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LOOKING TOWARD SUNRISE.

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(SERIES ** OF "REST A WHILE.")

BY ROSE PORTER,

Author of "Summer Driftwood"; "Winter Fire"; Etc.

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"Let me go, for the day breaketh. . . . . As he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him."—GEN. xxxii. 26, 31.

"A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."—ECC. xi. 7.

"How shall we reach God's upper light
If life's long day hath no good-night?"

I.

LOOKING TOWARD SUNRISE.

WHAT a glad thing home-going is! The heart beats high at the thought, and what a leap it gives when hope passes on from earth to Heaven, and we catch a glimpse of that last and gladdest Home-going the glory of which is unspeakable. And yet, almost always, hand in hand with this joyous anticipation comes a thought of the mystery and silence of the way that leads to the Heavenly Home. And so easily are the shifting tides of our emotions turned, in a moment that thought has power to take the gladness from our hearts, just as when a cloud passes before the sun, the brightness fades from the roses and honeysuckles of the June-time hedgerows. You tell me, dear H——, this has happened to you, for so present has become the dread of the incomprehensibleness and exceeding loneli-

ness of going from this world into the next, your faith has become dim, and you cannot behold even a glimmer of the glorious Sunrise that will dawn upon you when you pass over Penuel. You tell me, also, the consciousness of your sinful heart, the imperfection of your repentance, your innumerable omissions of duty, and commissions of evil, your general unfitness to meet God, weigh upon you till sometimes it seems well-nigh impossible to even hope for salvation. I do not wonder you feel thus, for there is, and ever must be, great mystery and awe, encompassing the hour when a soul passes from the known to the unknown, and parts from the mortal to put on immortality. And, when by thought, you are brought into the vivid realization of all this, it is but natural that your consciousness should be thus penetrated with a sense of your personal sinfulness, and the spiritual ruin which sin makes. Trying as this experience is, surely it is not to be regretted, if through it, you learn the true meaning of Gethsemane and Calvary. For, taught by the truths which cluster around these central points of the Gospel—leading as they

do to the Cross of Christ,—you can calmly and hopefully wait for the hour you now dread.

For the Cross bids you look away from self and sin—giving yourself, sin and all, to "Him that justifieth." If you do this, you will be at peace, though you may never be numbered among those rare souls to whom the hope of eternal life is so strong, the vision of Heaven so near and real, that they look forward to going There with something of exultant joy. That you cannot enter into this feeling is no cause for discouragement, for the desire either for life or death is no measure of the spiritual condition. Temperaments vary, and while there are some who never know the dread of death, there are others who shrink from it like a child frightened by the dark. Circumstances also make a great difference in the feeling with which men and women look toward it, and it would be as unreasonable to expect those whose earthly days are full of sweet content, who have close and near ties, and the prospect of a bright future, to long to depart, as it would be to expect birds to cease to sing in the glad sunshine of spring.

To such hearts, when the hour comes to go, it must always cost an effort to say, "Thy will be done." While for those whose dearest have gone from earth to Heaven, those who have none left to whom they make the chief joy of life, and who perhaps have worn and weary bodies, the desire to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better," is no proof of special readiness or submission. Indeed for such Christians, often it requires greater trust to submit to God's will, when it ordains a still longer stay on earth, still more patient waiting for the call, bidding the weary to come Home, and enter into Rest. But among the glad and the sorrowful, the most frequent experience, is like yours, and many a time it causes the bravest hearts to pray to be delivered from the bondage, and the burden, which in accordance with our human language we call, the fear of 'death!'—Why the Bible tells so little of this most momentous event no one can explain, but that there is great silence regarding it, and the Hereafter, we all know. And, since no one has ever come back to tell, either of the way, or of the *There*, we must needs gather up the fragmentary hints

of the Beyond which gem the pages of the Holy Book, where amid the encompassing silence, they shine like stars, glowing in the midnight sky. But better than this is the rest our souls can find, when by faith, they build their hopes on the strong foundation of our Lord Christ's victory over death, by which "He hath opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers."—For while He is our Judge He is also our Saviour, and He has promised, "I will ransom thee from the power of death. Fear not, for I Am with thee." How wonderful all this. Well may our souls be filled with awe when brought into the presence of the Love and Mercy of this Holy One, "who knew no sin, and yet bore the sins of many," and who will choose the very best time and way for you, and for me, to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, on, to the sunlit land beyond. And though now, this valley seems, as you think of it, a dreary, fearsome place, when you come to it the "shadows will flee away," for

"Christ hath died, yea, Christ is risen again:
Wherefore both life and death grow plain
To us who wax and wane,

For Christ who rose shall die no more,
Amen: till He makes all things plain
Let us wax and wane."

These words of man's wisdom are comforting and true, but in the Holy Scriptures we find closer and dearer ones for our support in the hour when "fearfulness and trembling come: and the heart is overwhelmed, sore pained, and withered like grass"—for at such hours the Comforter brings to remembrance that Christ is near. "He will help," He has promised; "Lo! I Am with you always."—"My presence shall be with thee."—"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." In the strength of this upholding all you have to do, dear H——, is to ask that His Will may be done *in* and *by* you. If this is truly your desire, you can also seek the added strength found in the humble, trustful pleading of the prayer the Church teaches her children: "Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts, shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayers; but spare us, Lord, most holy. O God, most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour. Thou most worthy Judge eternal,

suffer us not at our last hour from any pains of death to fall from Thee."——

As thus you pray remember—when that hour comes "He will hold you by your right hand," "the Almighty Lord will be with you!" And then—the afterwards! "You shall obtain joy and gladness," for "there shall be no more death, neither shall there be any more pain—the former things will have passed away," and you will be lifted above the weight of fear. Thinking of this blessed Hereafter, do you not sympathize with the heathen amanuensis who, writing the Epistle of St. John, burst into tears when he came to the words, "Now are we the sons of God," exclaiming, "It is too much, let me write, Now are we permitted to kiss His feet."—And through *Him* we are God's dear children! God is our Father! It is the knowledge of this which makes *Heaven*, *Home*. It ranks us, also, among "the watchmen who wait for the dawn"—and to the watchmen "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him who bringeth good tidings."—No wonder at His coming "they lift up the voice, and with the voice together shall they sing."

Meanwhile, during the watching and waiting the heart of faith finds over-lapping joys wrapped within sorrow and even fear. If only you knew the Heavenly Father better you would understand this, and "the Hope which enters within the veil," and you would be cheered through the troubles by a believing vision of their 'afterwards.' This is a truth that shines so brightly in the thought of the believer as a watchman, and one which speaks with especial earnestness to God's tired children, among whom you are numbered. For who are the watchmen more truly than the weary ones who are waiting and looking for the first peep-o'-day. A blessed service if it be rendered in calm, Christ-like patience. Patience! how cold it seems for me to theorize on patience, who so lack myself patience even to work till the sunset, though so well I know out of the Night the Day dawns!

I suppose the real reason these thoughts and hopes of immortality do not flood the soul with a glory like sunrise is, that we do not in actual truth believe them, and so we miss the gladness we might enjoy, if it were

not for the uncertainty of belief and hope. In the same way we suffer from our uncertainty regarding God's Fatherly Love for us. *That* is something so hard to realize, you say, and you add: "When we think of the beauty, and vastness of this wonderful world, and remember *it all* cost God but a word, how can we make ourselves believe, we insignificant mortals, are better loved and of more value in His sight?" If you are seeking, dear H——, for evidences of the Heavenly Father's love by such comparisons, I can only answer—you will find little satisfaction in them, or in natural theology. But—think of the reply held in one tear shed by the Lord Christ! And tell me, is not that evidence enough to satisfy you with the 'Love of the Father'?—Yes, surely, Christ's love and compassion are the strong keys that unlock the mystery of God's love—and "faith with no needle but a ray of light can weave immortal tapestries of tears." Christ the Interpreter—Christ the Revealer—if you fix your faith on Him, straightway He will guide you to the cleft of the Rock, and you will find that a place where the Lord "will show

thee His glory, and will make all His goodness pass before thee," for He has promised, "I will be gracious, I will show mercy—*there is a place by Me*, and thou *shalt* stand upon a Rock" (Ex. xxxiii. 19–21). Thus through Christ we can exchange hope for assurance, and uncertainty for certainty. Something God's early people could not do, for all the acts of God, before Christ came, were like words waiting to be explained.

Have you ever thought, too, how, after He came, the world's life of suffering proved its best Dictionary?—For, as you spell out the meaning of human love manifested in sacrifice and suffering, do you not begin to comprehend how God cannot manifest His Love toward us at a less cost? Hence it is that satisfying evidence of God's Love is not attained by us till it is illuminated by the suffering of which St. John wrote: "*Herein perceive* we the Love of God, because He laid down His Life for us." When we grasp even a hint which serves to interpret this Divine love, how quickly it becomes a life-giving power, and how through it we find even the silence of the Bible re-

garding mortal death, and immortal life, becomes voiceful and full of meaning, for the words of the Holy Book are, as the prophet said, "wheels in the middle of a wheel." We no sooner behold by faith the revolving of one, than another flashes before us, with a still fuller significance. This is how so many of God's dear children have obtained precious inlooks into His Word, and caught glimpses of the redeemed in glory. The dearest and the most life-like of these glimpses is the one recorded in the seventh chapter of Revelation, where we are told *who* they are, and *what* they are doing —"A great multitude which no man could number." Observe, not a few of the sweetest, most richly endowed souls the world has known—but a mighty company, like the Love that redeemed them, something vast and merging into infinity. A multitude also not limited to one nation or country, but formed "of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues." Yes—"all sorts and conditions" are There—the lofty and the lowly, the learned and the ignorant, the young and the old, and each retains their own special self-hood, for souls, like stars,

differ in glory and magnitude; nevertheless all differences are overborne by the prevailing likeness manifested by the sign of the Cross. We are told also, "these are they who came out of great tribulation," for

"The path to Heaven is steep and straight."

It calls for many a hard struggle, many a life-battle in which the struggler seems vanquished according to the world's judgment. And yet, how often this seeming defeat holds the promise of a victory greater than any this world can give! And when once that Home is reached, all tribulation is over, they are a safe, a happy multitude who "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!" And though some may wear apparel more exquisite and beautiful than others, the hue and lustre of each is the same, for they all wear the stainless robe—the garment that tells of redeeming Love. And they all have 'palms in their hands,' while "they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." "Thanks be to God, who giveth

us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."——

Of the occupation of these blessed ones we are told, "They are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."—"They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And there is no weariness There, never a need to say, 'I am tired,' for work is rest, and rest is work—and every service is a sweet note in the Song of Life, that blessed song in praise and adoration of the 'Three in One'—"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Think, too, "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." And "the Lamb shall lead them unto Living Fountains," for "in Heaven every fountain lives, and each living fountain is a lesson full of God." And because Heaven is the Revelation of perfection it is described for us in words that, united, form a full-orbed whole, for while one half of John's vision gives us a glimpse of the rest and peace that reign in Beulah-land, the other half of his description—as though to complete the picture—tells of the sorrows that are all unknown;

where "they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither does the sun light on them nor any heat." And as for tears, "God shall wipe all tears away."—Have you a right to hope for this glad, blessed ending to life's story? I think St. Paul would tell you—"Yes"—"if you have fought a good fight and kept the faith." For when the time of his own departure drew near he said: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and *not to me only, but unto all them also that* love His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8). These are glorious words of hope, and yet Paul utters them with no hesitation. But as you say, dear, 'that St. Paul should have this assured hope is a part of St. Paul's mighty faith, and no index to your feeling of assurance,'—nevertheless, unworthy as you are, your Redeemer was Paul's Redeemer—the Lord Christ—and salvation is all through Him. Thus if we are truly in earnest in following Him, we may rest, I think, in the comforting faith of assurance, without either presumption or danger of spiritual pride. For the wonder

and magnitude of God's Love and Mercy revealed in Christ, will be enough to keep us humble. And because this hope is one that can be distorted by the presumptuous, is no reason why we should lose the comfort of it. And surely Scripture warrants us in believing with an assurance that is very real and true, and it fills the soul with a gladness before which fears and doubts vanish like clouds before the Rising Sun. If you look in your Bible for these precious words you will find how rich and full they are, and as you ponder them, God grant they may become in very truth your heart's language. Think of the blessedness of being able to say, with a sense of ownership, as Job said: "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth" (Job xix. 25). A knowledge David echoed when he exclaimed, "I will *fear no evil*, for Thou art with me" (Ps. xxiii. 4). And that Isaiah proclaims in the words: "Thou wilt keep him in *perfect peace*, whose mind is stayed on Thee, *because* He trusteth in thee" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). But to attain this condition of rest and security you must "give diligence to make your calling sure" (2 Peter i. 10), for "the works of righteous-

ness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and *assurance* for ever" (Isa. xxxii. 7). Do right—and then you will have "the full *assurance* of understanding" (Col. ii. 2); "the full assurance of hope" (Heb. vi. 11). And you will be able to say with Paul, "*I* know whom I have believed, and am *persuaded* that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him" (2 Tim. i. 12).

This is an assurance which leads on to the confidence that is "persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39), for "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). Hence "we are always *confident*," for "we *know* that we are of God" (1 John v. 5), "we *know* that through Christ we have passed from death unto life."—"We *know* that through Him we have eternal life" (1 John v. 13).

There are certain conditions, I repeat, involved in this assurance which you must keep in mind, dear H——. And even then, you may not attain it immediately, for sometimes it is good for us to be kept waiting—and after you possess some measure of it, you will often be tried by doubt, and discouraged by failure, for you are still on earth, and "some doubts there will always be," but let not this dismay you. Remember, "he that never doubts has nothing to lose; he that never fears possesses nothing truly valuable." Be patient and steadfast, and in the end you will conquer through the One "sufficient for your weakness." And "good times and bad times all pass over"; and "all paths are right that lead to the mountain top, provided we remember that we are going up the hill, and keep *ascending*." Therefore be content whether the way be long or short, rough or smooth; 'all is well,' if it be a Homeward way, for what matter if we reach Home?

"Home by different ways. Yet all
Homeward bound through prayer and praise,
Young with old, and great with small,
Home by different ways.

"Many nights and many days
Wind must blow and rain must fall,
Quake the quicksand, shift the haze,
Life hath called and death will call,
Saints who praying kneel at gaze,
Ford the flood or leap the wall,
Home by different ways."

I referred to conditions on which the sense of assurance depends. One is, a constant mindfulness that while salvation does not depend on your work—for you are saved by grace—yet your sureness of it depends greatly on the *way* you live. Another condition is, that "inconsistency will dim your eyes and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well-doing that the day-spring of assurance will visit you and shine down upon your heart." For "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant" (Ps. xxv. 14). And before *that* showing, even now here on earth, shadows disperse, and doubts and fears wax dim. And yet, *this* is only the

Dawning. Think, then, what *Sunrise* will be!

"When He, the Lord, our Righteousness, shall come,
And call His people from the East and West
To dwell forever in the Eternal Light,
At rest within the Paradise of God."

Meanwhile, may "the Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, be now and evermore thy defence, and make thee *know* and *feel* that there is none other name under heaven, through whom thou mayest receive life and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Man's life is but a working day
Whose tasks are set aright;
A time to work, a time to pray,
And then a quiet night.

"And then, please God, a quiet night
Where palms are green and robes are white;
A long-drawn breath, a balm for sorrow—
And all things lovely on the morrow."

THOUGHTS ON PRAYER.

Jesus said: "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it."—JOHN xiv. 10.

"O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name."—Ps. viii. 1.

"A strong Tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."—Ps. xviii. 10.

"Then, fainting soul, arise and sing;
Mount, but be sober on the wing;
Mount up, for Heaven is won by prayer,
Be sober, for thou art not *There*."

II.

THOUGHTS ON PRAYER.

IN this meditation I will try, dear H——, to suggest several replies to the questions you ask regarding prayer, and the place it fills in the Christian's life. The first—"What is prayer in the Name of Jesus?" we have already considered, hence I will only refer to it by reminding you that Christ's words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in My Name,* that will I do," are among the most precious promises contained in the Gospel. They set a sacred seal, as it were, to the blessed truth that *through* and *in* Christ we have become the Heavenly Father's well-beloved children; and thus we may pray to Him—in Christ's Name—with the sweet confidence which springs out of the assurance, that the grace and glory with which the Father is well pleased in His

Son, is by imputation and in effect, henceforth bestowed upon us, since Christ said: "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them" (John xvii. 13).

In the presence of such a gift well may we ask in humble wonder:

> "Jesus, why dost Thou love me so?
> What hast Thou seen in me
> To make my happiness so great,
> So dear to Thee?"

Looking over your list, I find the meaning of the questions it contains so much alike, my reply to one will to some extent hold an answer for all. I may, too, fail in giving some special difficulty the consideration you desire; indeed, this liability between friends of focusing light on different points of a subject, in which both are interested, is always a trying part of the discussion of spiritual truth—for—we do see, even truth, so differently. Nevertheless, this danger—like so many others, has a bright side, for surely it teaches us charity, enforcing as it does, the "judge not" command—and the truth that—

> "Varied modes of creatureship abound
> Implying just as varied intercourse

For each with the Creator of them all,
Each has his own mind and no others."

Nature supplies endless illustrations of this 'many views'—and yet one central object, for Nature so seldom shows us the whole of a thing at one glance.

In proof of this, think of a mountain-slope, rising up before you in massive grandeur as you approach it; revealing with every onward step a shifting scene of changing outline, and varying tints of light and shade, and yet despite this apparent change you know between the foldings of the hills the same valleys are nestled, the same brooks and rivulets go flowing on their way; the same forest trees lift their strong branches skyward during the wild storms of winter or the tranquil calm of summer. And thus prayer fills always an unchanging place in Christian growth, though as we strive to solve the perplexities which involve certain aspects of it, to my mind, the light may fall in broad beams of illumination on some special point, over which, to your mind, shadows may continue to lurk—even on till the blessed hour when "all shadows will flee away."——

To return to your questions, the three, which immediately follow the one alluded to, are peculiarly marked by answers which interblend the queries: 'How is prayer religion in action?'—'Of what does prayer consist?'—And, 'Why is it called one form of hard work?' The deep significance of my three-fold reply you will straightway know, dear H——, if you obey Christ's command, "Ask, and ye shall receive." For to ask, implies an act on your part by which you place yourself in real and effective communication with God, and to do this, is something that demands a strong effort of concentrated will-power. A double effort, if prayer proves to be to you,—as it does to so many,—like sorrow in the doubt it suggests of the possibility of God's love for you as an individual unit: for while it is easy to grasp the idea that we are among the sheep of His fold, to some natures, it requires a strong mental effort to realize the wonderful truth, that our Heavenly Father knoweth us each by name, for, though

"One star differeth from another star
In glory and in use: yet all are stars
Of the illimitable Home of God:

And every one has its own name and place
Distinguished."——

While this blessed knowledge grows fuller, and clearer, as we approach nearer to God, and the Christ-like life on which He smiles, it will—as long as we stay in this world—be a truth difficult to appropriate. A frequent experience in seasons of great trial, or in minutes of earnest prayer explains this; for you know how at such times when our sorrow and our prayer seem vast matters to us, we suddenly become conscious of the thousands ignorant of them, and outside the thousands there are, too, indifferent billions. No wonder, in the presence of the thought of this great multitude, our little insignificant individuality seems lost, till it becomes well-nigh impossible to grasp the conception of a separate and personal relationship to God through Christ; almost impossible to believe, that our Father in Heaven in very truth knows every detail of our trouble, and hears every whispered word of our prayer, as distinctly as though there were no other human being in all the wide world. This passes our finite comprehension, yet it *is true*, for the billions are

not typical of Him. Indeed, the nearest and closest friend, with striving love and sympathy, only gets a little way towards the likeness of God's compassion, and willingness to hear and answer prayer. This, I repeat, is hard to comprehend, but when at rare moments we do feel it, the marvel and the blessedness make it difficult for us to realize anything else; though for that matter, it is always hard to keep both God and the world *real.* As we seek to do it, we find the work of controlling heart as well as mind is no slight task, especially in the development of that part of the soul's training which is connected with prayer, where it must combine the spiritual conditions that are the halves of a complete whole. They consist of obedience and of the work by which faith is made perfect; and conformity to the Divine Will is the Ladder of ascent by which faith gains at last the topmost round, of the many rounds of the Heavenward Ladder, each marked by a prayer, and a careful, patient step upward. This is one of the metaphors, that lifts us, while it bows us down, for the more we know and love Christ, the higher we ascend,

and yet, as we rise we know more of our imperfections—which is a humbling knowledge—we also know more of the path of prayer, and the faith-tests that encompass it, and which if faithfully encountered will result at last in the change from mortality to immortality, from the seen to the unseen, from imperfection to perfection. For "if ye be willing and obedient," "saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Is. i. 18).

Prayer, being, in the name of Christ, the way to this crowning of faith, certainly you are right, dear H——, to desire all possible knowledge of wherein consists "the effectual and fervent prayer which availeth with God," and which is "emphatically religion in action." A truth enforced by the words of the late Bishop of Salisbury, that "no man was likely to do much good in prayer who did not begin by looking upon it in the light of a work, to be prepared for, and persevered in with all the earnestness which we bring to bear upon subjects which are, in our opinion, at once most interesting and most necessary." Canon Liddon tells us

"this will indeed appear, if, looking to an act of real prayer, we take it to pieces, for we find it consists always of three separate forms of activity which, in the case of different persons, co-exist in very varying degrees of intensity, but which are found, in some degree, in all who pray, whenever they pray. To pray, is first of all to put the understanding in motion, and to direct it upon the Highest Object to Which it can possibly address itself, the Infinite God. And thus any common act of real prayer keeps, not the imagination, but the understanding, occupied earnestly, absorbingly, under the guidance of faith from first to last."——

"Next, to pray is to put the affections in motion; it is to open the heart. . . . . And this movement of the affections is sustained throughout the act of prayer."

The third form of activity "is to put the will in motion, just as decidedly as we do when we sit down to read hard, or to walk up a steep hill against time."—As containing a still more pronounced reply to your question observe the following extract: "The amount of will which we severally carry into the act of prayer is the ratio of

its sincerity; and when prayer is at once real and prolonged, the demands which it makes upon our power of concentrating determination into a specific and continuous act are very considerable indeed. Now, these three ingredients of prayer are also ingredients in all real work, whether of the brains or of the hands. The sustained effort of the intelligence and of the will must be seconded in work no less than in prayer by a movement of the affections, if work is to be really successful. A man must love his work to do it well." I think now, dear H——, you will understand how prayer is well called religion in action. To a certain extent you know also in what it consists, but to fully grasp its wide comprehensiveness, you need to ponder the examples of prayer recorded in both the Old and New Testament. It is a record which begins early, for when sin entered the heart the need of prayer began. That the Patriarchs recognized this and also what the spirit of prayer consisted in, we know through the window opened into their lives, which shows us "they walked with God." Words which express a nearness

of communion with the Heavenly Father kindred to that we now refer to when we say the soul abides in the attitude of prayer. "Later, after the Mosaic Law was given, when the idea and range of sin had been deepened and extended in the mind of Israel, we find prayer organized in a system of sacrifices, suited to various wants and moods of the human soul, consciously dealing with its God as the King both of the sacred nation and of individual conscience. Later still, in the Psalter, prayer —the purest, the loftiest, the most passionate,— took shape in imperishable forms. And when at length a new revelation was made in Jesus Christ, there was little to add to what was already believed as to the power and obligation of prayer, beyond revealing the secret of its acceptance. Our Lord's precepts and example are sufficiently emphatic; and His apostles appear to represent prayer not so much as a practice of the Christian life as its very breath and instinctive movement. The Christian must be 'continuing instant in prayer'; he must 'pray without ceasing.'" As an illustration of this, I beg you to give careful and devout

study to the special prayers mentioned in the Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles. They contain, also, a full reply to your wish to know in what prayer consists. I point you to a few especially sacred, because closely associated with our Saviour's own use—and thus for us they are indeed model prayers. Among the most precious are those recorded in Matt. xi. 25, and in John xi. 41, 42. These both give us an example of thanksgiving for God's abounding mercy and willingness to hear and answer prayer. Read and ponder also the 17th of John, a chapter dedicated to the recital of Christ's prayer for Himself, His apostles, and all believers. As a guide for prayer in hours of deepest anguish, I need hardly remind you of the sacred words recorded in Matt. xxvi. 29, and Luke xxii. 42. Here we find in one brief sentence the signature of all true prayer—"*Thy* will, not mine." Well-nigh as brief is the record (Matt. xxvii. 46) of the height of soul-agony caused by the hiding of the Father's face, and hence the suspension of Divine consolation. You will also find much profit from careful pondering of each separate clause of the "Lord's

Prayer."—And you will not overlook the blessed example of forgiveness taught by the petition contained in Luke (xxiii. 34). But I will not tarry to note the many other prayers which are examples for us to follow, and which will answer your question regarding the limitations of prayer. As you study them you will straightway observe they are in no way narrowed down to the mere asking for what one wants. Observe also " in the larger sense of the word, as the spiritual language of the soul, prayer is intercourse with God, often seeking no end beyond the pleasure of such intercourse. It is praise ; it is congratulation ; it is adoration of the Infinite Majesty; it is colloquy in which the soul engages with the All-wise, and the All-holy; it is basking in the sunshine, varied by ejaculations of thankfulness to the Sun of Righteousness for His light and His warmth. In this larger sense, the earlier part of the Te Deum is prayer as much as the latter part; the earliest and latest clauses of the Gloria in Excelsis as truly as the central ones ; the Sanctus or the Jubilate no less than the Litany ; the Magnificat as certainly as the fifty-first Psalm."

The question—'What tangible results follow prayer?'—is a gravely earnest one at all times; but especially so in this positive and practical age. That you may know with no dimness of mental vision what at least some of these results are, consider first the effects which prayer has upon the mind and character of the person who prays; effects which we Christians believe to be chiefly due to the transforming grace of God, given in answer to prayer. "Thus it has been observed that persons without natural ability have, through the earnestness of their devotional habits, acquired in time powers of sustained thought, and an accuracy and delicacy of intellectual touch, which would not else have belonged to them. The moral effects of devotion are naturally more striking and abundant. Habitual prayer constantly confers decision on the wavering, and energy on the listless, and calmness on the excitable, and disinterestedness on the selfish. It braces the moral nature by transporting it into a clear, invigorating, unearthly atmosphere: it builds up the moral life, insensibly but surely remedying its deficiencies, and strengthening its weak points,

till there emerges a comparatively symmetrical and consistent whole, the excellence of which all must admit, though its secret is known only to those who know it by experience. Akin to the moral are the social effects of prayer. It gilds social intercourse and conduct with a tenderness, an unobtrusiveness, a sincerity, a frankness, an evenness of temper, a cheerfulness, a collectedness, a constant consideration for others, united to a simple loyalty to truth and duty, which leavens and strengthens society." This subject — the social aspect of prayer—is a very broad one, embracing as it does—"the family; the nation; the race; and the Church"—all of which revealed by Christianity rest on the One foundation—for, "*Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. iii. 11). And yet each has a special Bible verse that applies to it alone. I note them for you. *The Family*—"I bow my knees unto the Father, from Whom every *Family* in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. iii. 14). *The Nation*—"The nations shall walk amidst the light—of the city of God—and the kings of the earth do bring their

glory into it" (Apoc. xxi. 24). *The Race*—"God made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitations that they should seek God" (Acts xvii. 26). *The Church*—"The Church, which is His Body" (Eph. i. 22).

You will find this subject dwelt on in detail by Canon Westcott in his recent volume, "Social Aspects of Christianity." The important thought it contains for our daily life is that prayer develops the spirit of universal brotherhood—for "in Christ all men are brethren"; if we once enter into vital relationship with this blessed truth it will transform for us the meaning of life. For "according as its influence prevails all life becomes an energy of fellowship with men in God, with men not as chosen by any capricious or personal rule, but with men simply as men. In this way the spirit of brotherhood quickens the spirit of sonship. The love which goes out from us comes back to us multiplied a thousandfold." This recognition of 'oneness in Him,' our Saviour, is taught by the very first words

of His prayer—"*Our Father.*" Sometimes we hear the wish expressed, that there was a universal sign, by which without utterance, Christians could immediately recognize one another as "members of Christ." There are those who believe that prayer sets such a sign upon the face. And truly, I think it is not too much to say that prayer has even physical results. "The countenance of a Fra Angelico reflects his spirit no less than does his art: the bright eye, the pure, elevated expression, speak for themselves." You know also, how it was said of Keble that "in his later years his face was like that of an illuminated clock; the color and gilding had long faded away from the hands and figures, but the ravages of time were more than compensated for, by the light which shone from within. This was what might have been expected in an aged man of great piety; to have lived in spirit on Mount Tabor during the years of a long life, is to have caught in its closing hours some rays of the glory of the Transfiguration."

I will not tarry to illustrate this farther, it will be fully brought out in our medita-

tion on "Meeting Angels."—Then, too, without dwelling on this subject, I think we can both recall dear faces that smiled on us with a spiritual brightness, "like the first burst of sunshine after rain."

Returning to the barriers against the efficacy of prayer which you call problems, the first to which men point is wont to be the scientific idea of law reigning throughout the spiritual as well as the material universe. To meet this and other difficulties, I again refer to the explanation given by Liddon. After stating the modern idea that we have attained to a wider belief than the old theological conception of the Bible and the Church, which assigns to law and order a higher place in our minds than can belong to a personal will, he asks: "Does not the very word law, by reason of its majestic and imposing associations, here involve us in some indistinctness of thought? What do we mean by law? When we speak of a law of nature are we thinking of some self-sustained invisible force, of which we can give no account except that here it is, a matter of experience? Or do we mean by a law of nature only a principle which, as our

observation shows us, appears to govern particular actions of the Almighty Agent Who made and Who upholds the universe? If, however, we mean by law the observed regularity with which God works in nature as in grace; then in our contact with law, we are dealing, not with a brutal, unintelligent, unconquerable force, but with the free will of an intelligent and moral Artist, Who works in His perfect freedom, with sustained and beautiful symmetry. And where is the absurdity of asking Him to hold His hand, or to hasten His work? He to Whom we pray may be trusted to grant or to refuse a prayer, as may seem best to the highest wisdom and the truest love. And if He grant it, He is not without resources; even although we should have asked Him to suspend what we call a natural law. Can He not then provide for the freedom of His action without violating its order? Can He not supersede a lower rule of working by the intervention of a higher? If He really works at all; if something that is neither moral nor intelligent has not usurped His throne,—it is certain that 'the thing that is done upon earth He doeth it

Himself'; and that it is, therefore, as consistent with reason as with reverence to treat Him as being a free Agent, Who is not really tied and bound by the intellectual abstractions, with which finite intellects would fain annihilate the freedom of His action. No; to pray for rain or sunshine, for health or food, is just as reasonable as to pray for gifts which the soul only can receive—increased love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. All such prayers presuppose the truth that God is not the slave of His own rules of action; that He can innovate upon His work without forfeiting His perfection; that law is only our way of conceiving of His regularized working, and not an external force which governs and moulds what we recognize as His work. It dissolves into thin air, as we look hard at it, this fancied barrier of inexorable law; and as the mist clears off, beyond there is the throne of the Moral King of the universe, in Whose eyes material symmetry is as nothing when compared with the spiritual well-being of His moral creatures."

"A second barrier to the efficacy of prayer

is sometimes discovered in the truth that all which comes to pass is fore-determined in the predestination of God. Where, then, is there any room for the effect of prayer? Can it be conceived that the erring understanding and finite will of the creature will be allowed to impose its decisions on the infallible Mind and resistless determinations of God? Surely, if we are to go on praying, after recognizing the Sovereignty of God, we must give up the notion of exerting a real influence upon the Divine Will; we must content ourselves with resignation, with bringing our minds into conformity with that which, as a matter of fact, is quite beyond the range of our influence."

"This language does but carry us into one department of the old controversy between the defenders of the Sovereignty of God on the one side, and the advocates of the free will of man on the other. The very idea of God, as it occurs to the human mind, and the distinct statements of revelation, alike represent the Divine Will as exerting sovereign and resistless sway. If it were otherwise, God would not be Almighty, that is, He would not be God. On the

other hand, our daily experience and the language of Scripture both assure us that man is literally a free agent: his freedom is the very ground of his moral and religious responsibility. Are these two truths hopelessly incompatible with each other? So it may seem at first sight: and if we escape the danger of denying the one in the supposed interests of the other, if we shrink from sacrificing God's sovereignty to man's free will with Arminius, and from sacrificing man's freedom to God's sovereignty with Calvin, we can only express a wise ignorance by saying, that to us they seem like parallel lines which must meet at a point in eternity, far beyond our present range of view. We do know, however, that being both true, they cannot really contradict each other; and that in some manner, which we cannot formulate, the Divine Sovereignty must not merely be compatible with, but must even imply the perfect freedom of created wills. God orders all that happens to us, and, in virtue of His infinite knowledge, by eternal decrees. But He also says to us, in the plainest language, that He does answer prayer, and that prac-

tically His dealings with us are governed in matters of the greatest importance as well as of the least, by the petitions which we address to Him. What if prayers and actions, to us at the moment perfectly spontaneous, are eternally foreseen and included within the all-embracing Predestination of God, as factors and causes, working out that final result which, beyond all dispute, is the product of His good pleasure? Whether I open my mouth or lift my hand, is, before my doing it, strictly within the jurisdiction and power of my personal will; but however I may decide, my decision, so absolutely free to me, will have been already incorporated by the All-seeing, All-controlling Being as an integral part, however insignificant, of His one all-embracing purpose, leading on to effects and causes beyond itself. Prayer, too, is only a foreseen action of man which, together with its results, is embraced in the eternal predestination of God. To us this or that blessing may be strictly contingent on our praying for it; but our prayer is nevertheless so far from necessarily introducing change into the purpose of the Unchangeable, that it

has been all along taken, so to speak, into account by Him. If, then, with 'the Father of Lights' there is in this sense 'no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' it is not therefore irrational to pray for specific blessings, as we do in the Litany, because God works out His plans not merely in us, but by us; and we may dare to say that that which is to us a free self-determination, may be not other than a foreseen element of His work."

This is a long extract, but demanded by your question, even though it leaves only a brief space in which to remind you that "every prayer for specific blessings in a Christian soul is tacitly, if not expressly, conditioned by the three conditions given at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer—'Hallowed be Thy Name—Thy Kingdom come—Thy Will be done.'" In effect these three conditions are only one. Remember also "the great masters and teachers of Christian doctrine have always found in prayer their highest source of illumination. . . . . And the greatest practical resolves that have enriched and beautified human life in Christian times have been arrived at in

prayer. . . . . And thus it is that prayer is of such vital importance to the well-being of the soul. Study may be dispensed with by those who work with their hands for God: handiwork may be dispensed with by those who seek Him in books and in thought. But prayer is indispensable: alike for workers and students, alike for scholar and peasant, alike for the educated and the unlettered. For we all have to seek God's Face above; we all have souls to be sanctified and saved; we all have sins and passions to beat back and to conquer. And these things are achieved pre-eminently by prayer, which is properly and representatively the action of religion. It is the action whereby we men, in all our frailty and defilement, associate ourselves with our Divine Advocate on high, and realize the sublime bond which in Him, the One Mediator between God and man, unites us in our utter unworthiness to the Strong and All-holy God."

To come into harmony with this spirit of prayer you need, dear H——, to let your heart run out as far as it will to meet the *Love* of God; for that will soften it; but cause it to reach out after His power also,

for that will strengthen it. In the matter of spiritual growth your soul is much like a tree, your conception of God, the soil, in which the seed of progress is planted. Hence, if the soil is all on one side, the root will be there, and adverse winds will strain fibres which were never meant to support a storm on that side. Strive, then, to reach out rootlets on each and every side, and then leaves of strength and beauty will crown the entire tree, just as symmetry in your views of God, will crown your life with completeness.

Many other thoughts are suggested by this precious subject, but we must leave them unnoted—something one of Nature's tender emblems will help us to do. For as we cannot see the whole of the Alps at once, but can only enjoy the part which our eye can grasp as nestling in and resting on that great incomprehensible mass, so we must be content with what we can see of prayer in its results. Meanwhile, with prayer, as with many and many heavenly truths, we must wait for the broader vision of the Hereafter, before we can know them in all their full, bountiful beauty and grace.

The path that leads to this blessed sequel to life's discipline, and narrow vision, I need hardly remind you, is one we can only tread as we "continue in prayer, and watching in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. iv. 1). "Therefore—look unto the Lord, wait for the God of your salvation. He will hear" (Micah vii. 7), and "we go to Him by prayer, not by steps."

GRACE FOR GRACE.

"He giveth Grace unto the humble."—JAMES iv. 6.

"All within us good and holy
Is from God, His precious gift:
In all our joys, in all our sorrows,
Wistful hearts to Him we lift."

Pleading,

"Give us Grace, and make us Thine."

"It is a good thing that the heart be established with Grace."—HEB. xiii. 9.

For,

"Through Grace joined
With patience come we at a crown enriched
With thousand blessings."

III.

GRACE FOR GRACE.

OF all the brief, yet promise-laden verses contained in the Holy Book, I find none richer, and fuller, than the assurance, that to the earnest soul will be given "Grace for Grace." For surely it holds the essence of all healthy spiritual life, since true life means growth. Let us, then, dear H——, seek its message, for there is nothing vague and unreal about the fact that it does contain a message, the entire Gospel being like that "leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matt. xiii. 33). Just here I want to linger for a moment while we note the significance of those words, and remember they occur among a group of metaphors of which we are told, "all these things spake Jesus in parables." Remember also, the helpful lesson for you, and for me, in this

parable is the simple and apparent one which crowns it, as a flower crowns a stalk, giving forth beauty and fragrance, even though we may not understand the *why* of the plant's twisted fibres and rootlets. Hence, paying no heed to the discussions of the commentators, as to what is meant by "the woman" and "till the whole is leavened," we will regard the "measure of meal" as the type of what Olshausen calls, "spirit, soul, and body"; in other words, the complete self-hood which receives the spiritual leaven into the life emblemed by the meal, which yields to the fermenting and penetrating power of the small beginnings of faith, hope, and love in the soul, till they expand and pervade the entire being with the leaven of righteousness developed by the promised "Grace for Grace." The first thought as we ponder these multiplying graces is, that in the Bible spiritual truth is dealt with much as we deal with our most valued treasures of material worth, deeming no setting too costly for them.

This is exemplified by the words, "And of His fulness have we all received, and *Grace for Grace*, for the Law was given by-

Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 16, 17). His Fulness! Grace and Truth! A golden frame verily. Think, it means the fulness of Christ, who is the "Light of the World," "The True Light"—"The Word made flesh and full of Truth and Grace," and then the sequel. Such a heritage for us!—"Power to become the sons of God," the only condition,—receiving Him by faith, into the heart, which then becomes "the garden of the Lord" wherein He plants seeds of the progressive graces. You ask what I mean by progressive graces? To enumerate would be well-nigh impossible, for they are as many and as varied as our individual needs. Yet a certain similarity runs through them, and thus the same word stands as a type of them all, for the foundation principle is the same, since Grace is developed only in the one way, and that is by following Christ with an earnestness which prompts an ever onward and progressive service; as you will know if you "press forward toward the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus." But remember, the object desired in the attainment of that high calling, is not escape

from punishment for sin either here or hereafter, but it is to be *saved from sin.* And the determination to rise above sin points to the only path by which we can obtain the controlling Grace of righteousness. We need to tread very carefully just here, for there is danger of our making a mistake in regard to what this righteousness really consists in, since from a merely surface glance the world's estimate of it, and the Lord's, seem much alike, whereas they are in truth as unlike as daylight and darkness. Two words define this great difference, for it consists in *doing* right, and in *being* right.

Doing and *Being!* Like two highways starting from the same point, they open out before us. The one is a road illumined by a light which shines from a lantern supplied by the oil of a self-restraint enforced from the hope of reward for service rendered, and escape from the penalty attendant on failure in duty. The other is a road illumined by rays from the Sun of Righteousness, which keep warm and glowing in the soul the desire of *being* right, for the sake of right, with no thought of either future reward or punishment, but with many dear

and precious thoughts of the High calling contained in following Christ, even though that following is like striving to reach the summit of a mountain peak higher than any elevation within the range of earthly measurement.

It is well to realize this rather than to rest satisfied with one's own standard and aims. For it is not enough as a Christian to query—'Am I coming near enough to my conceptions?'—but combined with the struggle to know more, as well as to be more, there must be the additional query: 'Is my conception as high as it can be?' We pilgrims from earth's lowlands cannot answer these questions without many a weary, hard climb; for only thus do we learn the daily dying to self which is required in following Christ. This self-mastery is slow work, and so is daily growth and conformity to "the pattern set in the Mount." Yet, though the struggle be severe, it is lightened by an always full measure of help and comfort, for our Example—Christ—is always within sight, and how much that means! Yes—always, if we will "look up." "But it is so humbling," you say, "to

think of your Ideal, and compare it with your attainments in likeness to Christ." Truly, thoughts of self are discouraging, and I do not wonder they cause you to lose heart—nevertheless, there is comfort even in this discouragement, if you remember when our Lord was on this earth He bestowed His richest blessings on the *consciously unworthy*, rather than on those who felt they had kept all God's commands from their youth up,—and we are not told to look at self—but at our Saviour and Leader. For, like Alpine climbers, our only safety is in steadfastly fixing our gaze on Him—our Guide—and following step by step the path He trod that He might know all the dangers and difficulties that beset our way. And we may be sure He will never lead us further or faster than we can safely follow. He will also supply the needed grace at the needed time, whether it be the grace required for passive or active service; of faith to walk in the darkness of sorrow or in the light of prosperity,—sometimes a harder thing to do.

But whatever the leading we are not to cumber our service by questions regarding

the *how* and *why* of our Saviour's guidance. He will guide, that is enough, and His Love can make a way through questions we never can solve by our own unaided reason, however learned or quick-minded we may be, for He alone can make "the crooked straight, and the rough smooth." But we must also remember, "according to the inexorable law of God's love, while He gives grace for grace, He gives as His gifts are turned into service." In a former Leaflet I touched on this truth, which perhaps shines with a brighter radiance in the text I then used to illustrate it, than it does even in the promised 'Grace for Grace.' Certainly the thoughts that grow out of the command 'Give,' and its conclusion, "*it shall be given unto you*," are replete with the elements necessary for growth in the Christian life; clustering as they do around the great principles of spiritual growth, which I have already alluded to—I mean the surrender of self; and desire after likeness to Christ. Like a star, shining out of a clear sky, the truth which shines out of this self-surrender reveals to us that it in no way implies self-impoverishment. But to fully understand

this requires that the word *give* be accentuated, for only thus will we feel the difference between *giving*, rather than letting others *take* from us. Have you ever thought how many things can be taken from you? But there is one thing always your own to give—and that is your soul. Though it may be marred and wounded, yet no one can rob you of that; and the power to give it, as, and where, you will. If you give it to Christ—ah! think of all He gives in return!

Among the sweetest of the Heavenly gifts that blossom out of our self-surrender is the power of love for, and sympathy with others. And in response to our first faint heart-beat of love toward the Saviour, we straightway feel this growing capacity of love and sympathy toward His creatures. We learn also these hand-in-hand graces—love and sympathy—which are the dearest gifts we can either give or receive from our Lord, or His people, are nevertheless the most worthless and baneful gifts we can bestow upon ourselves. For self-love engenders nothing but weakness in our own hearts, and estrangement from the hearts of others.

I think we never mark this contrast between *out*-going and *in*-going love and sympathy as we do in hours of trial, for then, if we have real love to give out, it finds ways without number by which tender sympathy can be expressed ;—and how the heart expands the more it gives !——

Whereas, if we nurse but for a brief time our own special sorrows, with *self*-sympathy, the heart and mind quickly narrow and become self-centered, till like a child rolling a snow-ball, we find almost before we know it, the little ball has become too large for our hands to lift. But, I repeat, once give forth, rather than hug in, love and sympathy, and we find verified in our souls the truth of the gardener's assurance regarding flowers—the more roses we gather and give, the more will crown our plant with beauty and fragrance.

This law requires no detailing, for it is enforced by every power we possess, greater strength and ability following use ; but remember, use does not include mis-use or abuse. When we realize that this power of giving, is something so capable of growth, how it enriches life ! Think of the hearts

we can help, comfort, and cheer by the precious gift of sympathy.—'But to really give it costs so much,' you reply,—and, you ask: how you can endure the strain on heart and emotions, which contact with suffering or sin must involve? Yes, it does cost, but like all the soul's deepest experiences, it is worth the price, even though it leads close to sorrow and sin.—But you can never know wherein the "worth all it costs" consists, if from dread of a shock to your feelings, you rest satisfied to depute others to dispense what you call charity —something which is as unlike the giving of the heart-to-heart sympathy our Saviour enjoined, as gold is unlike mere surface gilding. If you once try the two methods you will straightway know the difference. And now we will return to our following out of the "law of exchange" and the results that attend the command, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." One of the first and most blessed is the growth of our own hearts, till they become large enough to receive the only real wealth a soul can possess,—*capacity to give*,—and hence to receive. And, oh! the much there-

is to receive, despite all the sorrow and suffering. In proof of this, think of the love, joy, beauty, and brightness all about us if only our hearts were large enough to take it in; and they will be, if we banish selfishness;—that must be done, otherwise it will crowd out everything else. We who live in love-guarded homes especially need to remember this, for the love we there give and receive, without watchfulness, is apt to become a form of selfishness. And, anyway, it is a love unlike the wide, comprehensive thought and regard for others, which embraces the great company of men, women, and children we are wont to call "the masses." I know this wide out-reaching involves much that is repulsive in detail, yet if we give it, just as surely as spring follows winter, it returns to us freighted with blessings. In this, love and sympathy are like the ascending vapors which are constantly going on their silent way up to the sun; and yet earth loses nothing for all her giving, the moisture is sure to fall again transmuted into spring-time showers of pattering rain-drops that woo bud and blossom into leaf and flower; or it returns in

the softly falling snow-flakes of winter that cover and protect from the blight of frost and cold the tender rootlets of growing things. It returns also in the refreshing mid-summer dew, and in the generous autumn rains that fill the brooks and rivers soon to be ice-bound.

These are commonplace types of Nature's lesson, "Give, and it shall be given," but they are none the less true types of what will be the experience of your heart, dear H——, if you test their truth by giving yourself—for you will receive in response—what one word can tell it all?—Humanity hints it, and consider what it means to give love and sympathy out of your little beating heart, and in return to feel the throb of humanity's great heart! And this is not all, for as we give ourselves to others, God gives Himself to us; and we find there is nothing so full as the personal experience out of which we can interpret God's Love. We find, also, by striving to be Christ-like in our treatment of others, we learn to know Christ in His relation to us, as we can in no other way,—He becomes *ours* with a closeness of knowledge which can only exist as

through following Him we experience how He felt. All this seems much to accomplish, dear H——, but,

> "To start thee on thy out-running race
> Christ shows the splendor of His Face;
> What shall that Face of splendor be,
> When at the goal He welcomes thee?"

And you receive, the crowning Grace for Grace?——

Though this crowning Grace is sure, meanwhile we have many other graces waiting to be perfected, and their progressive development is no hasty work, for our Saviour's deepest lessons are not thus taught. Again, the law of Nature illustrates the law of spiritual progress: bud, blossom, and fruit, there is no changing this order. Nature's type does not end here, for as we strive after growth, grace enters our souls as gently as the dew falls in refreshment on thirsty flowers; like the plants, we are, too, growing all the time, though, now and then, we seem standing still, and we need to look at the way-marks by the road-side to discover if we make any advance. Then, again, sometimes when we have seemed "standing still" our eyes are

suddenly opened, like the eyes of the blind man, and we "see trees as men walking." We find our feet that have seemed so halting, have become like "hinds' feet," and "God has set us upon high places"—"He has enlarged our steps that we may not slip" (Ps. xviii. 36). If you picture a mountain path with narrow steps cut in the ledge of projecting rock, you will understand the beauty and significance of that promise to enlarge *the steps;* it is a promise to make the rough way easy, and the dangerous ascent safe. Observe, also, the word 'enlarge' has a different meaning in Bible language than the mere idea of "increasing and making greater."—When David says God has enlarged his feet, he means that God has set his feet free. It is a word of deliverance proclaiming that "he walked at liberty because he kept God's law." Using the thought thus, we find if by faith we are able to enter on the high-lands of soul liberty, mists and shadows will no longer dim our vision and dismay our souls. It is such a glad, sunlit path, and when you tread it, you will find it is also bordered on either side by the blessings of 'Grace for

Grace,' which bloom in as regular order as the flowers that mark progress in the Floral Calendar of Nature, of which the poets sing emblem songs, that each hold a flower-like thought that suggests a Heavenward-pointing metaphor.

If you trace this analogy, I think it may supply a half-answer to your question regarding those progressive Graces which overlap one the other, like sea-waves rolling landward from the great boundless mid-ocean of fathomless Grace. Hence, by way of *l'envoi* to this meditation on Grace, we will turn the leaves of a "Grace for Grace" and floral Calendar I made not long ago, to keep pace with the buds and blossoms of the year, for flowers

> "Are emblems, and we trace
> In the rarest and the loveliest
> Act of love, and gift of grace."

And Wordsworth tells us also:

> "God made the flowers to beautify
> The earth and cheer man's careful mood;
> And he is happiest who hath power
> To gather wisdom from a flower,
> And wake his heart in every hour
> To pleasant gratitude."

I give you my fancy, but you may choose quite a different order; mine ranks the Graces according to St. Paul's "fruits of the spirit"—thus they come in succession —"Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance, Righteousness, Truth."

Love—its emblem a *Lily:*

"Consider the Lilies
How beautiful they grow!
Never King had such glory,
Yet no toil they know.
Oh, happy are the Lilies
That He *loved* them so!"

Joy—old Donne gives us its type—the *Daisy:*

"Flung unrestrained and free,
O'er hill and vale, and desert sod,
That man, where'er he walks, may see
In every step the stamp of God."

Peace—surely its emblem is the

"*Heart's-ease*, of all Earth's flowers most rare."

As for *Long-suffering*, if we seek its type we must search

"Under the green hedges after the snow,
There do the dear little *Violets* grow."

"Ah, the flowers! surely yes,
At the end there will be a few,
Violets, *Violets*, so I guess,
And a little grass and dew."

Next we pause to note *Gentleness*, a grace sweet as the

"Timid Jasmine-buds that keep
Their odors to themselves all day,
But when the sunlight dies away,
Let their delicious secret out."

Goodness I find emblemed by

. . . . "The pilgrim *May-flowers*—
The humblest and the sweetest of all the flowers that grow."

Faith claims

"The quick and subtle spirit of the *Rose*."

While *Meekness* is like

"The *Harebell*, as with grief depressed
Bowing her fragrance."

Temperance has for its type

"The *Snow-drop* . . . robed in snow-white innocence."

And *Righteousness* is emblemed by the *Passion-Flower*,

"Fair and mystical . . . .
That seems like a thing apart.
. . . . . .

"Marked with the Cross of Jesus,
And the signs of His passion deep.
. . . . . .

"What a linking of sorrow with beauty!
The Cross, with its story so sad,
Stands forth on these delicate flowers,
And as we gaze, we are glad;

"For the Cross is our joy and glory,
The pledge of our Saviour's love,
The 'infusion of heavenly sweetness' here,
And the guide to a crown above.

"And though now we see not the glory,
Yet through all earth's pain and loss,
We know that our lives are made holy,
And signed with the blessèd Cross.

"And we pray, as we watch you, sweet flowers,
That deep in our inmost hearts,
We may treasure the holy lesson
That your beauty strange imparts;

"That the Christian's badge of honor
Is the bearing of the Cross,
That to suffer with the Master
Is the richest gain, not loss.

"That the soul is crowned, transfigured
With a glory full and free;
That ever with love remembers
Jesus has died for me;

"That that life is blessed and saintly
That fulfills the sacred word,
Always bearing about in the body
The dying of the Lord."

The last Grace mentioned in St. Paul's list is *Truth*, and I know no better emblem of it than the one contained in Milton's lines to the

"*Immortal Amaranth!* a flower which once
In Paradise, fast by the tree of life,
Began to bloom; but soon, for man's offence,
To heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows,
And flowers aloft, shading the tree of Life."

CALLED TO BE SAINTS.

"Thus saith the Lord, ... Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."—Is. xliii. 1.

'Called of Jesus Christ: . . . . beloved of God, called to be Saints."—Rom. i. 6, 7.

"Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."—1 Cor. iii. 9.

"The soul wherein God dwells—
What church can holier be?—
Becomes a walking tent of heavenly majesty."

IV.

CALLED TO BE SAINTS.

I DO not wonder the words which head this meditation prompt you to ask—'What is it to be a Saint?'—Neither do I wonder that you add—'What is Christian self-sacrifice?' In my reply, I will reverse your question, dear H——, for self-sacrifice is the bud of which saintliness is the flower. This is a subtle subject, and there is danger of making a mistake, for we are so apt to think self-sacrifice implies the "giving up of self," whereas its true object is the correction of faults, and the relinquishing of wrong plans and desires. To do this does not demand the sacrifice of our good traits, our good feelings, our real happiness, or our well-employed time, for while we are commanded to "cut off the right foot, to pluck out the right eye," if they offend, we are also commanded not to *let* them offend. If you

strive to do this you will soon know what self-sacrifice means, and the hard struggle and tough fight it costs to subdue inclination and desire, this will teach you patience—which is a very important part of saintliness of character—for not *as* we fight do we feel the gladness of victory—for that we must wait—it comes afterwards. Meanwhile, be assured, you cannot gain a spiritual victory till you have caught the spirit of Mary's words—"Whatsoever he saith unto thee, *do it.*"——

Keep in mind, also, the truth that "God never spoils a life," hence, if in following the path of self-sacrifice you come to hard places, you may always know they are part of your Christian experience and education, designed to develop growth in grace, and not to mar or spoil. You will encounter many such places, and it is well to be prepared for them, for when we are "called to be Saints," it is a call that runs side by side with the assurance that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of Heaven." How tenderly our Saviour's parable of the Vine and the branches illustrates this, and what a stronghold of

comfort He gives in the words: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John xvii. 33).

"*I have overcome*"—that is a pledge for our final victory, just as our only way of becoming Saints is found through our abiding in Him. And now let us think for a little while of the path toward Saintliness, which is prefaced by self-sacrifice, or, as I like better to term it, self-mastery. One reason why it is a path so often rough and trial-paved is that "we must be proved before we can be approved," and "therefore the individual life is so adjusted in its circumstances, and so measured as to its length as to constitute on the whole a complete probation." Without the discipline of trial, in most cases, this would be impossible, for "there is probably that in every one of us, which only suffering in some form can touch and try." Hence we read in God's Word: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you."—"I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." . . . . "The trial of your faith being more precious than of gold

which perisheth." . . . . Do not be dismayed by this; remember, though "God's fires are hot they are also purifying," and while He is "a consuming fire to what is evil, He is a refining and preserving fire to all that is good," and "the purifying like the proving is accomplished by the whole of the life-lot and discipline," not alone by the darker side of it, bright things have their function in the work too. Still, I repeat, adversity almost always seems needed to accomplish the holy, blessed object of fitting us to become "God's husbandry, God's building."

The place, self-sacrifice—for the sake of others—fills in the development of saintly character, is one of the steps Heavenward which it is most difficult to define, and yet, it is a very necessary one to take, if "by patient continuance in well-doing we seek for glory, and honor, and immortality," for while "it is not possible to doubt that Christians are often called to suffer for the sanctification of others," it is hard to decide how far we are to seek self-sacrifice for the sake of others. For self-sacrifice which is *sought* after, is, alas! too often triumphed

in, and thus it becomes calamitous in its effects on our characters, and "by the sentimental pursuit of it people have sometimes made not only their own lives useless, but the whole framework of their religion hollow." But this in no way interferes with the discipline of right, "which demands that we continually and reciprocally submit and surrender in all kind and courteous and affectionate ways; and these submissions and ministries to each, are as good for the yielder as for the receiver; they strengthen and perfect as much as they soften and refine." But, in this matter of self-sacrifice, no one can make a law for the conduct of others, beyond the general rule that "the constant duty of every man to his fellows is to ascertain his own powers and special gifts, and to strengthen them for the help of others. Life being not a pastime prepared simply for our enjoyment, but a solemn duty which we are bound to fulfil to the best of our powers, each one must test their own nature and gifts, and the better they are used for the weal of humanity the fuller will be the inner gladness, and the more sure the attainment of abiding peace

of mind." And "in the consciousness of having sown some seed for eternity, you will close your eyes at the end of each day like a tired child, perchance, but also like a faithful, well-tried servant." A life thus governed turns toward the Sun of Righteousness as naturally as earth's sunflowers turn toward the king of the planets; and a soul that walks life's ways illumined thus, by beams from Heaven, will soon discover the true spirit of self-sacrifice. Faith means so much when by communion with our Saviour we thus view through it, our attitude toward duty, as well as toward sin, for while it shows us our needs, it points to their remedy; the Christian life, being from its dawning on to its earthly ending an experience marked at every advancing step by some new manifestation of Christ's Love. Marked, too, by especial, peculiar, and blessed revelations of His Presence in the soul; but they, like all the dearest, most sacred experiences, are not for a stranger to intermeddle with. Christian experience also is not bounded by the development of any one grace or virtue to the exclusion of others, but by the rounding out of all. Hence we will no longer

isolate self-sacrifice, but proceed to consider as a complete whole, the various virtues, which are combined in the Saint-likeness emblemed by the "fruits of the Spirit." And they only ripen in proportion to our faith, love, and obedience, and are so interblended with individual experience, I cannot describe their growth by words.—Doubtless this is a cause for thankfulness, for our natural self-consciousness is aggravated by the tendency of this analyzing age, and there is danger of our carrying it so far that in the end we find it hard to free ourselves from ourselves. Yes, surely it is well for us not to try to explain and define by rule and measure each feeling, and each degree of growth.

Observe just here, that however marked the difference in personal saintliness may be as to the details of its growth, there is no difference in the universality of the call; and the directions for its attainment are also alike, for it consists in *Christ-likeness*, and that involves that we become "dead to sin" and "alive to righteousness," something we can only become as we learn to know our Divine Example, through

earnest study of His character, words, and works. It demands also that we become acquainted with the lives of His followers as we find them recorded in Scripture. This is why Bible-told biographies are precious; and it is why, even when they are comprised within the compass of a few verses, there is nothing fragmentary or unsatisfactory about them. Think of the story of St. Peter, and what a complete metaphor of human life it is. Think of the history of Paul, and of John, how rounded and full of suggestions for our imitation they are. Think, too, of the lesser lights which shine from the lives of God's Saints of old. Seeking one of these lives as a type for us to ponder, as we meditate on our own 'call to be Saints,' the brief record of St. Anna comes to me as full of rich, helpful thoughts for our daily life. For as we transfer her reverence and service from the Jewish Temple, and the narrow conceptions of a God bound by local limits, to the wider outlook which is ours through faith in Christ, and which reveals all the world as a temple sanctified by God's presence, we will find many things in Anna's life which

are types of what will be our individual experience if we make the Lord Christ the *reality* of our lives. Her story, in connection with the Temple, is briefly told: There was one Anna, a prophetess; she was of great age, she was a widow, and she departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.——

This is the substance of the record, and to discover its deep heart of helpful meaning we will need to read between the lines; otherwise it will be empty of practical significance for us. It will be useless, too, unless we realize that while life is meant to be a mission and a ministry, the wisest and most practical axioms never made any one better without their own earnest determination to appropriate, and incorporate into their own conduct the good learned from the lives of others. To accomplish this we require in the voyage of life, a steady purpose to hold, and a firm will to guide the rudder. And this lesson of steadfast adhesion to duty is the first we find for imitation in the story of this Anna "who departed not from the Temple, but served God night

and day." Before we dwell on this continuance of service, I pause to bid you note we are viewing Anna's life from an outlook that draws no distinction between what is commonly called sacred and secular.—Thus her Temple service as an example for us to copy comprises the every-day duties of the most commonplace every-day life, as well as those which rank as rare and important. You will see the reason I bid you put aside the thought of sacred and secular, if you remember that what is wont to be called secular is only the unappreciated sacred. For God is everywhere, and in everything; His temple is the universe, and He is as near to us when we are occupied with the most lowly duty, as when we are busy with the most important. Thus every act becomes to the Christian some form of 'Temple service.' And by faith's illuminating light we know also not merely that it is possible to 'do all' for God, but that it is also impossible to do anything which is not either a consecration or a desecration of His Presence, for it is not a part of God, but all of God, that is in every place. And while it is true that by prayer, praise, and

meditation we may enter into the "Holy of Holies," it is no less true, that the simplest deed comes under the law of service for Christ's sake. Ah! if we did but remember this, how every hour, like Anna, we would be "serving the Lord," and how softly we would walk before Him: with what reverent footsteps we would tread His Temple—the world. The next suggestion in Anna's life, as an example for us to follow, as we strive to become Saints, we find in the words—"She served God with fastings and prayers." Two acts which contain the essence of all spiritual life. Here we meet again the necessity for *self-sacrifice*, which is the other name for *fasting*. For fasting, to honor God, requires that we subordinate the material to the spiritual, not in the mere matter of food alone, but in every detail of our lives. This cannot be done without much pruning of the heart, mind, thoughts, affections, and actions. How much, must vary according to our individual temptations, and self-will; but be it more or less, it must be enough to leave room for God to fill the first place in our hearts, and to *really* thus crown Him King

of our inmost being will, in most cases, need a strength of moral purpose which will soon teach what *self*-denial, sacrifice, and mastery mean. But out of such purpose will grow a nobler worship than that of bended knee, for it will be the service by which through the will-power of a righteous soul, homage is rendered to the Father in Heaven by the consecration of business and pleasure, time and opportunity to His service. The fact that "fasting and prayer" were not divided in Anna's life is also an example for us,—and, how they may both be observed night and day, is explained, when we accept the idea that fasting is the mastery of the spiritual over the material—while prayer is not limited to mere petition, but consists in every thought of God which fills the soul with loving desire for His presence.

It is, also, the rest embodied in the child-like trust, with which the soul clings to "Our Father in Heaven,"—the Father who has said: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16).—"The temple of God"! Truly "we are greater than we

know." Let us try to compass this thought —"God *within us!*—Not only ever with us, unseen; not only watching us in our secret moments, and reading the very thoughts of our hearts; not only covering us with the shadow of His wings, and lighting us with the light of His countenance; but within us, our bodies His temple, our hearts His home! What a glorious dignity! What an imperial inheritance! We are the children of God, the heirs of immortality, but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor. . . . . Oh, if we could but grasp the wonderful meaning of this, we should live lives nobler and more beautiful; we should breathe a purer, a sweeter, and a calmer air." And—by God's grace we may grasp it—at least, in so far as to touch the hem of His garment. For His word bids, "Only Believe," "Fear Not." And each onward step we take in following Christ lifts us to a position higher in Christ, and contains for us, if we accept the precious gift, a sanctity that corresponds with that position. You ask how you can attain this blessed sense of peace? In reply I ask, "'Are you *created* in Christ Jesus?

—If you can answer 'Yes,' then you are 'created unto good works.' 'Have you *died* with Christ?' Then 'reckon yourself dead to sin.' 'Are you *buried* with Christ?' 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body.' 'Are you *quickened* with Christ?' Then you are 'begotten again unto a lively hope.' Are you *risen* with Christ? Then 'walk in newness of life.' Set your affections on things above. Are you called to be *one* with Christ? Then you are 'called to be a Saint.' 'Take heed, therefore, that you *walk worthy of the vocation* wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'"—Remembering—

> "Greatness, which is infinite, makes room
> For all things in its lap to lie."—
>
> . . . . . .

And—

> "What is infinite must be a home,
> A shelter for the meanest life,
> Where it is free to reach its greatest growth
> Far from the touch of strife.
>
> "We share in what infinite; 'tis ours,
> For we and it alike are Thine;

What I enjoy, great God! by right of Thee
Is more than doubly mine.

"Thus doth Thy hospitable greatness lie
Outside us like a boundless sea;
We cannot lose ourselves where all is home,
Nor drift away from Thee.

"Out on that sea we are in harbor still,
And scarce advert to winds and tides,
Like ships that ride at anchor, with the waves
Flapping against their sides.

"Thus doth Thy grandeur make us grand ourselves,
'Tis goodness bids us fear;
Thy greatness makes us brave as children,
When those they love are near.

"Great God! our lowliness takes heart to play
Beneath the shadow of Thy state;
The only comfort of our littleness
Is that Thou art so great.

"Then on Thy grandeur I will lay me down;
Already life is heaven for me;
No cradled child more softly lies than I,—
Come soon, Eternity!"

ANGELS BY THE WAY.

"The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."—Ps. xxxiv. 7.

"The Lord will send His Angel with thee, and prosper thy way."—GEN. xxiv. 40.

"Ah, me! how lovely they must be
Whom God has glorified;
Yet one of them, oh, sweetest thought,
Is ever at my side.
Then for thy sake, dear Angel!
More humble will I be;
. . . . . .
Then love me, love me, Angel dear!
And I will love thee more;
And help me when my soul is cast
Upon the eternal shore."

V.

ANGELS BY THE WAY.

YOU know the importance I attach to what we are wont to call "little things," thus you will not be surprised when I tell you the subject for this meditation was suggested by a remark I overheard not long ago, as I passed the carpenter-shop at the corner of our village street. Evidently it referred to the erection of some high wall, or fence, for the words that floated to me borne on the still air were, "Do you want to shut out the angels?"

Straightway they stirred memories that for years had lain dormant in the place,—be it either heart or mind—where memories are hidden, and where they are so deeply impressed, that nothing effaces them, however long it may be before they are reproduced at seemingly the most unlikely minutes, and from the most unlikely causes. Knowing this, we recognize, that memories

are God-given, and meant to be a lasting possession; and yet often, when suddenly they are wakened, we stand spell-bound, as I did that hour, while they thronged my mind as thickly as roses crown a rose-bush in June. And though there were troubles blended in with these memories, they were tender and gentle as they came back to me mellowed by time, and the soothing touch of our Lord, who has promised to be to His wounded ones as the "Balm of Gilead." Do you ever think if we here on earth can feel the healing of this precious Balm what Heaven will be to the wounded! Heaven where the soul will drink in comfort and healing through every bruised part, and where "God shall wipe away all tears." In the presence of the hope of this Divine consolation, one can but think that the untried—if there are any such among earth's sons and daughters—who reach Heaven, will wish they, too, had had tears, just for the sake of having God's Hand wipe them away! And when we look at sorrow in this light, how full of meaning we find the words Jesus uttered as a benediction for those who grieve—"*Blessed* are they that

mourn, *for* they shall be comforted." And yet it has taken me, and I think it will you, a long time to decide how we ought to bless the Lord in trial. I do not believe we can bless Him directly for the trouble He sends, for it is against nature.—Can a mother bless God her child has died?—But we can bless Him for that which *He is to us* in that which He sends. Here, again, Christ's words just quoted greet us as an explanation. The *Blessing* lies in the being comforted, and for *that* we can thank and *bless* the Lord.

This I now see I was helped to learn through the experience the carpenter's question brought to remembrance. For his words recalled the angel-like blessings that came to me that long-ago time, hand in hand with the sorrows, which seemed then sharper than the thorns of the most thorny rose-bush. But — why emblem thoughts by roses—and troubles by thorns, when so often we find, after all, our thoughts have proved the thorns, while troubles have blossomed into flowers. Before we know this, however, we need to wait, for "no chastening for the present seemeth to be

joyous," it is 'afterward' it yieldeth the precious fruits of peace and joy. Meanwhile, what God will have us to be He will make us through His own education, and the thing we have to do, while we are being thus educated, is not to struggle to be anything but our true selves, which we cannot be, if we strive for emotions and experiences because they may be expected of us, and because they may be natural to our neighbors.

While we thus yield ourselves to God to fashion according to His Will, we are at the same time bidden to keep heart and mind wide open, and on the watch for the 'Hidden Sweetness' with which Heavenly Love encompasses our path. To discover it, we often require to remember the Pearl merchants, who do not seek for the desired gems among the golden sands of the sun-kissed beach, but look for them down below the storm-tossed waves; ocean-waves,—sometimes angry and foam-crested on the upper waters, but always freighted with an undertone song, just as troubles have a bright as well as a dark side. This thought, you say, leads you to ask, "What especial

trouble memory brought to me when I heard the carpenter speak of 'shutting out the angels?" In detail I cannot tell you, for it belonged in one sense, to another, rather than to myself. Then, too, there are chapters in the history of each soul, which are only open for the eye of God to read. And a certain reserve, regarding our sorrows, as well as our joys, is our heritage as children of God. Still it is our duty to share with others the results of the experiences which we have found helpful, and which may contain for them suggestions of comfort and cheer. I think one reason, why calm years so often come after the enthusiasm has gone from our earthly life, is, that they may thus prove the harvest-time, when we are to go a-gleaning, for the sake of others, amid the furrows into which God's Hand let fall the seeds of Hope and Peace, even when our hearts were being most deeply stirred by the sorrows of this mortal existence. And so while I cannot tell you the precise trouble of that by-gone time, I can tell how it guided me to the knowledge of the "dear angels" old Luther called "our invisible but best, and most steadfast

friends." Since that time, the sense of angelic nearness has never left me, though the circumstances which lead to my recognition of their constant companionship have been put aside,—with many another page of life's story—as among the things we have to bear, and of which on our knees we learn what is done cannot be undone, *but*, what is left *can be*. It was the expression of calm, cheerful tranquillity on my mother's face that first made real to me how God's angels can encompass a soul with a peace,

> "Steady and pure as stars that beam
> In middle heaven, all mists above."

And,

> "Soft as pure, and warm as bright."

There was also a certain tone in her voice that seemed an echo of the look, and as though she was enfolded in the spirit of prayer—and—I think she was, for surely prayer is submission to God's will—surely its only true Amen — is 'Thy will, not mine.'——

I knew that the night, which only a little

while before had glided into morning, had been marked for my mother by heart-anguish and spiritual conflict, and this made all the more forceful the expression on her dear face; I saw in it so plainly the angel-look, involuntarily I asked: "Have you met an angel by the way, dear mother?"—She made no reply, but her smile told me 'Yes;' for it was all aglow with the rainbow light that is only reflected on faces when tears in the heart have been soothed by submission in the soul. I wonder, will that look ever shine on your face, and on mine, dear H——? Certainly, we meet angels every hour of our lives. Hence, why should it not?——

Just here you ask me to pause in my recountal while I tell you what I mean by the 'angel-look.' Your question recalls the history of Stephen at the minute, "when all that sat in the council looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts vi. 15). In a volume of sermons by Alexander Raleigh there is one on this text, in which he defines wherein consists "the angel-face on man"—which, as he bids us remember, "we are not to asso-

ciate with any particular style of face or cast of countenance, or with what passes among men for symmetrical, or handsome, or beautiful." Still, "there are certain things *common* to the angel-face which we may look for in *all* the faces which carry on them any image or resemblance to higher worlds and holier creatures." *Brightness* is the first thing we observe, or as we say, 'a light upon the face.'—If there be light within—that blessed light of the indwelling Spirit through which we can say, "In Thy light shall we see light," surely you and I, dear H——, can possess this mark of the angel-look. For though there will still be "some things to weep over, some things to fear;" and we will to the very last continue to find "this is a world of cloud and shadow," yet at the same time we know "the heaven in which the cloud floats is larger than the cloud, and all full of Light. Shadows are melting things, and even where they continue, the very fact that they are *seen* to be shadows argues the presence and prevalence of a superior Light." We know also that we have a Father in Heaven, and having committed the keeping of our souls, and

the ordering of our lives to Him, "He will lead us through the rainy days, and wintry weather of this present time to the summer that is coming." Let us endeavor to enter into so vivid a realization of this, that as nature reflects us—(for we see nature in a certain sense through ourselves—in different lights according to our moods)—so we reflect our spiritual condition, and if that be full of light we will be able to walk even amid surrounding shadows with our eyes lifted Heavenward, while our faces will be illumined by the angel-look of *cheerfulness*,

"As each moment wafts us higher,

. . . . . .

Till care and remorse are lost like motes in Light divine."

To gain this ascendency over earthly troubles and perplexities, our hearts must be like Sun-dials that "do not count hours unless they be pleasant." Verily, this old inscription, so common in Germany, is a well-chosen motto for such an instrument as the Sun-dial. And how beautiful and blessed a thing it would be, if indeed we could so engrave it on the tablets of mem-

ory, that in life we only remembered the good and pleasant, the unpleasant hours never counting it all! Think how deeply then we would drink from the source of All contentment. *Calmness* is another universal sign of the angel-face—"the keeping of the heart in the stillness of Grace, in the great deep peace of God in the very presence of immediate agitation." "Standing as Stephen stood, when anger burns, when falsehood lies, when earth is magnified, when heaven is slighted, looking above, looking beyond. This brings the Hereafter near enough for our souls to dwell in its eternal calm while the fretful things of the present flow by," and are lost for us in

"New thoughts of God, new hopes of Heaven."

Benignity is also a feature of the angel-look. "Without this there could be no resemblance to God Himself or to His dear Son. This is the one thing which, less than anything else, could be absent. This is the family likeness. For 'God is love,' and if He *could* assume any visible form, love and kindliness would shine conspicuously there.

. . . . And he that loveth not is not of God and cannot wear an angel-face. But those who, like Stephen, learn the lesson of love at the feet of Christ, and practice it among men,—those who return good for evil, who forgive all who trespass against them, as they themselves are forgiven of God, and seek the salvation of souls as men seek gold—they put on the image of the heavenly, they look like their brothers of the Upper Kingdom, they look what they are,—the "children of the King!"

Still another feature of the angel-face is *Fearlessness*, ... "A faithful fearlessness to truth and duty, without regard to any present personal consequences." And "this celestial courage *is* attainable in terrestrial scenes, if not perfectly, yet in large measure, and those who attain it will, by so much more, put on celestial resemblance and look on human scenes, as it were, with the face of an angel." Continuing to follow Raleigh's interpretation of the angel-face, I venture, as he says, to "give one more touch to the picture, and bid you remember if you would possess this face you *must look high, and far*. You must learn to look not

so much *at* things, as *through* them, to see what is in them, and what is beyond. Like Stephen, you must look 'steadfastly up into Heaven.'" That this should be the abiding attitude of our spirits we know from the command—"If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth." "Things above!" a paradox greets us here—for while, we can find them, in essence, everywhere, "in daily duties, and the commonest details, it needs the 'angel-eye' to discover them." This leads me to remind you, unless you have the angel-soul, you can never have the angel-look. Raleigh expresses this somewhat bluntly, saying: "To put the matter plainly, could anything more absurd be conceived than this, that a man should say, 'Now I am going to look like an angel!' If he has not got something of the angel-soul, he never can wear the angel-face. If he is not like the angels, he never can *look* like them. . . . . But never mind the face. Forget if you will that you *have* a face. I believe one face is just as good as another, or almost as good, for the expression of divine sentiment and emotion. Keep soul-bright-

ness, and the smile will, someway, ripple through. Keep soul-peace and fear or misery will not settle on your face. . . . . Love God with heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself. . . . . Have the angel within, and leave all else to come as it will. . . . . Be a Christian through and through, in belief and practice, among fellow-disciples, among worldly people, and the Lord your God will put His 'beauty' on you, in one or other of its many forms, and in some supreme moments of life, in suffering, in trial, in death, may give your friends beholding you the privilege and joy of looking as it were upon the face of an angel."

I think you know now, dear H——, what the 'angel-look' is, and I will resume the story of how I came to recognize that they who faithfully follow Christ are among those of whom we are told:

> "Angels He calls ye; be your strife
> To lead on earth an angel's life."

During the immediate months that followed my asking my mother if she had met an angel, I often brooded over the words—

wishing she would refer to them, but it was well-nigh a year before she did. And since a year must mean some progress in spiritual growth, if there be any love for the Lord Christ in the soul, I had during that time, by God's grace, learned enough submission to meet my daily duties with a cheerful face. Thus it happened that there came a day when just as I was starting for a morning round of music lessons, my mother smilingly asked: "Daughter, have you, too, met angels by the way?"——How the memory of that day comes to me now, with the distinctness of an event only yesterday by-gone. It was an autumn morning, the air crisp and clear, the outline of the distant hills sharply defined against the blue of the sky—shadows lingered in the valley.—The river went hurrying on its way bearing on its flowing waters the reflection of a cloud, that floated up from the eastern horizon, which was still rosy with the flush of early day. But it is my mother's face I see most clearly, it was so calm, so bright, so full of peaceful trust. No wonder her words sent me forth with the gladness of a smile in my heart. Alas—before noon-time

the gladness had gone, like the dew from the flowers. It proved such a trying day, I returned at night-fall utterly dispirited—with a heart full of complaints against the hardness of life, and my own special portion of it. But when I saw my mother, complaints melted like snow in April—and drawing a low chair to her side, I laid my head on her dear shoulder, saying: "Tell me, little mother, are you my angel?—Tell me, can we really meet angels by the way?"—Oh, the light in her face as she replied: "Yes, really—are we not told in God's own Book, 'He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways"?—And softly she added: "Sometimes I think these angels of ministry are as many as our varied needs of comfort and support, but only the soul wherein faith abides can recognize their presence, only the ear of faith can hear their tender whispers."

"And I am too discouraged to either behold or hear," I murmured, and my hand nestled into mother's, as though the feel of her clasp in return could help me—and it did! Its pressure grew firmer as she said: "Perhaps one trouble is that you fail to

understand real confidence in Bible truths is expecting from our Lord all He has promised to give us—and this expectation applies to the most humble, trying, and homely duties, as well as to the seemingly great, for in spiritual things we have no measure for great and small, and—

> "Strength for to-day is all that we need,
> For there will never be a to-morrow;
> For to-morrow will prove but another to-day,
> With its measure of joy and of sorrow."

After a custom of mother's, she was silent then, leaving her words to take root in my heart before she took up again the dropped stitches of our 'angel-talk.' "You ask," she presently said, "what angel I meet, when tempted as you are now, child, to indulge in bitter repinings. It is the Angel of Patience that comes at such times, and—

> "There's quiet in that angel's glance,
> There's rest in his still countenance.
> . . . . . .
> Ills and woes he may not cure,
> He kindly trains us to endure.
> . . . . . .
> And makes our own our Father's will!
> . . . . . .

He walks with thee, that angel kind,
And gently whispers, 'Be resigned.
Bear up, bear on, the end shall tell
The dear Lord ordereth all things well.'

"If you really believe," mother continued, "that 'the dear Lord ordereth all things well,' you have in your heart the foundation-stone of a patience nothing can rudely shake, even if sore trials come; holding firmly to its supporting power, the angel Patience will help you to find pain transformed into an angel visitor."—And again mother repeated a simple verse, that made her meaning plain:

"As I looked on Pain, my shadowy guest,
Her face was shining with a heavenly light,
And tender as a mother's sweetest glance;
And then she spoke with soft and loving tone—
'No cruel foe, dear child, but truest friend
I come, commissioned by thy risen Lord,
To purge thy dross and draw thy heart above.
Were life too sweet, heaven would be all forgot,
For only weary souls will sigh for rest.'"

Just then we were interrupted, but before mother left me, she found time to remind me of the One Higher than all angels,

whose promise is—"Lo, I am with you always."

"And if you have Christ's abiding presence in your soul," she said, "then truly you will hold converse with angels, for surely they will be where He abides—and to our earthly understanding they are typified by pure, holy thoughts, and faithful, earnest deeds done from love to Him, our Lord."

With these words I will end this story of that long-ago conversation, hoping the memory of it that stays with you, may be a repetition of the felt presence and nearness of the angels, like that my heart has known, ever since I first saw the look of wondrous peace on my mother's face. And by way of help to this, remember the line,

"Our acts our angels are."

Acts! they are the important things—and they are the outcome of what we are in heart; they tell better than volumes of words can, whether the angels who dwell with us are the ministers of good or of evil, for "if there is evil in us it will attract evil, and work toward evil; if there is good in-

us God will make it serve His glory. The streams are quite beyond us, we never know where they go; the fountain is ours, and if the angel of sweet charity is to stir its waters, we must keep them holy and pure, and this we can only do by keeping close to Him who can turn bitter waters into sweet." Yes, the important thing is that our daily life and conversation bear witness that we have angel companionship; this is worth more than any number of thoughts, and fancies about the angels who "encircle us constantly, either with a curse or a blessing. A blessing for those of the girded loin, and the burning lamp, but a curse for the idle and wicked." "But the curse need not be a permanent thing, for it will turn into a blessing, if as we open our eyes to behold the angels of the outer world, we also open the door of our hearts to the angels of the inner world, that sometimes come in garbs so unlike our preconceived idea of the robing of God's messengers, that verily as we bid them enter we prepare to 'entertain angels unawares.' But though there may be angels who come to us thus veiled, we can always know the Angels of

Innocence, Opportunity, and Time, and of Prayer and of Deeds, for they will be sure to make their presence known," and "they are angels with hands full of immortal gifts," and our way to obtain these gifts is to seek them with Jacob's determination, crying: "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me."—Make no delay in thus pleading, dear H——, for the Angels of Time and Opportunity are with you now. And remember though the gifts offered by the Angel of Opportunity often seem accidental, our preparation for such opportunities and the ability to use them when they come are among God's purpose and will for us. . . . . "Oh, let us then receive and use aright the fleeting hours the Angel of Time grants us for the fulfilment of the service the Angel of Opportunity calls us to render. To do this we must regard each new day as a fresh unstained gift from God, and wrestling with it earnestly from its earliest dawn, say to it, 'I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.' Oh, hallow it while it is yet unstained and innocent in your morning prayer."

The Angel of Prayer is such a help to

this consecration of minutes and hours, and "Prayer is an angel whose wing is strong as an eagle's, and by faith we may 'mount up as on eagle's wings.' Be prayerful then, and you will win the strength, peace, and joy that with the Angel of Prayer enters the soul." What a solemn thought this leads to, for "what your prayers are you will be!" Remember this, and then pray "habitually, reverently, trustfully to your Heavenly Father" with the sweet confidence that He will make you "wise with the wisdom of an angel" (2 Sam. iii. 16). Out of the blessing He grants in answer to such a prayer comes our introduction to the Angel of Deeds, and—

> "Prayer and Praise with loving Deeds are holy,
> Words of praise will never serve instead."

For,—

> "Still as for Himself the Infant Jesus
> In His little ones asks food and rest."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Help us, Lord! not those Thy poor ones only,
> They are with us alway and shall be;—
> Help the blindness of our hearts, and teach us
> In Thy homeless ones to succor Thee."

I will not linger to point you to the many other angels we meet as we tread life's pathway, but I think you will *feel* them near, and recognize their presence as God's servants of old did. Remember Daniel, and how he exclaimed, "My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the Lions' mouth that they should not hurt me" (Daniel vi. 22). And Elijah when, "as he lay and slept under a juniper-tree, behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise, eat" (1 Kings xix. 5). And Gideon, who beheld "an angel of the Lord face to face" (Judges vi. 22). And Hagar, to whon the angel of God called out of Heaven, and said unto her, "What aileth thee, Hagar?—Fear not, God hath heard thee" (Gen. xxi. 17).

But I will not multiply these examples, rather I bid you ponder our Lord's promise and assurance that "He will give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. xci. 11). And in every time of your need they "will come and minister unto you." For, "though no vision is vouchsafed to our mortal eyes,—although the darkness does not move and flash around us with bright faces and glorious

plumes,—yet angels of God are with us, and to the pure heart every home is a Bethel, and every path of life a Penuel and a Mahanaim."——

Before we leave this subject you ask me to point you to the angels of the 'outer world'—those angels who "excel in strength that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word" (Ps. ciii. 20). A thought of Nature will give you a fuller reply than any words of mine can suggest, for "He maketh the winds His angels, and the flames of fire His messengers; the sun and the moon utter His knowledge, and the morning stars shout His praise" (Ps. civ.; Job xxxvii.).

"Oh, world, as God has made it! all is beauty;
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?"——

Still another suggestion you beg, and that, one which will help open your heart to the Angel of Submission,—which is found by "putting God between oneself and one's trial."—The angel who guides to this shield some call *Renunciation*, but I better like the truer title, *Resignation*. Do you

remember the lines addressed to this angel by H. H.?—

"Oh, wherefore thus, apart with drooping wings
Thou stillest, saddest angel,
With hidden face, as if but bitter things
Thou hadst, and no evangel
Of good tidings?

"Thou know'st that through our tears
Of hasty, selfish weeping,
Comes surer sun; and for our petty fears
Of loss, thou hast in keeping
A greater gain than all of which we dreamed.
Thou knowest that in grasping
The bright possessions which so precious seemed,
We lose them; but, if clasping
Thy faithful hand, we tread with steadfast feet
The path of thy appointing,
There waits for us a treasury of sweet
Delight; royal anointing
With oil of gladness and of strength!
O, things
Of Heaven, Christ's evangel
Bearing, call us with shining face and poised wing,
Thou sweetest, dearest angel!"

You will observe I have not dwelt on the Angel who comes to all, with no respect of person or estate—the Angel of Death!—Meet him we must—and we know not when

he cometh, but as surely as the leaves of the forest fall, when summer is ended, so surely he will come, but with him comes, thank God, the stronger angel, Life! Mightier than Death.—And when we come to the sepulchre, this dear Angel will be the one to meet us as he met Mary, saying: "Why weepest thou? Why seek ye the living among the dead? Christ is Risen, and His promise is, 'thou shalt follow Me.'" "Where I am, *there* ye shall be also."—

Then, dear H——,

> "Let us go on, go on,
> Still hoping ever and anon
> To reach one in the Better Land."—

For—

> "Christ is Risen, mercy every way
> Is infinite."——

I know no better ending to this meditation on Angels than the collect which reveals their all-encompassing nearness: "Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the service of Angels and men in a wonderful order, mercifully grant that as Thy Holy Angels always do Thee service in heaven, so by Thy appointment, they

may succor and defend us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

"Angels of light, spread your bright wings and keep
Near me at morn;
Nor in the starry eve, nor midnight deep
Leave me forlorn.

"From all dark spirits of unholy power
Guard my weak heart;
Circle around me in each perilous hour,
And take my part.

"From all foreboding thoughts, and dangerous foes
Keep me secure:
Teach me to hope, and through the bitterest tears
Still to endure.

"If lonely in the road so fair and wide
My feet should stray,
Then through a rougher, safer pathway guide
Me day by day.

"Should my heart faint at its unequal strife,
Oh, still be near!
Shadow the perilous sweetness of this life
With holy fear.

"Then leave me not alone in this bleak world
Where'er I roam.
And at the end, with your bright wings unfurled,
Oh, take me Home."

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