment concerning him, that he has in him many good qualities. He is misunderstood. His neighbors' opinion about him are unjust. The best in him does not appear. He is rejected by the builders as unfit for any place

Misunderstood

in the temple. He is not to men's tastes and is thrown aside.

*"O God! that men would see a little clearer,
Or judge less harshly when they cannot see.
O God! that men might draw a little nearer
To one another. They'd then be nearer thee,
And understood."*

A strong plea should be made for the misunderstood and the unappreciated—and there are many of them. They are not taken into honored places. They are not elected to official positions, named on committees, nor called to act in conspicuous rôles. They are left to work in obscurity, rejected by the builders and cast aside. We can do no better service than to become the friends of these who miss human favor and appreciation, to seek to be discoverers of worth and goodness which others overlook, and to strive to bring to recognition and into active, useful service those who are in danger of being lost, forgotten, passed by and left to failure.

We should pray that we may see people as

The Gate Beautiful

God sees them, for he always sees the good, the best in everyone. He sees our possibilities—not what we are to-day, but what we may become through love and patience to-morrow. We need to learn to be very patient with people till the worthy in them comes to its best.

Some fruits are not sweet until the late fall. Some people also ripen slowly, and it takes a long time before they become sweet, beautiful, helpful. We should not reject any life, because it is not yet beautiful, because it does not yet seem lovely. Wait and let God train and discipline it in his own way, and some day it may be ready to fill an important place. The stone which the builders of society would reject as unfit, God may want at length as one of the finest ornaments in his temple. Let us be more patient with people whose faults offend us, who seem unfit or unworthy. Perhaps their faults are only unripenesses, or perhaps they are not faults at all, only individualities, which will prove to be elements of strength and beauty when the persons

Misunderstood

find their true recognition. God has a place and a work for everyone. There will be a place by and by for the misunderstood life, and the stone which the builders despise God will use to be the head of the corner somewhere.

Sometimes it is God himself that is misunderstood. Troubles come into our lives, and we ask, "Is God really always good? Does he indeed never cease to be kind? Does he care? Does he feel with us in our griefs and disappointments? Has he an interest in our lives? If he is our Father and cares, why does he permit us to suffer so?" We are in danger of misunderstanding God and not accepting the love and care which are in his heart for us.

But God's work with us is not yet finished. We misunderstand it because we have not yet seen it all. It is not just to criticise a picture when the artist's work is not completed. Sometimes you read a story, and at the end of a certain chapter all seems wrong. If the book ended there you would feel that God was

The Gate Beautiful

not kind. But there are other chapters yet to come, and as you read on, you learn how good came out of all that seemed hard, even unjust. Lives are serial stories. We may tell the bereft one who is questioning the divine goodness in the providence which so emptied her life, that God will stay with her, comfort her, and help her, causing all things to work together for good, and that some day she will find the love which she cannot now see. If the story of Joseph had closed with the sale of the boy into Egypt, or when he was cast into the dungeon on a false accusation, we could not have claimed that good is the final outcome of God's care. We must finish the story and then we shall find that there is a Hand which directs all human affairs and brings good out of all evil.

Many times we think our circumstances in life anything but kindly. It does not seem to us possible that these rough, unseemly things can be built into the temple of our lives as beautiful stones. In our experiences there may be some threatening loss, some bitter trial im-

Misunderstood

pending, or some painful thing that has already come upon us which we feel we cannot possibly build into the perfect temple. Yet this may be the very stone which God had prepared for the most important place in all the building. Some day you will say of it, "The stone which I, the builder, would have rejected, has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in my eyes."

Do not reject, then, the experiences of sorrow, pain, adversity. You do not see how these can become a good, a joy, a blessing in your life. But wait till God has worked out his plan to completion. The divine purpose in all providences is to make men, and all his making is very good. Doubt not, therefore, that the very stone which to your eye and thought seems so unfit, so unsuitable for building into the temple of your life, God will use to fill an essential place by and by, perhaps to be the chiefest adornment in your character when complete.

Our Lord in the Gospels used the incident of

The Gate Beautiful

the rejected stone as applying to himself. He was the stone which the builders rejected, but which God made to be the head of the corner. The rulers had a mistaken idea of the Messiah. They thought he would be a mighty earthly king, who would free them from their subject condition and make them a great nation that should conquer the whole world. They had not learned the sacrificial idea of the Messiah, given in such prophecies as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. So when Jesus came, lowly, meek, loving, unresisting, they did not believe that he was the promised Messiah and would not accept him. They misunderstood him.

There are many people to-day who do not approve of Christ. They do not like his way of helping and saving. They do not think he is the Friend they need. The life to which he invites them does not attract them. They do not think he can lead them to the best things, the best character, the deepest joy, the truest usefulness. In the tradition, there came a day when one particular stone was needed, must

Misunderstood

be had, or the building would not stand complete. Then the stone which had been despised, which had been thrown away, proved to be the only one that would fit and fill the place. The teaching is simple and plain. Men despise and reject Jesus Christ, but there will come a time when no one but Christ will fit into their soul's need.

For example, Saul did not think Jesus was the Messiah. He was sincere and conscientious in his persecution of him. He regarded him as an impostor and rejected him. He sought to destroy all who believed on him. He thought he was pleasing God in his persecutions. One day near Damascus he had a wonderful vision. He saw a divine Being shining in heavenly glory. He was startled, amazed, and fell to the earth. "Who art thou, Lord?" he asked. "I am Jesus," was the answer. Instantly Saul saw that Jesus was no impostor, but the Son of God. He accepted him now as the Messiah. From that moment Jesus took the supreme place in Saul's life. The stone which the builders rejected became the head of the cor-

The Gate Beautiful

ner, the glory of his life, the hope of his soul.

They only misunderstand Christ who think he is not all they need. Your life will always be incomplete, unfinished, until Christ is received into his own place in it.

Service Declined

[187]

*"I would have gone ; God bade me stay ;
I would have worked ; God bade me rest.
He broke my will from day to day,
He read my yearnings unexpressed,
And said them nay.*

*"Now I would stay ; God bids me go :
Now I would rest ; God bids me work.
He breaks my heart, tossed to and fro,
My soul is wrung with doubts that lurk
And vex it so.*

*"I go, Lord, where thou sendest me ;
Day after day I plod and moil :
But, Christ my God, when will it be
That I may let alone my toil,
And rest in thee ?"*

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

Service Declined



It seems strange to have God refuse service offered to him. David had been king for a number of years and had built for himself a house of cedar. One day as he sat in his luxurious home, a shadow fell over him. He began to feel a sense of shame as he thought of the fine house he had built for himself, and then, in contrast, thought of the weather-beaten tent in which the ark of God was dwelling. He felt that a dwelling place should be provided for the holy ark at least as costly and as beautiful as the house in which he himself was living.

We get a lesson right here for ourselves. We ought not to think of our own comfort and then give no thought to God and his work. There is no word of Scripture which forbids us to live comfortably ourselves. But when

The Gate Beautiful

we are able to do well for ourselves, we may not rob God, nor stint his service. A house of cedar for our own home, and an old tattered tent for God is not fit, not worthy. Job speaks deprecatingly of eating one's morsel alone while the fatherless shared it not. If we use only for ourselves the comforts we have, not thinking of those who have not the bread of life, we are living unworthily.

“ ‘ If I have eaten my morsel alone !’

The patriarch spoke in scorn.

*What would he think of the church, were he
shown*

*Heathendom, huge, forlorn,
Godless, Christless, with soul unfed,
While the church's ailment is fullness of bread,
Eating her morsel alone ?*

“ ‘ I am debtor alike to the Jew and the Greek ;’

The mighty apostle cried ;

*Traversing continents souls to seek,
For the love of the Crucified.*

*Centuries, centuries, since have sped ;
Millions are famishing, we have bread,
But we eat our morsel alone.*

Service Declined

*“ ‘ Freely, as ye have received, so give,’
He bade who hath given us all. }
How shall the soul in us longer live,
Deaf to their starving call
For whom the blood of the Lord was shed,
And his body broken to give them bread,
If we eat our morsel alone ? ”*

It seems pathetic to read that after David had conceived such a noble thought for the honor of God, God declined to let him carry it out. “Thou shalt not build me a house.” Yet as we read the story through, we see that the decision was right. David was not blamed for his desire. Indeed, his thought was accepted. God did not refuse the temple—he approved it. He only said that David should not build it. There may be some noble work you long to do. It may not be permitted to you to do it, yet it is commendable and will be done by another. We should be content with our own place in life, and our own work. We should not fret because we are not allowed to do some particular piece of work that we had set our hearts on doing. It is glory enough to

The Gate Beautiful

have anything, even the smallest task, to do in the building of God's great temple. If some other one has a part which seems greater, more conspicuous, we need not complain. We ought to be satisfied to have the beautiful work done, whoever may do it. Whittier's lines tell the story:

*Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong,
Finish what I begin,
And all I fail of win.*

*What matter I or they,
Mine, or another's day,
So the right word is said
And life the sweeter made?*

*Hail to the coming singers!
Hail to the brave light-bringers!
Forward I reach and share
All that they sing and dare.*

The Lord also encouraged David by the assurance that while he would not be permitted to build the temple, his desire to do so was

Service Declined

approved. "Whereas it was in thy heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart." David's purpose received divine commendation. God took the will for the deed.

We all have our limitations. Our minds are greater than our powers to achieve. As one suggests, we think in marble and build in brick. Of only one Man who ever lived could it be said that he had accomplished all that had been given him to do. None but Jesus Christ ever made his achievements up to his dreams and intentions. No one of us has lived as nobly or has wrought as finely as we intended to do. We have not the skill to fashion all the loveliness that our souls dream. No poet writes in his verse all the beauty of thought that shines in his glowing mind—his pen is not equal to the task. No artist puts upon his canvas all the splendor he conceives in his vision. No one of us is as good any day as we meant to be when we bowed in our morning prayer. But it is well the beauty is in our heart, that we mean to please God.

The Gate Beautiful

God accepts what we want to do as if it were done.

“God finishes the work by noble souls begun.”

God treated David very graciously when he declined the service David offered him. God is a most gentle Master. His No is sweeter and more cheering than the Yes of other masters. He could not accept David's desire to build a temple, but he so lifted up his heart with joy and hope that he almost forgot his disappointment. David could not build the temple but, instead, God would build him a house, that is, make him the head of a line of kings, ending at last in the Messiah. Whatever disappointment he had at God's declining the service he meant to do, he is made now to rejoice at God's wonderful goodness.

All of us sometimes have our desires and hopes thwarted. The things we want to do for God he declines to have us do. The requests we make of him he will not grant to

Service Declined

us. The temple we seek to build for him he will not allow us to build. Earnest prayers of ours he will return unanswered. But he will deal with us so patiently, so graciously, so gently, with such kindness, in declining our wishes, that we will forget our requests have been declined.

It is told of President Lincoln that in one of the dark days of the Civil War a poor woman came to plead that her husband or one of her five sons in the army might be released to care for the little farm and be a comfort to her. Mr. Lincoln spoke to her with deep emotion of the great crisis through which the country was passing, telling her that not one soldier could be spared. Then he spoke of the noble part she was doing in sparing her husband and all her sons to the country. He told her he thought that in the great need she would not want to take back even one of them. As she listened, her patriotism rose, and she withdrew her request, and went back home to share loyally and gladly in the saving of the country. So it is that God appeals to us when

The Gate Beautiful

we seek relief from crosses or sorrows, until we are ready for his sake to go on in our life of greatest self-denial and sacrifice. Our unanswered prayers seem better than if they were answered. We are not permitted to build the temple for God, to render the service we wanted to render, but we are able to rejoice and praise, seeing that God's way is better than ours.

We may learn then to take our place in the plan of God and to do what he has purposed for us to do. No one can do everything. God's plan for no life is large, because no one is able to do much. We think we can do great things, but when we try we soon find that we are very small and can do but little. The best and greatest of us are only little fragments of men. One can do one little piece of work, another can do another little bit. "There are no all-round men." All that most of us can do is to start one little thing in the world. All God expects of any of us is just some fragment of the whole. All that some of us can do is to have a good purpose in our heart

Service Declined

which some other, wiser and better than we, coming after us may work out. This is a great world and its vast work is one; all any of us can do is just a few strokes, a block or two in the wall, a touch in the adornment of some panel, or perhaps only a word of cheer to the builders.

Yet no life is unimportant. The smallest individual life has its essential place. If you drop out, no matter how little the place you fill, you will leave that place empty. Our part then is simple faithfulness. Accept your place in life and the work that is given you to do. Have large plans and great purposes. Seek to build temples for God. But if he declines the service you offer, do not fret, do not be discouraged. Perhaps your limitations may make it impossible for you to do the thing you long to do. One would preach, but lacks the qualities that are essential in a preacher. One would go as a missionary to a heathen land, but he has not the strength for endurance, and his consecration is declined. A young man offered himself as a volunteer

The Gate Beautiful

missionary. He was almost ready to go to the field when his father died and it became his duty to stay at home and care for his widowed mother and the children; so his devotion to missionary work must be given up. He grieved, but the other duty was as sacred as the missionary service could have been.

Life is full of rejected service, of thwarted intentions. Thousands and thousands of people are not permitted to do the things they had set their hearts on doing. What then? Let them do what God plans for them to do instead of what they had planned for themselves. The thing you thought you were made to do, was really some other one's task, as the temple was Solomon's work, not David's. Mr. Sill, in a little poem, puts it thus:

*Fret not that the day is gone
And thy task is still undone.
'Twas not thine, it seems, at all :
Near to thee it chanced to fall,
Close enough to stir thy brain
And vex thy heart in vain.*

Service Declined

*Somewhere, in a nook forlorn,
Yesterday a babe was born :
He shall do thy waiting task ;
All thy questions he shall ask,
And the answers will be given,
Whispered lightly out of heaven.*

*'Tis enough of joy for thee
His high purpose to foresee.*

Sitting in our house of cedar, with marvelous goodness filling all our life, let us look out and see the needs of God's work about us. Let us think of the many things which wait for loving hearts and willing hands and promise God our best, all we can do. Let him choose what he would have us do, and because our particular dream of service is declined, let us not fold our hands and close our heart—rather let us pour out our life in the work the Master sets for us to do.

How Can We Know ?

"I find enough good people in the world to make me think God is good, though a few years ago there was a period in my life when I wondered if God had not forgotten me, or if he was just."—PRIVATE LETTER.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

How Can We Know?



JESUS had just said, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye have known him, and have seen him." The words bewildered Philip. He could not understand them. "Ye have seen the Father," Jesus had said. That was just what Philip was longing for—to see the Father. So he interrupted the Master, saying, "Lord, show us the Father." He wished that Jesus might make the mystery plainer.

There are many sincere Christians who have the same desire that Philip expressed. They long for clearer, fuller revealing of God. A writer in a religious paper tells of two girls walking home from their work one evening, talking earnestly together. One of them was overheard saying to the other, "Yes, but

The Gate Beautiful

why has no one ever seen God?" This was all the gentleman heard, as he stood waiting for his car, but even this single sentence showed what had been the burden of the conversation. Evidently the girls had been talking about the apparent unreality of spiritual things. Why had nobody ever seen God? They had heard a great deal about God, his love, his care, his interest in human lives and affairs, and his promises of help and direction, but they had never had even a glimpse of him. How could they know that all they had heard about him was true? How could they be sure that there really is a God? Had anybody ever seen him? How then could they know that the things of the Christian faith and hope were realities?

In a private letter from an earnest Christian the longing takes this form: "For the last month or more I have been drifting away from God and have not been able to drop anchor. The more I read and study the life of Jesus, the farther I seem to drift. I find myself asking the question continually, 'Are

How Can We Know?

all these things true? They certainly are beautiful to read about, but are they true? How do we know they are true? ”

There is nothing wrong in such feeling as this writer expresses. Philip, Christ's apostle, felt the same yearning. There come times in the life of almost every thoughtful Christian man and woman when such questions arise. "Is there a God who is our Father? Does God really love me? If he does, why must I suffer so?" Christ is not impatient with our questions when we cannot understand. We remember his wonderful gentleness with Thomas when that disciple could not accept the fact of his Master's resurrection. Jesus was not grieved with Thomas. He dealt with his doubt patiently, he showed him his hands with the nail prints, and thus proved to him that he was indeed risen. He wants us, also, to bring our questions to him, and he will answer them for us and give us joy and peace.

It is not surprising, either, if sometimes we cannot understand the mysteries of the Christian faith. All life is full of things too hard

The Gate Beautiful

for us to comprehend. Can you tell how on the bush in your garden on which in March are only briars will be in June clusters of glorious roses? Can you tell how the food eaten to-day will be to-morrow in the laboring man strength for work, in the poet beautiful fancies, in the singer sweet songs? A great botanist said there was mystery enough in a handful of moss to give one a whole lifetime of study. There are really few things anywhere that we can fully understand. How does the eye see? How does the ear hear? How does the nose smell? How can the wireless instrument on a ship in mid-ocean send a message which the operator on the coast receives and reads? We wonder at these things, but we do not doubt them. Why, then, should we question the fact that as a mother, the other night, stood by her sick child when the little one was hovering between life and death, and pleaded with God, her prayer reached the ear of the heavenly Father? Why should we doubt that God loves us when we believe that our human friends love us? You cannot see

How Can We Know?

the love in your friend's heart. You say the friend is true, patient, kind, that he is a tower of strength to you. You cannot see these qualities in him, but you do not question their existence. Your friend travels abroad, and you cannot be with him to see that he is faithful to you. You do not have anyone to watch him when he is absent; how, then, do you know that he is true? You believe in him. Can you not believe also in God, whom you do not see? Is the fact that you cannot understand the divine love any reason for your not believing in it?

We say God does not manifest himself to us, but he does reveal himself far more actually than we think. There is a picture of Augustine and his mother which represents them looking up to heaven with deep longing and great eagerness, as if listening for something. One is saying, "If God would only speak to us!" and the other replies, "Perhaps he is speaking to us now and we do not hear him!"

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father," and

The Gate Beautiful

Jesus replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" Philip thought he had never seen the Father, and Jesus told him he had been seeing the Father in him for three years. What Philip had in mind was some revealing of visible glory, some outshining of majesty and splendor, a transfiguration—that was the way he thought God must appear. When Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," he referred to his daily life with his disciples. The very purpose of the Incarnation was to show God to men in a common everyday human life, which they could understand. Jesus was showing God to men when he was patient with their dullness, gentle with their faults, long-suffering and merciful with their sins, compassionate toward their sorrows.

We see God continually in the same familiar ways. A writer says that most men are religious when they look upon the faces of their dead babies. The materialism which at other

How Can We Know?

times infects them with doubts of immortality, drops away from them in this holy hour.

*“There’s a narrow ridge in the graveyard
Would scarce stay a child in its race;
But to me and my thought it is wider
Than the star-sown vagues of space.”*

People say, “If we could see miracles we would believe.” But it was not miracles to which Jesus referred in his own life when he said he had been revealing the Father all the time he had been with the disciples. He referred to the kindnesses he had shown, and the gentle things he had done continually in his associations with the people in the common life of his everydays.

Have you never seen God? If you think of God as only burning majesty, shining glory, you will say, “No, I never saw God.” But the splendor of Sinai clouds and flaming fires is not God—God is love. You remember Elijah’s vision on Horeb. A great wind swept through the mountains, but God was not in

The Gate Beautiful

the wind. An earthquake made the hills tremble, but God was not in the earthquake. A fire swept down among the crags, but God was not in the fire. Then came a still, small voice, a sound of gentle stillness breathing through space, and that was God. You have really seen God a thousand times in love, in peace, in goodness. You have seen him in daily providential care, in the sweet things of your home, in sacred friendships, and in countless revealings of goodness. Think how you have been blessed all your life in many ways. Do not call it chance, or luck—there is no such thing. You ask, “Why has no one ever seen God?” You were in danger the other day and a mysterious protection sheltered you from harm. (You had a great sorrow which you thought you could not possibly endure, and there came a sweet comfort which filled your heart with peace.) There was a strange tangle of affairs which seemed about to wreck everything in your life, and it was all straightened out as by invisible hands, in a way you never dreamed of. You had a

How Can We Know?

crushing loss which seemed about to overwhelm you, and lo, the loss proved a gain. You were wrongly treated by a pretended friend, and the stars all seemed to have gone out of your sky. To-day you are quietly praising God for it all, for it delivered you from what would have been a terrible misfortune, and gave you instead a true friendship, a rich happiness which fills all your life. You had a painful sickness which shut you away in the darkness for weeks, and you thought it a sore experience. To-day you thank God for it, for you learned new lessons in the darkness. All your years have been full of great deliverances, remarkable guidances, gentle comforts, answered prayers, sweet friendships, divine love and care. Yet you say you have never seen God, and you ask, "How may I know that the beautiful things which the New Testament tells me about Christ are true?"

How may we learn the reality of spiritual things? Only by experience. In one of the Psalms are these words, "They that know thy

The Gate Beautiful

name will put their trust in thee." Human friendships are formed in experience. We meet one we have never seen before. Little by little we learn to know him, finding in him qualities which please us, and coming at length to love and trust him as a friend. In the same way only can we learn to know and love God. We read of his goodness, his justice, his truth, his lovingkindness, his faithfulness. But we must come into personal relations with him before we can know that these qualities are in him. We can learn to know him only in experience.

The story of Lady Aberdeen's conversion to Christ is very suggestive. She was long in doubt—wavering, indecisive, not knowing what to do. In the time of her perplexity she sat one day under a tree in her garden, in deep thought. She had been asking, "How can I know that these things are true? Is Christ real?" She could not be sure. "Act as if I were," said a mystic voice, "and you will find that I am." Nothing could have been more fair or reasonable. She did not

How Can We Know?

stay to ask whether the voice she heard was real and divine, or only an illusion. To her it was the voice of Christ, and he was bidding her try him. "Act as if I were. You do not know whether I am or not. I offer you life, rest, joy, peace; you do not know whether there are such blessings or not. Act as if there were. Test my promises. Try me." She did, and she was not disappointed.

How do we know that these invisible things are real? How do we know that God is real, that there is a God? Some one asked a devout Arab this question. The sun was just setting, pouring its glorious beams in floods over the desert. He answered, "How do I know whether it was a man or a camel that passed my tent last night? I know by the footprints." Then flinging his arm toward the setting sun, he asked, "Whose footprint is that?" We need not seek proofs that there is a God; the Bible offers none. How do we know the character of God? The Bible does not tell us what it is. When Philip asked,

The Gate Beautiful

“Lord, show us the Father,” Jesus replied, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” In Jesus Christ, therefore, we see God. He was the highest, fullest revelation that God made of himself. Look at Christ and you will see God.

Let no one think that God wants to hide himself, wants to be only dimly, obscurely seen. He wants his friendship with us to be real and close. He does not want us to walk in darkness, to grope in gloom. He does not want to be unreal to us. He wants us to know him as we know no other friend. He wants prayer to be real to us, to be as real as talk with any human friend, as the child’s talk with its mother. But do we know that these things are real? “They are very beautiful, but are they true?” Yes, they are the truest, realest things in the world. How shall we make them real to ourselves? Christ is real,—he is our Saviour, our Master, our Friend. How, then, shall we make him more real to our faith? Trust him, love him. Some one asked, “How can I learn to love Christ more?” “Trust

How Can We Know?

him more," was the answer. "How can I trust him more?" "Love him more." Loving and trusting go together. The more you love him the more will you trust him, and the more will you find in him to love. He will never disappoint you. There is no human friend of whom you can say that. The best, the truest, the most faithful will disappoint you some time, in something. But Christ never has disappointed in the smallest way anyone who has trusted him.

Does God Care ?

[217]

*“And is there not in every day—
Earth’s beauty and sweet love’s caress,
In health, in books, in childhood’s day—
More than enough for happiness?”*

*“And though our petty plans fall through,
All noble deeds that have been done,
All noble deeds that we may do,
Shall help the triumph to be won.*

*“Our Shepherd watches where we lie ;
He guards us if we wake or sleep ;
Green pastures spread before the eye ;
Still waters in the sunshine sleep.”*

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

Does God Care?



WE like to know that people think about us. Even a postal card coming in the mail from a friend far away, saying only, "I am thinking of you," brings you a strange uplift. You were sick for a time and could not see your friends. On one of your lonely days a rose was sent up to your room with a card and a message of love, and you remember how it cheered you. Some one was thinking of you. You were in sorrow and a little note came in with just a verse of Scripture, or a "God bless you," and a name. It was almost as if an angel from heaven had visited you, strengthening you. Somebody was thinking of you. You have not forgotten how it helped you.

"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" So God thinks of you, too. In

The Gate Beautiful

the previous verses of the Psalm the poet tells us that God knows all our thoughts. Here he tells us of God's own thoughts for us—he thinks of us, thinks of us with love. His thoughts are precious, like gold. Then they are without number—that is, he does not think of us merely once in a while, but continually.

The Bible teaches unmistakably that God cares for us. A scientific writer is said to have declared that the greatest discovery of the twentieth century will be the discovery of God, and then it will be known that God does not care. It would be very sad if this should prove to be true. But we do not need to wait for a new discovery of God. The discovery has already been made, and God does care.

Not only are we in God's thoughts, but he thinks about us as individuals, not merely as a race. The Father never forgets one of his children, even the least. Though you are cast upon a bare rock in the sea and no friend knows where you are, you are in God's thought. He is watching and caring.

Does God Care?

Though you are carrying to-day some secret grief or trouble which no one on earth can know, he knows, he sympathizes, he is thinking of you.

*“Among so many, can he care?
Can special love be everywhere?
I asked. My soul bethought of this—
In just that very place of his
Where he hath put and keepeth you,
God hath no other thing to do.”*

If you actually believe this, all your troubles will be made light and life's meaning will all be changed for you.

Providence is full of illustrations of God's special thought for his children. In an address made in Glasgow before an Insurance and Actuarial Society, on The Incalculable Elements of Business, James Byers Black told the story of the escape of the one man who survived the Tay Bridge disaster, some years since. This man left the train when it stopped for a moment at Fort Street

The Gate Beautiful

Station, just before it started on its journey to death. His hat blew off and he yielded to his impulse to follow it. At that instant the train moved off and the man was left standing alone at the little wayside station, on a dark, tempestuous night. He was vexed and greatly irritated at being thus left behind. Within a very few minutes the train had crashed through the broken bridge and had carried seventy-four persons—everyone on board—down to death in the remorseless waters of the Tay. The man whose hat blew off was the sole survivor of that night's tragedy.

It would be interesting to know this man's subsequent history. Why was he spared? What work was there for him to do? If we could understand the mystery of divine providence, no doubt we should learn the reason why God thought of this man and kept him off the ill-fated train. We call this a special providence. But was this a providence any more than a thousand other things that have no tragic importance in our lives? Some one

Does God Care ?

once asked George Macdonald if he believed in special providences. He said, "Yes, in the providences, but not in the special." Not now and then, in some remarkable instance, but in every event and occurrence there is a divine providence. God is always on the field. Our life is full of God. We do not always see his hand, but he is never absent. There are no accidents, no chances, in life. God thinks of us continually and watches over all our movements.

We call it a providence when there is a disaster on the railway and we are not hurt. Is it any less a providence when the train runs through with no disaster, and we come to our destination uninjured? One man asked in a meeting that thanks be given because when his horse stumbled on the edge of a great precipice he escaped being dashed to death. Another man arose and asked to be included in the thanksgiving because he passed over the same mountain road and his horse did not stumble. Not only does God deliver us in danger, but he guards us from danger.

The Gate Beautiful

God's thoughts for our life may not always be our thoughts, but they are always good thoughts. There is a word in Isaiah which says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts." It is God's thought we want for our life, rather than our own. God's thought for us is higher than ours, that is, wiser, better, safer, than ours. We will all assent to this as a theory of life. But when we come to the acceptance of God's thought, his way, his plan, instead of our own, sometimes we fail. We are not willing to accept his thought for us. If you were directing your own life, you would leave out some disappointment, perhaps, some loss or sorrow. You would not have had this year's pinching times, or some special trial, if you were changing things to your mind. But would your life be better that way? Perhaps the best things will come out of the things you would omit if you were planning.

Does God Care ?

*"If some things were omitted, or altered as we
would,
The whole might be unfitted to work for perfect
good.
Our plans may be disjointed, but we may calmly
rest ;
What God has once appointed is better than our
best."*

When we say, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" we should be ready to accept them, to yield ourselves to them. Have you ever thought what a glorious thing it is to have God plan for your life, to know that he thought about you before you were made, and then made you according to his thought? No wonder George MacDonald said he would rather be the being God made him to be than the most glorious creature he could think of. No possible human plan for your life could be half so high, so noble, so beautiful, as God's thought for you.

This is true, not only of the plan of our life in general, but of each detail of it. We are

The Gate Beautiful

coming all the while to certain experiences which so break into our thought for our own life that we are startled, and say, "Surely this cannot be God's thought for me." Sometimes we have pleaded with God to withhold from us something—some sorrow, some loss, some pain—which seemed to be impending, and we did not get our request. That which impended came on in spite of our prayers that it might not come. What really happened? God's perfect thought for us at that point went on in our life instead of our lower thought. And that was best. Our desire should always be that God's thought shall be realized and not ours.

One was speaking of unanswered prayer. There had been the most passionate pleading for something without which it seemed that the person's happiness and good would be most incomplete. It appeared, indeed, that it would be nothing less than disaster if the request were not granted. But if it was God's thought for the life, it would have been no disaster. The disaster would have been the

Does God Care ?

granting of my friend's request. "My ways are higher than your ways," that is, wiser, better, more glorious. One puts it thus :

*" 'Twas long ago,
When I was young. Alas ! I did not know
A better way. I said, 'It must be so,
Or God cannot be good.'
Alas ! Alas ! my poor weak human pride !
How differently would I have quickly cried
If I had understood.*

*" And now I bear
A thankful heart for that unanswered prayer.
And so I think it will be when, up there,
Where all is known,
We look upon the things we longed for so,
And see how little were they worth, and know
How soon they were outgrown."*

God's thoughts for us are always good. Jeremiah, in comforting the exiles in captivity, said, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." When you are passing

The Gate Beautiful

through some great sorrow, some overwhelming loss, some sore trial, God's thought for you always is peace, good, blessing. If only we would believe this, if only we would be sure of it, whatever the experiences may be, nothing ever could disturb us. Has it not always been so? God never had a thought toward any child of his that was not a thought of peace. (He always means good even in the most painful trials. The cross of Christ, terrible as it was, was a thought of God and we know what infinite blessing the cross brought to the world. Every disappointment of yours is a thought of love, if you understood it.

“How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!” What is God's thought for your life? Something beautiful, perfect. God's thought for you is eternal life—a life of blessing and holy service here, and then glory. Do not fail to be what God made you to be and wants you to be. Do not disappoint God. Some people do. His thought for them is beauty, love, obedience, holiness,

Does God Care ?

glory, and at the end they bring him nothing but sin, marring, ruin. They reject his higher way for them and insist on having their own. And the end is disaster, not good or blessing.

Thou Shalt know Hereafter

*"Home! the safe and blissful shelter where is glad and full
content,
And companionship of kindred; and the treasures early
rent
From your holding shall be given back more precious
than before.
Oh, you will not mind the journey with such blessedness
in store,
When the road leads home.*

*"Oh, you will not mind the roughness nor the steepness of
the way,
Nor the chill, unrested morning, nor the dreariness of
the day;
And you will not take a turning to the left or to the right,
But go straight ahead, nor tremble at the coming of the
night,
For the road leads home."*

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

Thou Shalt Know Hereafter



PETER drew up his feet when Jesus was about to wash them and said, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" He could not bear to have those blessed hands on his feet. Jesus insisted, however, and said, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter." There was a purpose in what he was doing which Peter could not understand. Still he should accept the service without question, and sometime the reason would appear.

These words are always on Christ's lips as he comes to us in our anxieties, our perplexities over the mysteries of life, our sorrows and disappointments. "What I am doing you do not now understand. It seems to you unnecessary, perhaps even severe and unkind. You cannot see goodness and love in it. You can-

The Gate Beautiful

not conceive how it ever can prove to have blessing in it for you. But wait—some day you will understand. Then you will find that this strange, hard thing is really full of love.”

We cannot understand all that God does. How could we? Consider his greatness. Theologians tell us that God is infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. In the first verse of the Bible we are told that God created the heavens and the earth, that is, all the universe. Our earth itself seems big to us, but it is only a mere speck in comparison with all that God made. They tell us we can see about five or six thousand stars with our naked eye on a clear night. Lord Kelvin says that in the system right round us there are at least a thousand million stars. And these belong only to one little corner of the universe. Truly God is great.

So perfect also are the movements of all the stars, planets and moons that there is not a moment's variation in their motions. No star in all the countless millions is ever a second

Thou Shalt Know Hereafter

late in rising or setting. Eclipses, transits, and conjunctions are calculated centuries in advance, and there is never a fraction of a second of failure in their occurring. How great and wise God is, and how vast are the affairs he controls! Is it any wonder that we are puzzled and perplexed sometimes concerning his dealings with us? Could we expect to understand all the reasons for his actions, and always to see at once the wisdom and beauty in his vast and complex purposes? "What I do thou knowest not now."

We are assured that God has a plan for our lives, for each individual life. Jesus had a purpose in washing the feet of his disciples that night. It was not an idle thing he was doing. He meant to teach these men a great lesson. He has a purpose in every smallest thing, in each event in our lives. Life is full of God. His plans run on through all the years and are woven of the threads of the common events of our lives. We do not know the meaning of the small things in our everyday experiences, but the least of them is in

The Gate Beautiful

some way connected with the great divine plan. We need to be careful never to fail in the smallest duty, for the minutest failure may be the dropping of a stitch which will leave a marred place in the web of some other life, or our own.

God's plan for each life includes the smallest affairs of that life. The things that come into our experience are not mere happenings. Happen is not a good word. At least we must not think that anything comes into our lives as a mere happening, without God's knowledge and permission. Chance is not a good word; at least we may not use it to mean something that broke into our life independently of God. The old poet's way of putting it is better:

"It chanced—Eternal God that chance did guide."

Nothing ever comes into our experience by chance, in the sense that it is outside of God's purpose for our life and beyond God's control.

Thou Shalt Know Hereafter

• Suppose some one wrongs you, treats you unkindly, cruelly. Is that wrong or cruelty of God's doing? No; God never did anything that was not love. A good woman met with two great troubles in a single fortnight. Her husband died, leaving his family well provided for. Within two weeks the person in charge of his estate embezzled his whole fortune, leaving the widow and little children without money enough even to pay the funeral expenses. It is easy to say that the death of the husband was God's will. He was God's child and his work was done. But can we say that the embezzlement was God's will? Surely not in the sense that God directed it or approved of it. God never is the author of a crime. But the moment the sin was committed God took it into his hand—"Eternal God that chance did guide," and thus it became part of his plan and began to work for good. That was the way God did with the crime of the brothers of Joseph—he caused it to work for Joseph's good, and for the good of his people. That was the way he did

The Gate Beautiful

with the crime against Jesus—he made it to work for the saving and blessing of the world. It will be the same in your case if anyone wrongs you or treats you unjustly. The wrong or the injustice is not God's act, but if you are God's child, your Father takes the evil into his hands, when it has been committed, and it becomes thenceforth, a secret of blessing; it will be overruled so as to be among the "all things" that work together for good.

We may go a step farther and say that the purpose of God is always good, always love. It could not be otherwise, for God is love. This does not mean that his plan for us never involves suffering. Ofttimes it does. It brings death to a mother and pain and grief to her family. It took the baby out of the young mother's arms the other night. It leaves the young widow broken-hearted, with little children to provide for. It permits loss of property to come, leaving a family to suffer pinching want and hard struggle. It allows a man to lose his work in the time of financial de-

Thou Shalt Know Hereafter

pression and to endure experience of sore need. It brings sickness with its pain and cost. It lets us have bitter days of suffering. Saintly people oftentimes have to endure things which are hard and most trying. Nevertheless, the plan of God for our lives is good. It is a plan of love. "What I do"—it is the Master who says this, and what he does must be good.

Is affliction good? Can it be good to endure bereavement, to suffer injustice, to bear pain? Some day we shall know that many of the best things in life are the fruit of these very experiences. The world's redemption comes from the sorrow and suffering of Jesus Christ. The best blessings and the holiest beauties of God's saints are the harvest of pain. The pleasant things are the easiest for us to accept—and these, too, are parts of Christ's purpose. We must not think that his will always means hard things. Some people always say, "Thy will be done," as if God's will were something terrible. But we have a thousand glad experiences in life to one that

The Gate Beautiful

is sad, a thousand days of bright blue skies to the one that is dark and cloudy. And the joyous things bring their blessings, too. We must not get the impression that all the sacred things of Christian life come through pain, that we are enriched and made more worthy only when we are suffering. We receive countless joys. The sunshine, too, is full of love and full of life.

But we must not forget that the things which are painful are also parts of Christ's chosen way for us, and that they are always good. In all our life Christ is making us—making men of us, fashioning character, transforming us into moral and physical beauty. In the Hebrews there is a wonderful word which says that Jesus himself was made perfect through suffering. Let not life's pains and trials dismay you. Submit to God, accept the providences that come as part of his discipline and take the good, the lessons, the enrichings which he sends. Some day you will know that you have learned many of your sweetest songs in the darkness.

Thou Shalt Know Hereafter

In the advertising circular that came with a new canary bird, there is a description of the way the birds are educated. They are raised in the peasant districts of Germany. When they are to be trained, each bird is put in a little box cage, with only a small hole to give him just light enough to see to eat and drink. These cages are then put in a room from which all light is excluded, and their teacher gives the birds a lesson every two hours. First they get a lesson on the flute, then on the violin, then on bells, and last of all a nightingale is brought in to sing its wonderful notes and then to teach the birds to sing at night.

The point to be noted is that the birds must be taught their lessons in the darkness. They would not learn them in the light. It is with many people also as with the birds. There are certain songs we cannot learn to sing in the sunshine. So the great Teacher calls us apart and shuts the door, to keep out the light and exclude the world's noises and then teaches us the songs of peace, of joy, of trust,

The Gate Beautiful

of peace, of love. Thus painful things of life have their place in the divine training of our lives.

But all the mysteries in our lives will some day be revealed. They will not always be inexplicable to us. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter." We do not see now how this or that experience can be well and can do good, but after a time the mystery is explained. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit." The plow cuts rudely through the field. It seems only destructive. But afterwards there waves a harvest of golden grain where all seemed ruin at first. It is only afterwards that many of God's providences can be clearly understood. It takes time for the full meaning to be wrought out. We do not know in the days of sorrow what shining blessing will be revealed as the final outcome. We do not see in midwinter the roses that are hidden under the snow, which after a while will unfold their beauty.

Thou Shalt Know Hereafter

*"The year is young. It does not know
What roses sleep beneath the snow,
Waiting for June's soft breeze to blow.
Our souls are young. We do not know
What power is ours for joy or woe.
We wait. Another life will show."*

There is a distinct promise that the mysteries of life will be made clear sometime. Ofttimes this is realized soon. There are some of life's mysteries, however, which are never made plain in this present world. Life is too short. Men and women die sometimes with perplexities unexplained. But there is another life. We are immortal. We shall live a thousand years, ten thousand years, after leaving earth. There will be time enough then for the deepest mysteries to be made plain.

"What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt understand hereafter." Believe this. Believe that the clouds will lift and that a whole heavenful of sunshine and blue sky will appear. Believe that beyond to-day's sorrow and out of it will come comfort and joy. Believe that to-day's stress and strain, pinching

The Gate Beautiful

and anxiety, will pass away and that you will have rest, plenty and gladness. Believe that your present burdens will become wings to lift you upward into the blessings of eternal life. Believe that the buds under the snow will be glorious roses in a little while.

The Practice of Immortality

[245]

*"To live for common ends is to be common,
The highest faith makes still the highest man !
For we grow like the things our souls believe,
And rise or sink as we aim high or low.
No mirror shows such likeness of the face
As faith we live by of the heart and mind.
We are in very truth that which we love,
And love, like noblest deeds, is born of faith."*

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

The Practice of Immortality



EARLY everybody believes in immortality, although not everyone is enthusiastic over the subject. Not long since, when a distinguished man was asked if he believed in personal immortality, he is said to have answered: "Yes, I cannot help believing in it. Everything points to it. But I do not want it." He does not accept the Christian faith, and yet he believes that man is immortal. But the belief has no comfort for him. He does not want to live forever. Immortality, however, is not merely continuance of life forever—that alone might give no joy. Some lives have been so sad here that the thought of living ten thousand years in the same way would be intolerable. There is a story of one who prayed that he might never die, but forgot to pray that he might not grow old. His

The Gate Beautiful

prayer was granted, and he lived on century after century, becoming more and more feeble continually, all the infirmities of age increasing in their burdensomeness until he prayed to die. Mere prolonged life would not be a blessing. We must die to attain an immortality of blessedness. "This corruptible must put on incorruption. . . . Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

But immortality ought to have a meaning for us now while we are in this world. We say we are immortal—how then should an immortal man or woman live here and now? We have the answer suggested in one of St. Paul's epistles. The writer is speaking of Christ's resurrection, and he says that believers are risen too, in Christ. Then he adds, "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is." That is, you are risen with Christ. You have not gone to heaven with him yet. He has left you here for a while. You have a work to do in this world for him, and there is also a work to

The Practice of Immortality

be done in you before you will be ready for heaven. But you are to remember that you are now risen with Christ, and are now living the resurrection life. What sort of a life ought that to be? The question is not, "What sort of a life will you live when you get to heaven?" but "What kind of a life should you live right here, right now, in the present world?"

When Jesus was speaking of eternal life which those who believed should enter into, he said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life." He did not say, "He will have eternal life when he enters heaven," but he "hath it," that is, from the moment he believes. He is not to wait till he reaches heaven before he begins to live his eternal life. He is on the earth yet and cannot get away from his earthly relations. He must take up his tasks, he must do his duties—having eternal life does not release him from these. He is to practice eternal life now and continually.

If you die to-morrow, being a child of God,

The Gate Beautiful

you will enter at once upon the heavenly life. We do not know just what the heavenly life is, but we do know that it is loving, unselfish, holy, without sin. It is joyous. It is contented. We cannot think of anyone in heaven being unhappy, discontented, fretful. Nobody there grumbles, complains, is a murmurer. Nobody in heaven ever worries. When you die and go to heaven, you will begin at once to live as other people in heaven live. You will find it easy to fall into the heavenly habits. Heaven is a holy place. Nobody sins there, nobody lies, nobody gets angry, nobody does a mean thing, nobody speaks evil of another. If you die to-night and go to heaven, you will begin to live to-morrow morning the heavenly life.

But if you do not die to-night, but stay in this world longer, living the eternal life will mean that you shall rise to-morrow morning and live that life here, wherever you may be, and live it just as you would do if you had died and lived now in heaven. In the story of our Lord's last night with his dis-

The Practice of Immortality

ciples, we have this remarkable statement, "Knowing that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, he took a towel and girded himself and began to wash the disciples' feet." He knew the glorious being he was, that he was the Son of God, divine, and yet, with this consciousness fully in his mind, he performed the lowliest service for his disciples that any man could do for others.

You know that you are risen with Christ, that you are immortal, that you have eternal life; now what are fit things for one to do who knows that there is such glory, such splendor in his life? First of all, no service of love is beneath him. His life should be devoted to the sweetest, most helpful ministries of kindness that his hand can find to do.

John the Baptist, in the gloom of his dungeon at Machærus, began to wonder if after all Jesus was the Messiah, and sent some of his disciples to ask him. When the men came, Jesus did not enter upon a set programme to show his deity—he just went on with his everyday work of kindness and then told the

The Gate Beautiful

men to go back to their master and tell him what they had seen and heard—the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good tidings preached unto them. These were the truest and best evidences of Messiahship. That is the way the man who knew he was the Son of God lived his common days.

For another thing, Jesus, knowing his divine glory, did not separate himself from other people to show that he was not an ordinary man. He did not live in a way that would demonstrate to the world his divine character in unearthly ways. He took his place among workingmen. He was a carpenter, and for eighteen years wrought at his lowly trade. It scarcely seems to us quite fitting that the Son of God should be a carpenter, but there was nothing undivine in that. It left no dishonor on him, and indeed it made his glory all the more radiant. In all his earthly life we see in Jesus his divine life. He was always practicing immortality, living eternal life. This

The Practice of Immortality

suggests to us how we may live the heavenly life here. We may not do it in any strained or unnatural efforts at holiness or heavenliness, but by doing the will of God in the simplest way, which will always mean the common tasks and duties of the days as they come to us. The heavenliest life we can live here will be the one that will best fulfill our common duties in our natural relationships.

*“Do to-day the nearest duty.
Our work counts for more than talk.
Three things are great :
Conscience, and will and courage to
Fulfill the duties they create.”*

We, too, may live the resurrection life in the shop, at a trade, in the kitchen, in any lowly work or calling. Doing the will of God wherever we may be is the immortal life.

The Apocryphal Gospels are a number of stories about Jesus written by men who thought that a divine being never should do anything natural or common. So they in-

The Gate Beautiful

vented stories of childish miracles that they said he did when he was a boy. The true Gospels, however, show Jesus like other children in his childhood, without anything fantastic, finding his Father's business in being a dutiful son, living a sweet, sinless life, doing no miracle, and working at the carpenter's trade. Then even the greatest miracles in his public life were never unnatural, or showy, but simply deeds of love. You may learn from your Master that eternal life in this world is a life of kindness, gentleness, usefulness, unselfishness. Holiness is not dignity which is above noticing the poor, or greatness that cannot condescend to the lowliest person or the most menial service that is needful.

Centuries ago Aristotle said, "Live as nearly as you can the immortal life." This is wise and lofty counsel. There is a book called "The Practice of the Presence of God." The title is suggestive. You believe that the presence of God is always with you, that you never can get where God is not. Practice that. Act as if you believed it, realized it.

The Practice of Immortality

You could not do a mean thing, nor say an evil word, nor think an unholy thought, if you saw Christ beside you. You know that he is beside you—practice his presence. You will find wondrous power in this practice—power of restraint, of inspiration, of transformation. That is what religion is.

When the disciples had been on the Mount of Transfiguration for an hour or two, they wanted to stay there always and continue the transfiguration companionship and glory. But they could not do this—they had to return to the struggles and temptations of the lower world. We, too, have our transfiguration visions, but they come only to give us new assurance and strength. We have to return again at once to our work and our daily life of care. But the Master wants us always to live the transfiguration life, to live every moment as if the holy vision were shining before our eyes. We cannot always be at the Holy Communion, but we are to carry the communion fact and spirit with us when we go back to our homes, to our place of busi-

The Gate Beautiful

ness, to our offices and shops and farms. We are to live the immortal life wherever we go.

Perhaps we ought to think more of the glory of our lives. We do not think half enough of ourselves—of our greatness, of the glory of our being, of the divineness of our destiny. It is not self-conceit in which we are deficient—there is enough of that hateful thing in the most of us—not self-conceit, but self-honoring, self-reverencing. Not many of us honor and reverence ourselves as we should do. Perhaps the greatness of our being is not often enough impressed upon us. We are not accustomed to think of the splendor of our nature. We were made in the image of God. The old Psalm says that “Man was made only a little lower than the angels.” The Revised Version changes this, however, and makes it read, “but little lower than God.” Jesus said that a man is worth more than this whole great world, and that anyone, even the lowliest, would make a bad bargain if he sold himself for the whole world.

The Practice of Immortality

Now what are you doing with this glorious life of yours? The beloved disciple in one of his letters says, "Beloved, now are we children of God." That is the first glory. That surely is great glory. But there is more of the honor. It is not yet made manifest clearly and fully what we shall be—the future is veiled in mystery—but "we shall be like him"—that is the final glory. We shall be like Christ in our heavenly life. Then the writer tells us how we should live in this world if this is to be our future distinction. "Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It is pitiful how men throw away their crowns. Made only a little lower than God, children of God, destined to be like Christ at length, they yield to appetite, lust, and passion, and debase themselves in the dust. With this glory set before us, we should keep ourselves pure and our lives white, and should strive even here to reach up to the honor that is prepared for us.

Looking Unto the Hills

[259]

*“Lord, when I look on high,
Clouds only meet my sight ;
Fears deepen with the night ;
But yet it is thy sky.
Help me to trust thee, then, I pray,
Wait in the dark and tearfully obey.”*

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

Looking Unto the Hills



WE ought to learn to look up. Many people dwarf their lives and hinder the best possibilities of growth in their souls by looking downward. They keep their eyes entangled ever in mere earthly sights and scenes, and miss seeing the glory of the hills that pierce the clouds, and of the heavens that bend over them. We grow in the direction in which our eyes habitually turn. We become like that toward which we look much and intently.

Yet there are those who never look upward at all. They never see anything but the things that are on the earth. They never see the stars. They never think of God. They do not pray. They have no place in their scheme of life for divine things.

There are two conceptions of the universe—

The Gate Beautiful

the scientific and the religious. Sir Oliver Lodge says: "Orthodox modern science shows us a self-contained and self-sufficient universe, not in touch with anything above and beyond itself. . . . Religion, on the other hand, requires us constantly and consciously to be in touch, even affectionately in touch, with a power, a mind, a being, or beings, entirely out of our sphere, entirely beyond our scientific ken. The universe contemplated by religion is by no means self-contained or self-sufficient—it is as dependent for its origin and maintenance as we are for our daily bread upon the power and the good will of a being or beings of which science has no knowledge."

The latter of these conceptions of the world is the one that the Bible gives. This is our Father's world. He made it, he sustains it, he lives in it, all its affairs are in his hands. One of the Psalms gives us this devout thought of life: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains." It was to God that the poet looked. The mountains are a symbol of

Looking Unto the Hills

God. The writer says also, "My help cometh from the Lord." The minuteness of the divine keeping is beautifully brought out in the Psalm. "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved." On mountain paths a great disaster may result from the slipping of a foot. Many a life has been lost by a misstep among the crags. But God's keeping extends even to the feet of his children.

There is another assurance of exquisite beauty in the Psalm. No human love can watch over a friend unintermittingly. The most devoted mother sometimes sleeps by her suffering child. But there is an Eye that never closes, that always watches. The whole Psalm shows the safety of those who lift up their eyes unto the hills. They are kept from all evil. They are guarded when they go out and when they come in. We never can get away from the divine keeping unless we give up God and go out into sin. The greatest mistake anyone can make is to leave God out of his faith and out of his life.

To those who live thoughtfully life is full of

The Gate Beautiful

God. Even if there were no assurances in the Bible, telling us of his love, no promises of his care, common daily providence is so full of God that a thoughtful person could not doubt his existence or his care for his children. God is the most real Friend in all the world, though we have never seen him. We can see his footprints everywhere. We find evidences of his love, his interest, his kindness, in people's lives all about us. If one says he has never seen God, he has at least seen God's faithfulness, evidences of his love, his interest. We may not hear his answer in words when we talk to him in prayer, but we see the answer in what he does to bless us.

Some time since two men met on a vessel crossing the Atlantic. They soon discovered that they had both been in the American Civil War, one fighting with the North, the other with the South. They discovered, too, that they had taken part, on one occasion, in the same battle. Then this incident came out as they talked together reminiscently. One night the Northern soldier was on sentry duty on

Looking Unto the Hills

one side of a little river, and the Southern soldier was a sharpshooter just across the river, picking off soldiers on the other side at every opportunity. The sentry was singing softly, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," as he kept his watch, and the words of the old hymn were heard in the still night over the stream. The sharpshooter was taking aim and was about to fire on the sentry. Just then he heard the words, "Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of thy wing." His rifle dropped—he dare not shoot a man praying that prayer. "I could as soon have shot my own mother," he said. Was not God in this whole incident? Was he not a reality that night? We need not ask why no one has ever seen God. Lift up your eyes unto the mountains in every time of need, and God will always help.

Every Christian should train himself always to look up. Some people look down continually, watching for thorns and briars. They never see anything in life but the unpleasant things. They are always looking for troubles.

The Gate Beautiful

They find them, too, on the brightest days, in the loveliest places. They never see anything beautiful. But that is not the way to go through life. Lift up your eyes and look for roses, not for thorns. Once when a voice was speaking to Jesus, some people said it thundered, while others said an angel spoke to him. So it is always with people—some never hear anything but thunder. They think people are all like snarling wild beasts. They do not love anybody, nor trust anybody, nor care for anybody. They hear only discords, wolf notes. They do not believe in people, even the best of them. To them all men are liars, thieves, robbers. They claim that all Christians are hypocrites, all merchants dishonest, all homes bedlams, that nobody is pure, and nobody is unselfish. Can you think of any other way of making one's life miserable that equals this? Rather, lift up your eyes unto the hills, where the air is sweet, the light clear, the music like angels' songs. This will change all the world for you. Of course there are discordant notes in the music of a

Looking Unto the Hills

great city where throngs are surging all about. But why should we hear the discords when there is so much sweet music in life to be heard everywhere? We are exhorted to overcome evil with good, bitter with sweet, sorrow with joy, hate with love.

Lift up your eyes unto the hills when you think of your own circumstances. They may not seem bright or hopeful. You hear people talk about the sore troubles they have. There always are difficulties, discouragements, disappointments, and we can easily find them when we look for them. But can you not train yourself instead to find something good, something beautiful, something cheering, and inspiring? There always is at least a gleam of light in even the darkest night. When the little dog, lying in the parlor upon a chill day, saw a spot of sunshine on the floor, he was wise to leave his cold corner and go and lie down in it. His was good philosophy for a dog, and good also for a man. If there is only one spot of happiness in all your little world, find it and set your chair in it.

The Gate Beautiful

Some one tells of a poor crippled shoemaker who never could go out anywhere. His little shop was in the heart of the great city, with houses on all sides of the poor place where he lived, shutting out every beautiful sight, with no sky visible from his little window, with not a hint of life to be seen. But one day he discovered that from a certain place in the shop he could catch a mere glimpse of blue sky. He set his shoemaker's bench right there, so that while he cobbled away, he could lift up his eyes at every resting moment and see the bit of beauty. How it brightened his dreary life! There is some point in the hardest experience in your life where something of heaven may be seen. Find it and set your stool there.

We do not begin to know how true it is that we make our own world. The sunshine we see about us daily is in ourselves. It shines out from within us. We are not to go about demanding that others shine on us, on our field, and on our home. We are not to blame other people when we are peevish, fretful, discon-

Looking Unto the Hills

tented, or touchy. A great teacher said, "When things go wrong, don't blame somebody else; blame yourself." It is usually our own fault that we are not happy. Even if people do not treat us as they should do, if they are unjust to us, unkind, disobliging, selfish, exacting, that will not make it either right or beautiful for us to grow unhappy, or to go about sour and sad. We should never allow anybody, any circumstances, or anything that happens to spoil our life. We ought to resolve to keep sweet whatever the circumstances may be. That is what being a Christian means. That is what it is to lift up our eyes unto the hills. If we are looking to God, we cannot do mean things, we cannot lie, we cannot be selfish, grasping, or greedy, whatever the provocation may be. If we truly lift up our eyes unto God, we will get something of God's beauty into our soul, will become imbued with God's holiness, God's truth, God's love, and get grace enough to enable us to live the Christlike life.

The mountains are places of strength. They

The Gate Beautiful

cannot be moved. They are stable and sure. They are places of safety. They are away above the floods and dangers of earth. The higher our life rises, the safer it is. The power of temptation grows less and less as we go up nearer to Christ. Our faults, infirmities, vices, lose their power over us as we rise up into the mountain air—they will choke and die there. It is said that telescopes have detected birds flying six miles above the earth. How safe they are up there! No arrow can reach them. No enemy can find them. The same is true of the soul that flies far above—no trapper can catch it, no tempter can reach it. The mountains are places of safety.

The mountains are places of peace. There is a point in the heavens, above the clouds, where no storm ever blows, where no tempest ever breaks. If we rise into these calm, holy heights, we shall find peace. An ancient legend relates that every morning at sunrise a handful of dew fell from Mount Hermon upon the church of St. Mary, where at once it was gathered by the Christian physicians

Looking Unto the Hills

and proved a sovereign remedy for all manner of diseases. This dew from the sacred mountain represents the love of Christ which comes down perpetually from heaven, which not only nourishes the lives of men but also heals all diseases.

No Fairacre, But Power

[273]

*"If we sit down at set of sun
And count the things that we have done,
And counting, find
One self-denying act, one word
That eased the heart of him who heard,
One glance most kind
That fell like sunshine where it went,
Then we may count that day well spent.*

*"But, if through all the livelong day,
We've eased no heart by yea or nay,
If, through it all,
We've nothing done that we can trace
That brought the sunshine to a face;
No act most small,
That helped some soul and nothing cost,
Then count that day as worse than lost."*

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

No Miracle, But Power



IT is said of John the Baptist that he did no miracles, but that all he said about Christ was true. Therefore one may not be a miracle worker, and yet may be very useful. Perhaps we think that most of the things of love and mercy which Jesus did were miracles. He had divine power, and many of his works were supernatural. He showed his power over nature when he made the water wine, when he stilled the stormy sea, when he multiplied the loaves. He showed his power over sickness and disease when he healed all manner of human ailments. He showed his power over demons when he cast them out of those in whom they were living. He showed his power over the Tempter when he vanquished him in the wilderness. He showed his power over death when he rose

The Gate Beautiful

from the grave. We may not make little of Christ's miracles—he did many things which no man could do.

An English preacher tells of a visit paid by a party of Americans to the wonderful royal grapevine at Hampton Court. It hung full of rich summer clusters. One of the party asked the keeper, "Could you not give us a few of those grapes?" The keeper replied courteously, "There is only one man in the kingdom, sir, who could give you grapes from this vine." "And who is he?" the visitor inquired. "His Majesty, the King," was the answer. There are things which only the King can do. There are blessings which only Christ can bestow. There are fruits of grace which you can receive from no hand but his. His miracles were wonderful.

Yet only a small proportion of the things Jesus did were unusual, supernatural; ninety-nine hundredths of his acts were simple, common kindnesses which it did not need divinity to perform. His words were all gracious and inspiring. He wrought only one miracle in

No Miracle, But Power

the Bethany home, but in his frequent visits, sitting with the family by the hearth, or at the table, talking with them in the quiet evenings, walking with them in the garden, sharing with them the tender things of friendship and affection, there must have been in their hearts ever after a thousand memories of his love which made his name sacred to them, besides the memory of his raising of Lazarus. It was so in all Christ's life—there were a few miracles, showing divine power in marked and undoubted way; there were countless revealings of kindness, gentleness, sympathy, thoughtfulness, encouragement, mere common kindnesses, which were as full of God as the miracles.

When Jesus said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," he did not refer merely to the miracles he had wrought—there was quite as much of the Father revealed in his everyday life with his friends—his unbroken peace, his never-failing patience, his abounding joy,

The Gate Beautiful

in his gracious helpfulness every moment, as in his great signs.

Indeed the Incarnation itself was just the coming of God down out of invisible glory, into common human life, revealing himself in simple, homely ways that we might understand him, that he might get close to us, that we might come close to him, that we might know him intimately and familiarly. It was in Christ's most human ways that the disciples saw most of God. His miracles dazzled their eyes and awed them. Mary could not have sat at his feet and listened calmly to his words if he had appeared transfigured. John could not have leaned on his breast at supper, restfully and quietly, if glory had been shining in his face. Christ's deepest revealings to us are made in humanest ways. A writer in *The Outlook* puts it thus:

*They bade me lift my eyes to thee, who art great
Lord and King,
Enthroned above the cherubim, who praise eternal
sing.*

No Miracle, But Power

*And eagerly I gazed above, as other mortals dare :
Such radiant light was all too bright—I could not
find thee there.*

*And blinded, and with downcast eyes, I scarcely
saw the man*

*Who walked beside me on my way, though close
our pathways ran.*

*No pomp, no kingly pride was there : his footsteps
pressed the road ;*

*A staff like mine was in his hand ; his shoulders
bore their load.*

*One day I turned and saw his face—the pitying,
human brow ;*

*“ Brother,” he said, with outstretched hand ; and
I, “ Why, this is thou ! ”*

The same is true of others as well as of the Master. One may be a true witness for Christ and yet not be a worker of miracles. Or to bring it into the language of every day, one may not be brilliant, may not be eloquent, may not do great or conspicuous things, and yet may do much worthy and blessed service for the Master and for men. Many people are hero worshipers. They admire and magnify

The Gate Beautiful

the work done by the miracle workers. The popular preacher wins attention by his eloquence, and everybody praises him. Meanwhile, plain, commonplace preachers toil away in obscurity, not drawing crowds to hear them, not winning commendation, never mentioned in the newspapers. Yet they go about, seven days in the week, giving out their lives in all manner of kindly service to men. Their lives are full of self-denials. They carry benedictions into people's homes. They pray beside sick beds and comfort mourners. They carry their people in their hearts and are friends to the needy, the poor, the children. They are not eloquent, and no one praises their public ministry, and yet they may be ten times the blessing in the world the brilliant orators are. They do no miracles, but they are Christ's beloved servants, messengers of his love to the world.

It is the same in all callings. There are those who do spectacular things, and people praise them, follow them, almost worship them. There are certain persons who do good in un-

No Miracle, But Power

usual ways. They are benevolent, and are known everywhere as great givers. The tendency is to pay a great deal of honor to these miracle workers. Perhaps the honor is not too great, not more than they deserve. We must not envy those who do great and beautiful things and get much praise of men.

But meanwhile there is a great multitude of people who are not brilliant, not eloquent, who do no unusual or striking things, but who are among the most useful persons in the community where they live. They do no miracles, but their lives are full of blessing.

Indeed, the fact that a person works quietly, without noise, without fame, never doing anything startling or sensational, may indicate greatness rather than smallness. It is easier to work amidst cheers and huzzas than in obscurity, where one never hears a commendation. A writer says, "One test of the religious life is in its willingness to occupy a subordinate place and to work faithfully in it." The story is told of a young man who was president of a young people's organization, and who

The Gate Beautiful

greatly liked prominence. He had a genius for keeping always in the limelight. As long as he could lead and be prominent he was happy, cheerful, enthusiastic and interested. But when he was not in some conspicuous position he was not a comfortable man to get along with. One of his friends described and characterized him thus: "He has plenty of religion to lead, but not enough to follow." There always are good people of this type. They work splendidly when they are in a conspicuous place, with others under them, but when they are second or down somewhere in the common ranks, they are of little use. It takes more grace to shine in the lowly places than in places of prominence.

In the immortal Thirteenth of First Corinthians St. Paul draws a distinction between the miracle workers and those who do no miracle. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all

No Miracle, But Power

faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Here we have a list of miracles—speaking with the tongues of men and angels, having great knowledge, having faith, that can do impossible things, giving away millions, devoting one's body in martyrdom. But all these miracles of attainment and achievement in themselves amount to nothing. In striking contrast with these conspicuous things St. Paul sets love. Love does no miracle, it is lowly, humble, hiding away from observation, desiring no praise, vaunting not itself, seeking not its own, and yet it is honored in heaven and blessed on the earth far above the startling miracles of genius and brilliancy which lack love.

It is fitting that we sing the praise of the lowly who love and serve without fame, without noise, oftentimes even without appreciation. It was thus that Jesus himself lived and wrought. He never did anything to get peo-

The Gate Beautiful

ple's praise. He wrought many miracles, but never one to make a sensation. His were all miracles of love, of kindness. He never advertised himself. He worked quietly, without a wish to gain fame. All that came into his presence were better for meeting him—life meant more to them ever after. But he worked without noise. His influence was like the dew that is forgotten but leaves refreshing and benediction everywhere.

Think of the mothers, the mothers who live with their children and for them. They do no miracles, but their hands are ever performing the homely things of love. Think of the great company of Christian men and women who are plain and commonplace in their lives, who are not known beyond the little circle in which they live, who have no earthly honor and who "leave no memory but a world made better by their lives." They do no miracles, but their names are known in heaven. Angels are familiar with their deeds. God is honored by their noble lives.

So we do not have to do great and startling

No Miracle, But Power

things to make our lives impressive and unusual. We do not have to do miracles in order to commend Christ to others. We may not be able to do anything great or startling. We cannot give much money. We cannot speak eloquently. We cannot go as missionaries. Some people have the impression that because they cannot do miracles of service, they cannot do anything to add to the honor of Christ's name. But the smallest beautiful thing we do for Christ makes him a little more glorious as men see him. A preacher went back after forty years to the college from which he had been graduated and spoke one Sunday to the students. He talked to them of the kind of friend Christ would be to them. At the close of the sermon he said, "I have tried to speak a good word to-day for Jesus Christ." That is what we should try to do every day—say a good word for our Master.

Be good, though you cannot be great. Live sweetly, though you cannot live brilliantly. Do well your lowly tasks wherever you are.

The Gate Beautiful

) Never long for honor, for praise of the world, for distinction among men. Live for the eye of Christ and to make people better and happier. Show no discontent with your quiet, obscure lot. Envy no one who does things that men praise while you are unpraised. The noblest life is the one that puts a little glory on the name of Christ and makes some other human being a little better, truer, more worthy. It is enough for any day if you say in some ear a good word for Jesus Christ.

The Work of the Lord

[287]

*"Do the work that's nearest,
Though it's dull at whiles,
Helping when you meet them
Lame dogs over stiles,
See in every hedgerow
Marks of angels' feet,
Epics in each pebble
Underneath our feet."*

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

The Work of the Lord



LAST summer at Lake Mohonk the guests would gather on the west porch every evening to watch the sunset. It was always wonderful. When the sun had sunk out of sight there would frequently be a marvelous afterglow. But the splendor did not last long. While we watched, it faded. While the wondrous beauty was in the heavens, groups of earnest people sat on the porches and in the parlors talking quietly of matters that interested them. They were not conscious of making impressions on each other by the words they were speaking. But touches were put upon lives in those conversations which never shall fade out. We are always impressing other lives. The touches of beauty which the mother puts into a child's life in her home will never fade. The influences of friendship

The Gate Beautiful

are immortal. It is diviner work which we do upon each other's lives in our common mingling together than if we could help God paint clouds in the skies.

In one sense all the work we are ever called to do is work of the Lord—the affairs of business, the housekeeper's tasks, the mechanic's labors. Jesus said at the age of twelve that he must be about his Father's business. Then for eighteen years he did the common tasks of a boy at home and worked in the carpenter's shop. All this lowly, common work was his Father's business.

In a more definite sense, the work of the Lord is what we do in the church, and through the church. The young man who joins a church becomes a partner with all fellow church-members and is assigned to some particular place and duty. The young woman who becomes a Christian enters the kingdom of Christ and has her part to do in the Father's business. She is not merely a boarder—she is one of the family, and there is nothing in the household of God that does not concern her.

The Work of the Lord

The mission of the church is to save the world. We are to do good to men in every possible way. When two young people love each other and enter into the marriage relation, starting a home of their own, they want to be happy. They build their nest primarily for their own enjoyment. But if they love Christ, they have a wider desire and purpose—they want their home to become a center of blessing. They want to make one little spot about them brighter, sweeter, purer, gladder, better, in every way. Dean Stanley says, "Each of us is bound to make the small circle in which he lives better and happier; each of us is bound to see that out of that small circle the widest good may flow." The home you build only for yourself, to shut out the cold and roughness only from you and your household, to shelter you and yours alone from the storm, to be a little refuge for selfishness, is not a home at all. Only love can make a home, and love is always unselfish, always thinks of others, always seeks to share its best with those who lack.

The Gate Beautiful

This principle runs through all phases of Christian life. We are to conduct our business not only to make a living for ourselves and our household, but also to make our community more prosperous and more attractive. We are to seek the good of our neighborhood in every way. A good Christian should always be a public-spirited citizen. He who plants a tree or a row of trees before his house is doing something which will be a blessing to his neighbors. The woman who has her little garden, if only five feet square, or who has but her window box filled with flowers, makes the world a little brighter. Religion thinks always of others and seeks to make the place in which one lives brighter and sweeter.

It is not enough for us to be good—we must also do good. This means, first, that we are to be on the side of every good cause, of every true reform, of every effort to drive out evil from the community. Whatever concerns the good of men, the safeguarding and sweetening of our homes, the protection of our

The Work of the Lord

children, the upbuilding of the kingdom of God among us is part of the work of the Lord. "The gospel must concern itself with impure politics, with dishonest commercialism, and with improper marital relations. It is a dwarfed, unmanly, unchristian gospel which refuses to put on its armor and fight for truth and God." It ought never to need inquiry or investigation to find out where a Christian stands regarding any moral question or reform.

To be engaged in the work of the Lord means, also, that we are always to be doing good in practical ways. What was Jesus Christ in the place he lived? What was his attitude toward the needs of the people? What did he think of the suffering about him, and what did he do to relieve it? Where did he stand regarding the wrongs and oppressions of the people? Did he care when he saw the poor despised, the weak crushed, the laborer robbed of his wages? Did he look with indifference on the sorrowing, the bereft, the lonely, the tempted, the misled, the unled, children beaten

The Gate Beautiful

and abused, widows and orphans the victims of man's greed and avarice?

The story of Christ in the Gospels answers these questions. The ideal church should be as Christ himself living in the place where the church stands. To be abounding in the work of the Lord is to be the friend of men, a refuge for the storm-tossed, a shelter for the unsheltered, a comforter of sorrow, a succorer of the tempted.

*"Quit you like men, be strong :
There's a burden to bear,
There's a grief to share,
There's a heart that breaks 'neath a load of care—
But fare ye forth with a song.*

*"Quit you like men, be strong :
There's a battle to fight,
There's a wrong to right,
There's a God who blesses the good with might—
So fare ye forth with a song."*

There is a call to-day for a higher type of Christian conduct and character, for a diviner

The Work of the Lord

conception of the duties of church-membership than has ever yet been realized. The world is growing better every day. Such achievements of Christianity as we are now witnessing were never witnessed before. Recent years have marked the rising of a loftier sentiment regarding public and private morals than was ever before felt. Bad as much in our politics undoubtedly is, there are foretokens of a better day coming. There are indications that commercialism is being born again. This is not saying that politicians, railroad kings, captains of industry, and statesmen and leaders of finance are becoming saints; it is saying, however, that the religion of Christ is at work with mighty, resistless energy in all the world's life and that out of the travail of souls the new birth of a better righteousness is coming.

Never was so much demanded of Christian men and women as to-day. Those who profess to live religiously are now in the fierce light of public sentiment as never before. We must prove our faith and our creed by a life that is

The Gate Beautiful

worthy and true. It is life itself that makes the deepest impression upon men, not mere profession. Our unconscious influence is a tremendous factor in our life. No one lives to himself alone. Have you ever thought of what other people's lives mean to you, how they impress you, how you are sometimes kept from giving up by the example of another man who does not give up, how you are saved sometimes from falling by another person's belief in you? A young man said the other day, referring to the young woman he expected to marry: "I would not dare do a mean thing, an unworthy thing, while I call her my friend. She never preaches to me, she never says a word about what I do, but her life is so beautiful, so spotless, so true, so strong, that I could not consciously do anything wrong and look into her face afterward. She believes in me, and her belief in me compels me to strive to be what she thinks I am."

There is many a man out in the midst of the fierce struggles of life who is holding firmly

The Work of the Lord

to the true and the right and keeping his feet in the clean path of honor and faithfulness, because some quiet, noble friend believes in him and expects him to be loyal and strong. He could never look into the face of this friend if he failed or faltered. When others believe that we will be true we must be true. When worthy friends are confident of our power, know that we can accomplish certain results, reach certain ends, their faith in us compels us to be true and do our best.

It is a great thing to be believed in. We should ever keep in mind the influence on others of our faith or our belief in them. We do not begin to realize how it weakens the faith of others about us to have us who are Christians lose heart, show the white feather, in some time of testing. Nor can we ever know how it cheers others and makes them brave to have us keep brave. If you have a friend carrying a heavy burden, or waging a hard battle and growing faint and discouraged, you must be careful lest something you do, or some word you say shall cause him to

The Gate Beautiful

give up and sink down. Do not for the world say a timid word then, a word sympathizing with his discouragement. You must speak courageously, inspiringly, then. You have your friend's success or failure in your hand. To be a discourager in such an hour would be a crime against love.

*"Turn to the world a courage brave,
There is some one you may inspire."*

Part of the work of the Lord always is the guardianship of other lives. Of course this is true of parents and the children committed to them, also of teachers and the young lives that are intrusted to them. But it is true also in the widest way. When we have a friend, the friend's life is in our keeping, in a deeper sense than we dream. We must beware that never by a word, by a touch, by an act, by an influence, we harm or weaken our friend's life, or in any way misdirect him. We must be sure that we always shelter, guard, keep inalienably and inspire the life committed to us.

The Work of the Lord

A business man who employs a number of young persons has a responsibility for them far beyond the paying of their weekly salaries and the providing of physical safety and comfort for them while they are at work for him. He is responsible also for the moral environment he sets about them, the influences amidst which he places them. The same is true of all who become in any way the caretakers of others. We are responsible to the full extent of our ability for the keeping, the protection from harm and the advancement of the interests of all who are thus intrusted to us.

“Keep this man,” was the charge; “if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life.” Later, the man reports, “As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.” It is thus that God is continually putting others into our care, bidding us keep them, guard them, influence them for good. Are we faithful to our trust? There is not one of us without some such responsibility. God is always sending people to us in provi-

The Gate Beautiful

dential ways. We do not know why they come to us, why they pass within the range of our influence. But in whatever way they are sent to us we have some errand to them. They may need our sympathy, our encouragement, our comfort, our protection, the influence of our friendship. Let us be careful lest while we are busy here and there they are gone without having received from us the help, the blessing, the influence which God intended us to give them.

1912
85



