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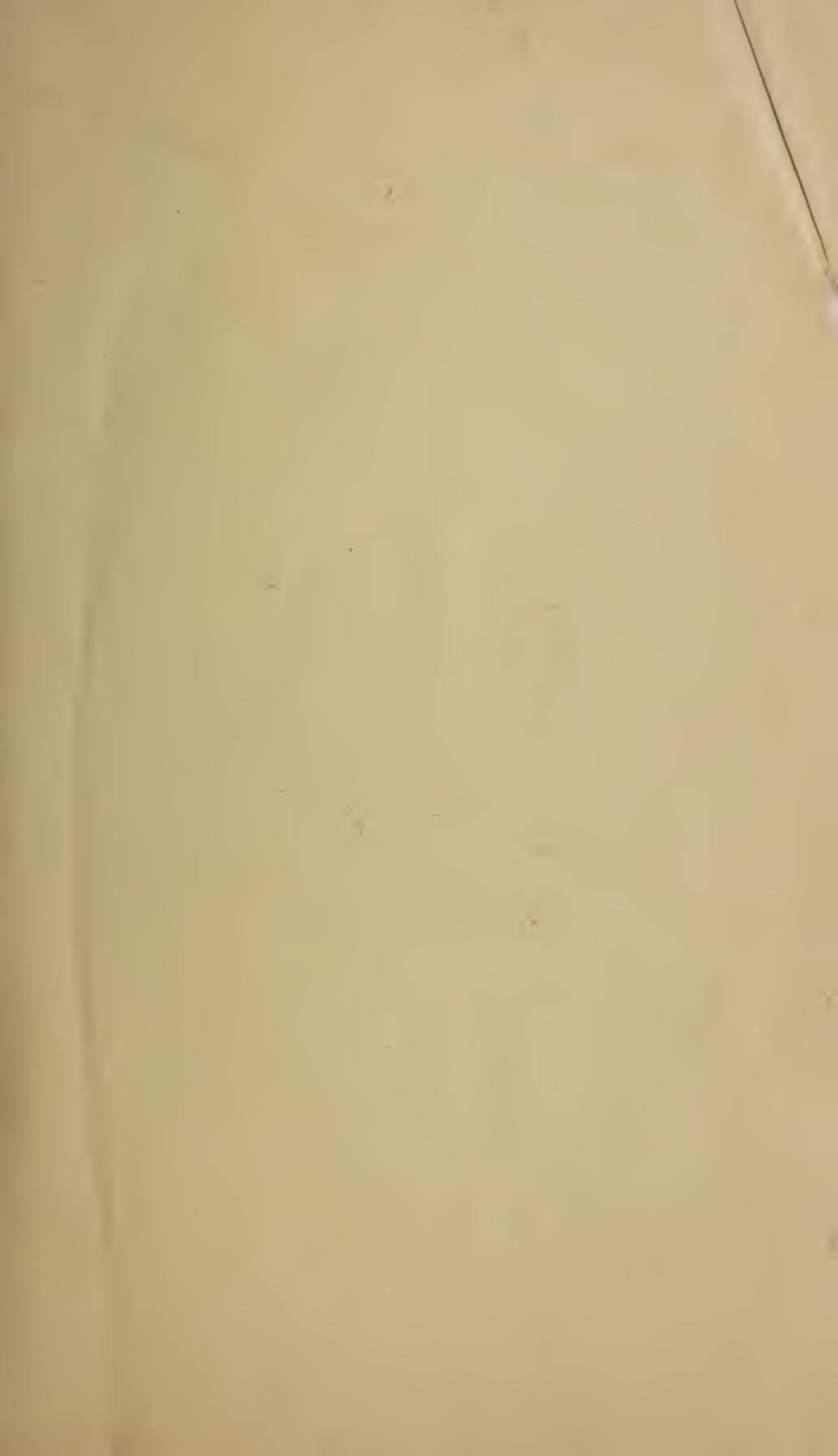
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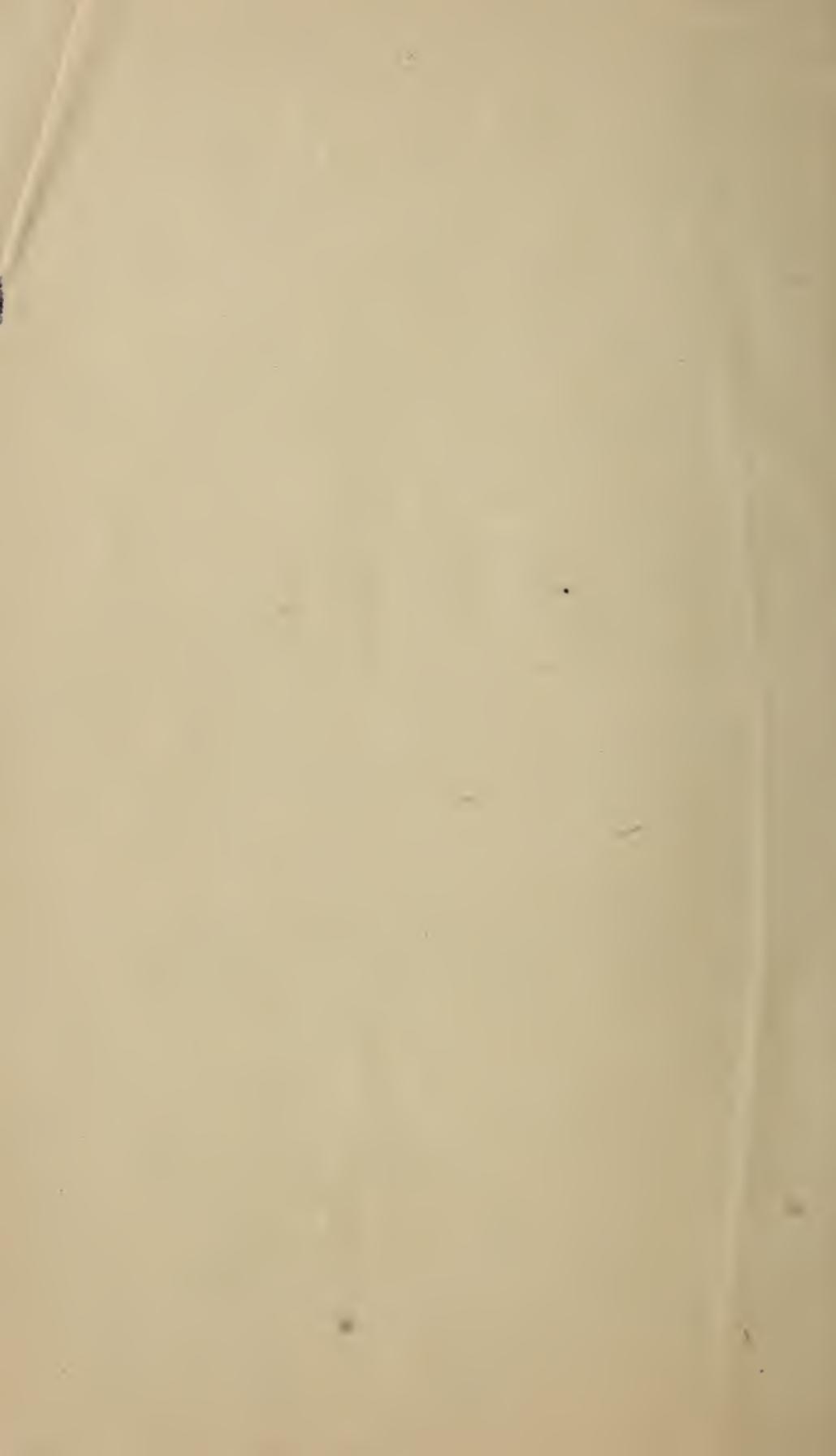
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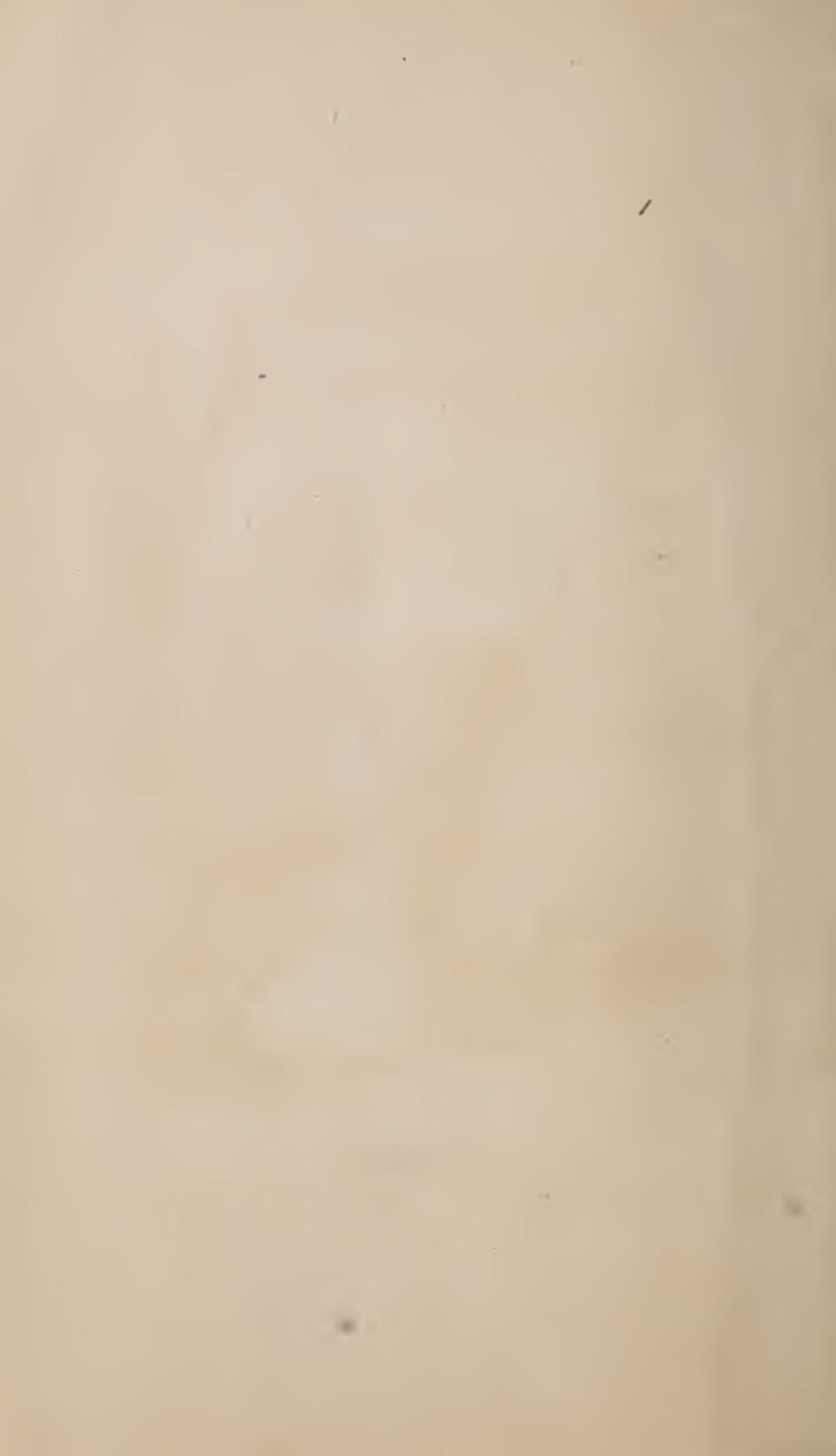
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As large sheaves may be gathered by diligence in picking up single straws, so much instruction may be gleaned from lessons on very humble subjects.

Things to be Thought of.

Addressed to the Young.

Wilson, Henrietta

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LITTLE THINGS."

2
6.5

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."
PSALM cxix. 59.



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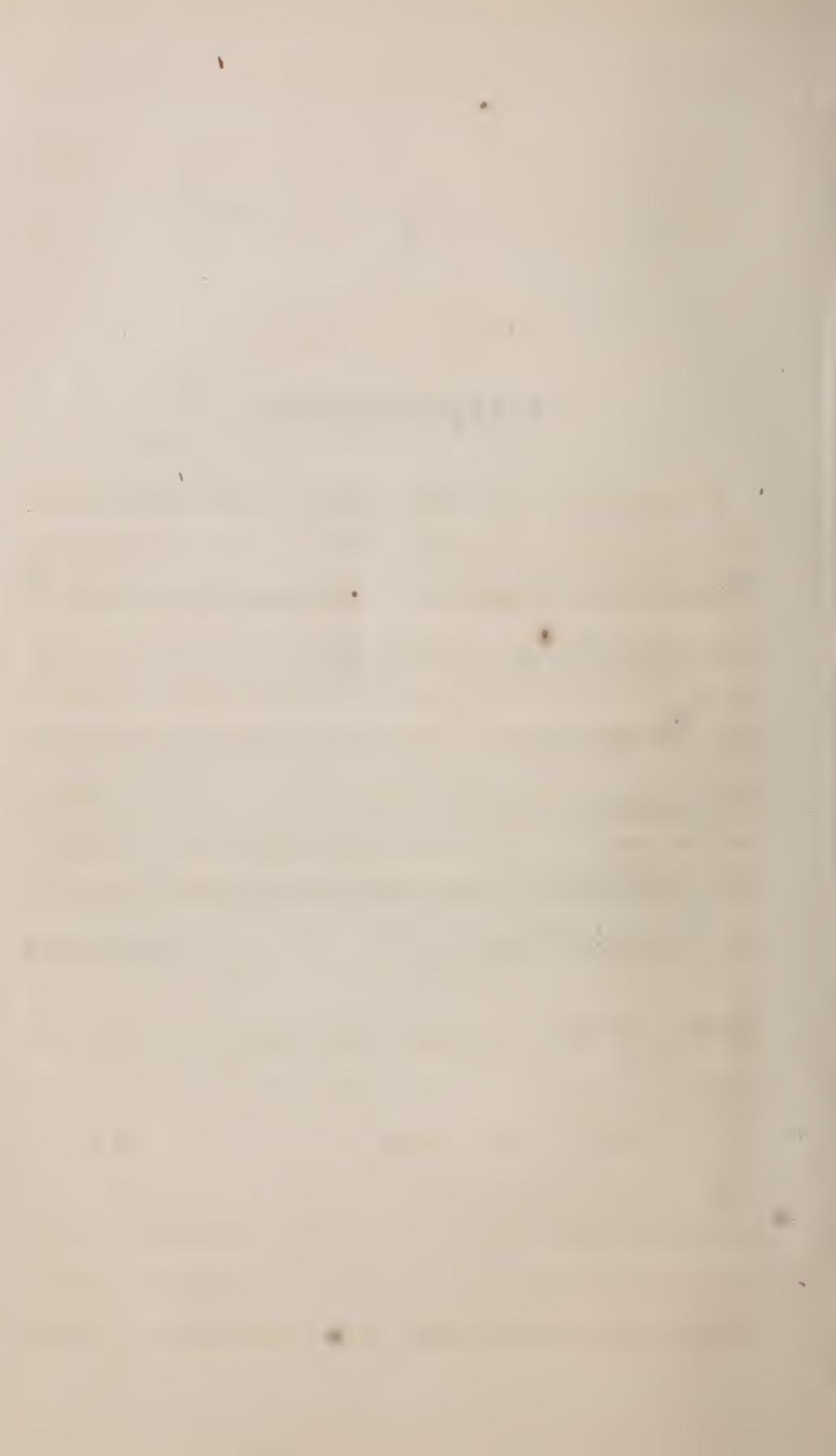
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INTRODUCTION.

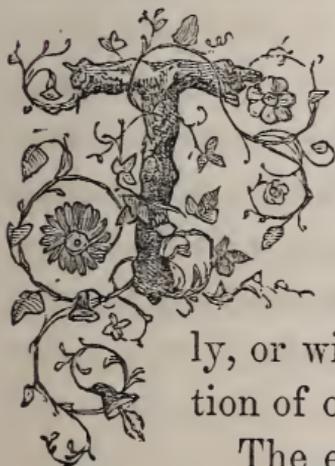
I FEAR too many of my young friends have never seriously asked themselves the question, "Why was I sent into the world?" They are content to live for their own pleasure, and rather feel as if serious thought on any subject was unnecessary at their time of life, and that as care and anxiety will come some time, perhaps their best plan is to enjoy themselves now, and let the future take care of itself. You may perhaps feel that it is a gloomy thing to be religious—that, at least, you would rather not think of it just yet—that it involves a life of constant self-denial, and so meanwhile you will enjoy the pleasures natural to your time of life, and when older, it will be time enough to think of these things. Advice and exhortation to such thoughtless ones, to consider the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the awful importance of eternity, are alike unheeded. They will not believe that true happiness and true

religion are the same, and that the service of God is perfect freedom, and debars his followers from no rational pleasure, from no pursuit that exalts and refines the mind. Yet they are not always satisfied that they are in the right—they do sometimes feel uneasy—there are times when conscience will be heard, and thoughts of misspent days and sad neglect of the soul's best interests will arise—too often, alas! to be put aside by renewed thoughtlessness and folly. But I would hope that some who may look into this little work may be, at least, *inquiring* what use they are of, or feeling that they are only standing idle in the market-place “because no man hath hired them;” and to such I would earnestly appeal, requesting them to consider their ways, and to resolve that, whatever others do, *they will serve the Lord.*

THINGS TO BE THOUGHT OF.

What do You Live for?

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”—*Acts ix. 6.*



HE quotation that we would thus press upon the young is inexpressibly important. It includes all we have to do on earth, whether as connected with this world's duties, merely, or with the most interesting question of our preparation for eternity.

The earnest seeking after the salvation, or complete sanctification of the soul, is clearly the chief work we have to do, a work leading to the great end of “glorifying God, and enjoying him for ever.” There is no condition or circumstances that we can plead as an excuse for neglecting this great work; for the command is imperative on all, “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;” and the Saviour's promise of acceptance is alike universal; “He that cometh unto me I will in no

wise cast out.” It is along with this first great duty, and as growing out of it, that we counsel the young to take a review of their circumstances, character, and capabilities, so as to endeavour to ascertain in what way they may best do His will in all things.

We all know and acknowledge that we are not sent into this world to live for ourselves, for our own interests or amusements—yet how many do so? And even of those who have from choice or circumstances been led to follow a more useful path, how few have first asked, “Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?” If we have been brought to feel that we “are not our own, but are bought with a price,” surely this reference of ourselves to the will of God will seem our most reasonable proceeding. If we have a sincere desire to know and to do that will, we need not fear that we shall be allowed to go astray. To those who are thus beginning life I would say, Take a calm, considerate view of your position, your advantages and disadvantages, your talents, your disposition, the station in life to which God hath called you, and try if you cannot, by those providential arrangements, ascertain in some measure what God requires of you.

Next to making an inquiry of this sort in the sincere spirit of wishing to know God's will, it is of importance that you should consider it as regards *yourself*. The question implies this also, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?" The field is wide enough for all to work in, but it is surely neither necessary nor possible that all should do the same work. Sometimes it happens that young people, in their zeal to do good, are eager to engage in schemes of visiting or teaching, because they see others thus engaged, without considering whether their calling may not be different, or their gifts lie in another line; and finding that they do little good, or can only attend to these self-imposed duties by neglecting others which they know to be incumbent on them, they grow discouraged, and are apt to fall back.

It is not, indeed, always easy to ascertain what we are fit for. Some by their zeal, or self-confidence, are led to attempt too much; while others, from diffidence, or it may be indolence, decline all but the simplest and most obvious duties. The rule that we generally do well what we like to do, will not hold here: for useful exertion generally implies resolute self-denial; and there are times when neither the

most zealous, nor the best fitted for the work, will like it. There *may* also, sometimes, be a risk of our mistaking our calling by supposing that if we are doing what we dislike to do, we must be doing what is right. There is, perhaps, no great fear of too many people being led astray by an excess of self-denial; for ten that will find out that what it is disagreeable to do cannot be their duty, one, perhaps, may feel and act as if the dislike to the duty made it *therefore* right for them to do it. Now if in thus endeavouring to find out what good you can do, you do conscientiously feel that it is not from indolence or self-indulgence that you dislike the work you have begun, I would say that you have less chance of being useful in it than some others may have, who having more natural capacity for it, take to it more kindly.

In the matter of teaching in a Sunday-school this may be often seen exemplified; for though an earnest desire to do good, and practice and preparation go far in making a good teacher, still these are not enough. There must be, I think, some natural capacity for the work, a power of being interesting to, and understood by children, that every one does not possess. District visiting, too, requires more

judgment and good sense than are always bestowed upon it. But besides these departments requiring more tact and experience than is usually found in the young, there are many to whom they are denied, either from their position, or from the wish of their parents, or from their other duties. To such, and indeed to all, who wish to begin to live for some good purpose, I would say, Take up the duty that lies nearest to you, however humble it may be. Do not let your desires to do much good prevent your doing a little when it is in your power, as the very training you will get by these daily endeavours will fit and prepare you for more extended operations, should God see fit to call you to them.

In this review of your fitness and opportunities for doing the will of God, you must take into account your condition of life as regards your self-improvement. Too many young people seem to think, that when done with school they have done with all they learned there, forgetting that all they have already acquired is but, as it were, the framework for a building yet to be begun, and which, day by day, their efforts and energies are to be employed in finishing. If God has placed you in a station of life

where no labour for your own maintenance, or that of others, is required, and where you have much leisure time, if you have received an education comprising accomplishments as well as more serious acquirements, it is clearly your duty not to lose the advantages thus bestowed upon you, but rather to cultivate whatever of the more elegant arts of life your talents lead you toward.

Though inclination or disinclination be not a safe rule in *duty*, the choice may now be in some degree allowed you as to which of your acquired accomplishments you will continue most sedulously to cultivate. If you are gifted with musical powers, or a talent for drawing, your own inclinations will probably lead you to follow out those delightful arts. For the sake of others, as well as for your own gratification, it is your duty to do so, and to resist the pleas of indolence or idleness which may make you fancy that you need not *now* practise either accomplishment with the diligence or perseverance you were required to put forth in their acquisition. The very fact that you now keep up and extend your acquirements and powers with comparatively little trouble, ought to make you feel it more incumbent on you not to lose them.

It may seem unnecessary thus to urge those whose natural talent for music or drawing would seem rather likely to need a warning not to let such fascinating occupations usurp too much of their time. But do we not too frequently see those thus gifted neglect the exercise or cultivation of their talent to such a degree, that to others, who long for some share in their powers, it almost seems as if a counterbalance were given along with the talent, so as to nearly equalize those who have and those who have it not? Even to those who feel that they have no particular talent for music or drawing, I would say, do not throw aside what you have learned, merely because others in the family may excel you, and because you feel that your powers, or acquirements, are of little use, and may therefore be dropped or disregarded. This is often done, and frequently regretted afterward, when what has been thus lost cannot be so easily regained, and when from altered circumstances even *your* music would have been acceptable, or your feeble artistic powers an amusement—at least to yourself.

I am aware that to those who have begun to ask themselves what they are living for, and on whose souls the overwhelming thought of eter-

nity has for the first time begun to exercise its full power, such advice as the above may seem trifling. They feel those hours misspent that are not in a more direct manner devoted to God and the good of others; and lamenting that their hearts are too apt to be led aside from serious thought, they fear to occupy themselves, or allow an increased interest in any earthly pursuit. I think, however, that those conscientious scruples may be met by considering, that in recommending the young to keep up the accomplishments they have acquired, it is not meant that such a course should be the purpose of life. These accomplishments are only meant as adornments; and before throwing them aside, let the question be asked—what shall be substituted in their room?—For relaxation and amusement of some sort the human mind must have; and too often, when debarred from innocent recreation, it takes refuge in frivolous gossip, or the dulness of apathy. “Do not,” it has been said, “altogether abandon your pursuits, but regulate them, and use every acquirement for God’s glory; wage no war with things innocent, but pursue them not till they become guilty.”

If cultivating accomplishments, under re-

striction is a duty, it ceases to be so when these are made the chief work of life. Yet how frequently do we see young people who seem to have no other purpose but to pass their time agreeably, and whose hours are filled up, and their thoughts occupied by nothing but fancy work, music, and dress, to the exclusion, not only of serious thought, but of all rational and intellectual occupation. Let such ponder the above advice, for while it is admitted that these things are innocent in themselves, and lawful and proper to be attended to, yet, if pursued as the *only* occupation, they become sinful.

I do not well know why, but fancy work seems to be less feared as an accomplishment by many who might think it wrong to spend hours on music or drawing. A young lady is generally considered industrious, if she is perpetually crocheting or knitting, or engaged in worsted work, or embroidering; while there can be no doubt that these are much less intellectual amusements than the fine arts, give less pleasure to others, and ought to occupy little of the time of those who can do better things. It is not now, however, considered so unfeminine as it once was, that a young lady

should both read and study for her own improvement. The silly accusation of being a "blue-stocking" need not now be apprehended if a lady is found to prefer improving her mind to the mechanical exercise of her fingers; nor is it now believed to be a necessary consequence of the love of reading, that a woman will neglect her dress, despise domestic duties, and talk inconsiderately of books which she may not understand.

The cultivation of the mind and its various powers is clearly a *duty*, being one of the means put into our power by which we may glorify God, and do good to others. Besides these more active exercises of our powers, the negative advantages of a cultivated mind are neither few nor small. I mean by these the freedom from the love of petty gossip, the power of employing one's-self, and the happy independence of outward sources of amusement, to say nothing of the growing power of the mind itself to gain new knowledge, and be interested in a greater variety of pursuits. One of the answers to the question we have taken as our motto may be—to cultivate, improve, and thus increase the mental powers bestowed on us.

One of the chief means of doing this is by reading. Now, though there are few tastes so valuable as a love of reading, and few people to be so much pitied as those who have it not, yet, like all other enjoyments, it needs a guard, both as to the time devoted to it, and the books read. It is a sad abuse of this love to expend it all on light or merely amusing works: yet how often does the expression "a great reader," indicate nothing more than such a course? Those who pursue it become, at length, so vitiated and weakened in taste, that all steady reading is disliked, and amusement alone is sought for in what ought to be one of our principal means of mental improvement. I am not sure but that the most general idea of the desirableness of a love of reading consists in regarding it as a mere amusement. Perhaps it is from the prevalence of this mistaken view, that, to many people, the idea of industry is only suggested by work, of however useless a nature; while hours spent in reading are considered to be, at least, but an innocent and amusing manner of spending the time. I would advise every young person to dismiss this false notion, and to make it a point of duty to read daily such books as will

require careful attention, to *study* sometimes, and *read* at others, and to consider no scheme of self-improvement complete unless it includes a little tougher work in this respect than they may always find amusing.

In recommending daily hours for steady reading, I would also advise some regular plan, both of study and of time, to be thus employed. Dr. Chalmers's advice on this subject was, "The first essential to a pleasant and productive employment of your time is, the regular and systematic distribution of it. This does not supersede the relaxations of society, domestic concerns, light reading, and exercise out of doors. The truth is, that the zest of the last is greatly heightened by the previous tension and fatigue which you may have incurred throughout those parts of the day which are given to the more serious pursuits of instruction and self-improvement. Regulate your hours, then; for it were quite vain to offer any advice to those who will not relinquish the habit of living at random, and living as they list."

There can be no doubt that this true cultivation of the mind adds to our usefulness, and often does so in a way we little expected. Permanent influence over the minds of others

is seldom acquired by any one of a frivolous and empty mind. There is, generally, in such, a sameness and *common-placeness* that make their society wearisome after a time, while there is a freshness and intelligent interest in a cultivated mind that enable it to maintain its influence over others, and thereby to draw them toward what is good. "In all labour there is profit," says Solomon; and though you may not at first find any good in what you have learned, beyond the strengthening of your own mind, you will, surely, at some time or other, find a use for all you have acquired. No one was ever heard to regret that he had learned too much; but many a one does regret that opportunities of acquiring knowledge were allowed to pass unimproved, inasmuch as now it would be useful or desirable. Therefore, "get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding."

It seems desirable, in some instances, to have a slight knowledge of some subjects of which a thorough knowledge cannot well be attained. I do not mean by this to advocate a young lady's getting a smattering of several subjects, so as to enable her to talk on them; nor do I mean to excuse the superficial, un-

persevering spirit that leads too many to fly off to a new study or pursuit the moment they are tired of what they are about. I mean rather, that we should cultivate a general and intelligent interest, and endeavour to acquire even a little knowledge of all important subjects, so as to have our minds awake, and ready to add to our store, should an opportunity offer, or should circumstances compel or induce us to turn our minds more in one direction than another. It is true, that without deep and devoted attention being given to one pursuit, no great or high excellence can be attained in it; yet how seldom is it in the power or capacity of woman to give this undivided attention? But because she cannot and ought not in general to give herself up to some one study or pursuit so as to make it her calling, is she therefore to yield her mind to trifles or mechanical handiworks?

Let me not be misunderstood as despising or undervaluing the truly feminine occupation of needlework. I would not consider any young lady as fully educated who has not acquired both a taste and a capability for sewing, not merely ornamental work, but good old-fashioned plain *white seam*. Our needles are not only

useful, but how often are they a resource that nothing else can supply! How many an odd, idle minute do they serve to occupy usefully; and when in the many hours of recovery from illness, or watching by the sick-bed of others, we cannot task our minds with even light reading, how pleasant an employment is needlework, either useful or ornamental, let those say who have tried it. May it not be one cause why men in general bear long confinement worse than women, that they seldom have any means for employing their *hands*, while their *heads* are incapable at these times of any great exertion?

Let us consider needlework, then, as among our *privileges*; and, certainly, if we excel in it, there are few accomplishments that can be turned to such good account, both as to variety of usefulness and variety of amusement. It is a *womanly* accomplishment, and therefore we should cultivate it; for though it may be a false and unnecessary fear, that attention to mental cultivation unfits a woman for her proper duties, still we ought to dread all departure from feminine habits and employments, lest it lead, in any measure or degree, to that dreadful character, “a *manly* woman.” “That is

so like a woman"—is too generally an expression of contempt; but while, by cultivating her reasoning powers, and acting in accordance with religious principle, a woman ought to seek to free her character, as much as may be, from *weakness*, let her never forget that to be *womanly* is the highest praise that can be bestowed upon her; for then only is she fulfilling the high and noble destiny to which God has called her.

On Completeness of Character.

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.”

THIS exhortation is from the *general* epistle of the apostle Peter, and therefore we cannot set it aside as not addressed to us; and the study of it must lead us to see how important to a Christian is *completeness* of character. There is no doubt a great diversity of natural dispositions, as well as of mental characteristics, and each and all of us should seek to know ourselves in these respects, that we may employ what is good in us to God's glory, and watch against the evil which, unchecked, would but too soon and too easily choke the good seed and make it unfruitful. But more than this is required of those who would “neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is a comparatively easy business, for instance, for the naturally gentle to bear provocation meekly, for the naturally

warm and ardent spirit to be zealous in a good cause, for the naturally quiet to be keepers at home and to mind their own business, or for the naturally active and energetic to “spend and be spent” for Christ.

It is right it should be so. When these natural gifts are sanctified by the Spirit, and made meet for the Master’s use, it is right that they should be dedicated to Him—it is right that each should bring an offering as the Lord hath blessed him—it is right that we should remember that all members have not the same office. But that, “having gifts differing according to the grace given us,” we should serve the Lord with what we have, neither envying those who are fitted for higher posts of usefulness, nor undervaluing those whom we may deem almost useless.

But we should not stop here. The apostle Peter shows us “a more excellent way.” We are required to *add* to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, &c. We are not, as it were, merely to grow in one grace, to be eminent in one field of usefulness, or to rest satisfied with attaining to greater completeness in the exercise of any one gift. As in the growth of the body, all the members must

grow equally to make it a perfect body, and none must be wanting, nor any one exercised into full vigour while the others are left unused and stunted; so in the growth of the soul all its faculties and powers must receive due cultivation, if we would seek to attain to the "stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." In studying the description given by the apostle of the graces that must be added, one to another, to make us "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," we feel that if any one were observed to be totally wanting, or even very weak, we would be apt to judge unfavourably of the consistency, if not of the Christianity, of another. If, for instance, we knew any one who professed to have faith, but was evidently wanting in virtue; or whom we knew had much knowledge, but failed in godliness; or professing to love God whom he hath not seen, yet loving not his brother whom he hath seen, thus *not* adding to godliness brotherly kindness, would we not feel a painful sense of incompleteness, a hesitancy even as to such a one having in reality even the one grace which he professed to have.

Let us deal thus with ourselves. Let us not

only avoid picking and choosing, as it were, what grace we shall cultivate and practise, leaning, as we should then naturally do, to what is easiest and most grateful to our dispositions; but let us go on diligently to *add* to those natural gifts, all that is here required of Christ's followers. It is not meant by this that all should do the same work, or that all will attain to the same perfection in any one particular. The differences of natural disposition and of providential arrangement will ever make this as unlikely as it is un-called-for. But seeing that amid all the endless diversity of God's works, the same completeness is manifest in each and all of them, so surely should we steadfastly strive after the like completion in the progressive sanctification of our own natures. This must be done, as it were, by a double work; for while the cultivation of all goodness is assiduously carried on, there must be an equally strenuous endeavour to eradicate whatever is evil. Each grace, each increasing degree of holiness, has its opposing sin to watch against, and vainly shall we strive to attain to the one; if, at the same time, we do not resolutely, and with earnest prayer for grace to help, struggle

to uproot the other. The graces of the Spirit must not be left to take their chance. We must never forget that they are like exotics planted in an uncongenial soil; and though we know that we are as entirely and completely dependent on God's Spirit for our growth in grace as we are for the first renewing of our natures and the implanting of these graces, yet here is the command, "Giving all diligence, *add*" to those graces; and while humbly obedient to that command, we shall be assisted and guided to its fulfilment.

It may seem unnecessary to remind any one that there is thus a double work to be done in cultivating our souls, that they may be as a well-watered garden, which the Lord hath blessed. But it is to be feared that we are sometimes apt to forget this; and while conscientiously striving by a diligent use of the means of grace to promote the sanctification of our nature, we are too apt to pull down with one hand what we build up with the other, from a want of watchfulness in striving against the opposing sin here alluded to. Do we not somehow feel as if our unbelief, or ungodliness, would yield easily and be subdued without an effort on our part, if only—

“In some favoured hour
At once He'd answer my request,
And by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest?”

But where would then be the warfare? Where the good fight of faith? Where the increasing sense of our own insufficiency and of the fullness that is in Christ? These lessons are to be learned when we find that our desired growth in grace cannot be obtained without a constant struggle to repress sin, as well as to cultivate holiness.

As there are natural dispositions inclining each to an easier performance of some part of their duty, so there are “easily besetting sins,” which seem to follow those natural virtues like their shadows, and tend either to lead us into extremes, or so to act as to counterbalance all the good effects of the others. The quiet and gentle are often timid and indolent—the active and energetic, rash and irascible; prudence may degenerate into selfish faint-heartedness, and even charity become false liberality, as when we excuse what is in its essence wrong. All these errors, and many more which will readily occur to the thoughtful reader, are alike opposed to that completeness of character

which ought to be the object of our earnest endeavours; and while we thus experience the difficulty of its attainment in our own case, we learn to judge others less harshly, and to wonder less at *their* inconsistency.

In thus, each for herself, taking account of easily besetting sins, we ought to include those to which we are liable from age and station. The "sins and faults of youth" we may think will disappear of their own accord; and so, meanwhile, the young trouble not themselves; hoping, if they give the subject any consideration, that they will *outgrow* all these things, or that circumstances will change them. Alas! too often there are no fears in their hearts.

This want of thoughtfulness is in itself one of the commonest faults of youth, and the origin of many more. To how many does the excuse seem a valid one, that "they never thought about it," and therefore they feel that they are free from blame. Did they but perceive how much their own improvement, mental and moral, suffers from this absence of thought,—did they but realize how it interferes with the growth in grace which we have been urging, they would surely watch against it, and feel as if it should

have been left far behind, as belonging to childhood rather than to youth.

It is true that there must a season of immaturity in what is good in the young, and that they must and do err often from inexperience, as well as from thoughtlessness. They are frequently led astray by their high spirits, till cheerfulness passes into levity and folly. But will added years and experience cure these things without their taking thought on the matter? I fear not,—for the truth of the proverb may be doubted, that “Experience teaches fools.” Is it not rather the wise and the thoughtful who profit by her lessons, while “the simple pass on and are punished”?

It is not easy, indeed, to see how we are to improve by merely growing older, without a thoughtful endeavour to learn the lesson each passing occurrence may teach us, or to lay up in our minds, till they are needed, the principles of conduct that may be acquired from a wise observance of what is passing around us,—from our own mistakes, from the example of others, or from the written or spoken experience of those who are older and wiser than ourselves. How otherwise shall we add “to virtue, knowledge.” How otherwise avoid becoming as crea-

tures moved by impulse alone, kind and amiable it may be, but, from want of *thoughtfulness*, in no way to be relied on as to action, or consulted with safety as to judgment. Does not a soul in this thoughtless state run the risk of the fault becoming habitual, and so resembling the hard and beaten wayside, where the good seed could find no root, and the fowls of the air quickly devoured it? This serious *thoughtfulness* and consequent growth in grace must indeed be the work of the Holy Spirit in us; but are we not commanded to be fellow-workers together with Him? While, then, we seek his aid and all-sufficient grace, let us remember that the effect of these will be to excite and enable us to make efforts, not to supersede them.

A trifling, frivolous youth will grow into a trifling and frivolous age, even though the objects of its frivolity may be changed; and it is to be feared, that even when the heart has been renewed and the bent of the mind is toward eternal things, the hurtful effects of such a disposition will continue to be felt and seen. Every thing that can enlarge and strengthen the mind should, therefore, be allowed a place in the studies and pursuits of the young. Let them not

too curiously inquire of what use will it be to learn this, or to know that; but try rather to keep what has been acquired till it is of use—remembering that the indirect benefit received is sometimes of as much value as any more palpable one can be. An uncultivated woman is apt, not merely to be narrow-minded and bigoted, but to become that most offensive of all characters—a religious gossip. Surely if there were no other recommendation to a cultivated taste, this would be one, that it often prevents, and is offended by, those gossiping ways and words, to which even religious principle alone does not always put a stop. Labour, then, for completeness of character in every spiritual grace and in every mental gift. Let the latter help and enhance the former; but let not your labour in either respect be self-seeking. Be not as Israel of old, who was condemned as an empty vine, for he bringeth forth fruit to himself; but bring all your gifts into God's storehouse, and prove him, if he will not pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room to receive it.

Another advantage to be gained by completeness of character, or even by striving after it, is a true admiration of, and value for the gifts

of others. The one-sided are not only prejudiced, but they really seem as unable to see, as they are unwilling to admit, the beauty and exemplary nature of those graces in others which are wanting in themselves. Those, however, who from experience have felt the difficulty of attainment, or those who, by reason of their having attained, are able to appreciate excellence, can, and do admire the good that is in others. If it is true "that no man can be really appreciated but by his equal or superior;" and if it is also true that "there is nothing by which the mind is more impoverished than by a habit of undue depreciation," it must follow as a matter of course, that a want of that hearty and sincere appreciation of the gifts and graces of others, must result from our own inferiority, and must often hinder our own spiritual and mental progress.

Fulness of mind gives a readiness in resources which is most valuable, whether it be acquired for the benefit of others, or is used only for our own advantage. When the habit is once acquired of earnestly seeking to profit by every means, there can be few, if any, circumstances in which we can be placed, where this

great work may not be carried on. To some, of a quiet and even tenor of life, this may seem a small benefit. But to many, a ready power of adaptation to circumstances is a most desirable habit, and one which is greatly increased and facilitated by that completeness of character we are inculcating, which, place it where you may, will ever find materials whereon to work, because it has within itself materials to work with.

It will not, as we said before, and never can be the effect of this spirit of progress to make all alike, either in development or sphere of duty. The spirit must be the same, the aim the same; but as our circumstances, dispositions and duties vary, so will our experience, our trials and temptations differ; but while we are thus going on in the same path, let us not be forgetful of that brotherly kindness and charity, which will lead us not only to admire excellence of any kind in others, but to practise forbearance, and to feel sorrow for, rather than bestow blame upon, these shortcomings. If the advantages and consequent progress of some are not our own, neither are the temptations which lead to the falling away of others. Let us endeavour to help forward

both. While we willingly give place to, and seek to imitate the one, let us consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted, and be careful to put no stumbling-block or cause of offence in our brother's way.

Earnestness.

“Covet *earnestly* the best gifts.”—1 Cor. xii. 1.

IF asked what is the best or most hopeful mood of mind for carrying on the great work of life, I would say *Earnestness*. We all know what it is to be thoroughly in earnest about something, and we all know how much more easy of accomplishment that something is, when we are so disposed. For the concerns of the soul it is indeed of vital importance, being spoken of in Scripture under the terms, *upright, sincere, perfect*. It is opposed to all formality, sloth, or trifling,—those besetting sins that too often eat out the life of our prayers and praises, our confessions of sin and purposes of amendment. Above all, let religion be a thorough work, and let earnestness characterize all our efforts, remembering the apos-

tle's exhortation, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."

This earnestness is also opposed to doing things by fits and starts, as it were, which makes the religion of too many so fluctuating, so unlike the scriptural description of a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But though of infinite importance to our progress in religion, indeed essential to our being religious at all, this earnestness will be found to be necessary in all we undertake, if we would avoid the habit of trifling, or the danger of being superficial. Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well, is a maxim which must be regarded in two ways: first, be sure that what you are about is worth doing, and then take care to do it earnestly, however slight it may be. The exquisite and perfect finish of the smallest work of God may seem to show us, that what he designs to do cannot be beneath the notice and imitation (feeble though it be) of his creatures. We have also an illustration of this principle in works of love. We would fain give of our best, whether in substance or labour, to those we love; we do every thing for them "as well as we can;" and surely if we could achieve the attainment of doing *all*

to the glory of God, we would not willingly offer to him that which cost us nothing, but would rather be willing "up to our power, yea, and beyond our power," to make all we do perfect.

There is a plan which may be generally found available in our endeavours to do earnestly whatever we are about, and it is to task ourselves, as it were, to fix times for what we have to do, as well as the things to be done ~~in~~ those times. Who has not felt the listlessness of taking up work that may be done at any time, or a book that one does not require to finish? And who has not experienced the wandering of mind, so apt to follow, as we fancy we should be doing something else, or desire we had something else to do? There is so much of woman's work that comes under this head, so much done either to pass the time, or for the mere sake of doing something, that some such self-imposed law of doing things at a fixed period, and forcing one'sself occasionally to do what we are not inclined to, just because we have fixed to do it, is necessary to give a stimulus to the mind, and really makes our most trifling occupations more profitable than they can be in themselves, because we are acquiring, by this means, a little steadiness of purpose and resolution.

How often is the excuse made to ourselves, "I am not in the humour to do so and so;" or "I do not feel like it;" or how often does the cowardly thought arise, "After all, I am not obliged to finish this," till inclination being thus idly indulged, all habits of application and earnestness of purpose are lost. The counsel Dr. Chalmers gave to his students, to follow Dr. Johnson's advice as to composition, may be usefully observed in many minor matters. Dr. Johnson, in reply to a question put to him relative to the business of composition, whether, ere one begin, he should wait for the favourable moment, for the *afflatus*, which is deemed by many to constitute the whole peculiarity of genius, said: "No, sir; he should sit down doggedly." And, be assured, that there is much of substantial, and much of important practical truth in it. Whether it be composition or any other exercise of scholarship, I would have you all to sit down doggedly; for if once you bethink yourself of waiting for the mind to do it, the risk is that the mind to do it never may come. Substitute "waiting till we are in the humour" for the more high-sounding "*afflatus*," and then we, too, may practise the above advice, and find it useful.

Another use of this system of doing even self-imposed duties at fixed hours, is the prevention of much waste of time, odd half-hours being too often spent wondering what to do next; whereas a well-laid scheme would lead us from one employment to another without those idle intervals, and enable us to accomplish far more than by desultory efforts. Perhaps our young friends may feel that this is too much like the school-life they have, perhaps, just left, and that it takes away the feeling of liberty of action which certainly gives a zest to our occupations. But if we, while here on earth, are always to be labourers, why should we object to take the benefit of some of our school habits along with us; and, besides, I speak of *self-imposed* rules, and this makes a great difference in our desire to keep them.

“In truth, the prison into which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is.”

It is not meant that you are to tie yourself down so rigidly to set times of occupation, that nothing can be allowed to interrupt you. That can rarely be your duty, as many family and social calls and necessary interruptions must be allowed for, and, indeed, included in your

plan. You must, therefore, use it only as a guide to keep yourself from idle, trifling ways, never as an excuse for refusing to take your share in all the home and social intercourse, and assistance to others, that is your duty. I have heard of at least one tiresome individual, who was so tied to her own rules, that her family and her friends had little benefit from her society, *unless* it was sought for exactly at the time she had fixed for social intercourse. If you called and wished to spend an hour with her, she was obliged to leave you because the time for her daily exercise had come. Did you meet her out of doors, and wish her to prolong her walk because the day was fine, or because you had not met for a long time, no persuasion would induce her to stay one minute beyond the appointed hour for exercise. So rigid was she in thus sacrificing every thing to her own rules, that one of her friends used to declare that she was sure she fixed and kept to a certain number of mouthfuls of bread, when she partook of any refreshment of the kind. No such rigid and selfish adherence to rules would I recommend to the young; for though I do say that you should keep up as much as possible your school habits of regular employment, and

strive to be daily adding something to what you already know and can perform, yet your system must now embrace others as well as yourselves, and your first duty is to study how best you may fill the station in which God has placed you. This will not prevent your having abundant leisure for your own pursuits; for it may be observed that it is not only the best humoured, but the most industrious member of a family, that has time to attend to all the rest, and to whom, indeed, all the rest somehow get a habit of appealing for help. The idle have no time to spare. Be sure then in any scheme of steady occupation you lay down, to include in it largely the claims others have upon you, not merely the sick and poor, but your own family—not merely your parents, but your brothers and sisters. It is but too common to see in large families the daughters devoted to nothing but themselves. It matters little whether it be to their own gratification in rational pursuits, or to their own amusement; for if, in either case, the welfare, the comfort, or even the enjoyment of others of the family is unheeded, can that young person feel that she is living to the glory of God, or doing her duty to those among whom he has placed her,

that she might be "the helper of their joy," as well as the useful friend? Oh! what a boundless import has this one word "usefulness." Its effect may reach through all eternity; and surely, did we consider its extent, and realize that, by one means or another, the power of usefulness is a talent given to every one of us, we should tremble under the responsibility, and make it a matter of earnest prayer and constant effort to see where and how we can best employ it, and should grudge no time or labour that may increase so great a gift. The power of usefulness, like all God's gifts, increases by exercise. Let us not despise the humblest and most mechanical offices in which we may help others, while we remember that there is no mental acquirement so high, no enlargement of mind so extensive, but that we shall find it, if we seek to do so, a means of greater usefulness. Let all your acquirements and efforts tend mainly to this great end of making you more useful in your day and generation, whether it be by advice, assistance, or example; and remember, that as you cannot be very useful unless you are loved, it is a duty to adorn your usefulness with all the graces of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace," &c. Take care, however,

not to forget, that while these higher exercises of the power of usefulness are the most important, the more quietly and unobtrusively you exercise them the better; and remember to make use of your humbler powers in the same way. Be daily doing something for others—at home especially. Let your desire to be useful show itself in the kindly consideration of their smallest concerns; but be yourself, as far as possible, content thus to serve others, without parade or unnecessary bustle.

On Diligence.

“Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

EARNESTNESS in all we do has been alluded to as a most desirable state of mind, and from it would follow, as the natural result, diligence in doing. As there is an acknowledged difference, however, between always saying something and always having something to say, so is there between always doing something and always having something to do. The constant frittering away of time, the useless industry, the “lethargic assiduity,” of many who are yet always doing something, can hardly be called diligence. Yet, as they are never idle, one cannot help wishing that such busy idlers had actually something to do.

From the frequent commendations of diligence in the Scriptures, and the many promises attached to it, we may gather, that the exercise of this quality extends to the higher concerns of the soul, no less than to the daily business of life. Much instruction may be

gained from many verses of the Proverbs on this subject, for though many of them refer in the first place to worldly diligence, there is a deeper spiritual meaning in them. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Prov. xiii. 4. This is certainly one of those, and from the contrast drawn in it and others, between the slothful and the diligent soul, we should take warning as well as encouragement, and may often be thus self-convicted of want of diligence.

How apt are we to be satisfied with good desires—with wishing well! We seem to have almost an idea that this is enough; that the graces of the Spirit will flourish under this as under culture; and while thus desiring, how apt are we to forget that, all the time, we "have nothing." Oh, these lazy wishes! How they do rob us of the comfort, and strength, and growth in grace, that are here promised to the diligent soul! It has been said, "Let the same earnestness and solicitude, the same diligence and perseverance, with which some favourite worldly object is pursued, appear in our religious conduct and in our devotion, and we shall soon find, 'that the effectual, fervent

prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' ” Diligence in studying the word of God, in prayer, and in attending on the ordinances of religion, cannot be profitable, if not done with that earnestness of spirit which alone makes the difference between real diligence and heartless formality. The following counsel from the pen of Archbishop Leighton is so beautifully explanatory of what diligence in the concerns of our souls implies, that I cannot do better than extract it :—

“ For the entertaining and strengthening of spiritual life, which is the great business of all that have it :

“ 1st. Beware of omitting or interrupting those spiritual means that do provide it and nourish it. Little neglects of that kind will draw on greater, and great neglects will make great abatements of vigour and liveliness.

“ 2d. Take heed of using holy things coldly and without affection ; that will make them fruitless, and our life will not be advantaged by them unless they are used in a lively way.

“ 3d. Be active in all good within thy reach. As this is a sign of the spiritual life, so it is a helper and a friend to it. But wouldest thou

grow upward in this life? Have much recourse to Jesus Christ thy head. Wouldest thou know more of God? He it is that reveals the Father, and reveals him as his Father, and in him thy Father.”

There is another branch of this spiritual diligence that I would urge upon the young, and for that also I would refer to a text in Proverbs: “The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.” If asked what is implied by the common term, “a diligent use of the means of grace,” would not the answer be: a regular attendance at the house of God is one of the chief of these means,—reading the Scriptures and religious works is another. But it is not to the means themselves, but to the diligent *use* of them, that I am now alluding; and is it not the case, that in spiritual things we too often resemble the slothful man who roasted not that which he took? What else are we doing, when we hear and read, nay, are even keen and earnest about these means of grace, and yet apply them not to our own souls, or let what has most impressed us at the time soon slip out from our remembrance? It is no great proof

of diligence, to love to hear the truth set forth in glowing and earnest terms, and to be roused and excited by thus hearing for a time. But, alas! what becomes of all we hear or read—delightful though it be? Even as the excitement of the chase is unto the slothful man! Do we not too often derive as little benefit from it, as he did from that which, when found, was useless from the want of a continuous course of diligence? Let any one look back a year, and sum up all the opportunities of good, the Sabbath-days, the sermons, the books read, the trials and mercies, in short, all the means of grace he has enjoyed, both spiritual and providential; let him compare with these the actual amount of benefit derived, and will not the result be a most humbling one?

To those who are earnestly striving thus to “give all diligence” to those higher and more important matters, I would say, carry the same spirit into all you have to do. Beware of a sauntering, listless way of setting about any work; looking more as if you had nothing else to do, and, therefore, were only doing that meantime, than if you were really at work. Get done with whatever you are about. The circumstances were very peculiar that justified

Penelope in weaving her endless web; and there is nothing more opposed to diligence, than the system of dawdling for ever over some one thing that might have been completed long ago. Remember that activity is part of diligence.

Another great recommendation of this virtue is, that it really seems to add time to those who practise it. Burke says, "Thus much is in favour of activity and occupation, that the more one has to do, the more one is capable of doing, even beyond our direct task." Do not, however, mistake bustle for active diligence, nor undertake more than you can do without having to hurry over your work. In such a case you not only run the risk of doing every thing in an unsatisfactory manner, so that it has to be done again, but you yourself suffer from the uneasy feeling of having left undone much that you had undertaken. Work *undertaken*, but not *overtaken*, is oftentimes a heavy burden to a conscientious person, who perhaps has erred in overrating his powers of action; and from thus being, as it were, obliged to hurry and get into a bustle, his diligence, praiseworthy though it be, fails to accomplish all that he desires. Quiet diligence does the

most work. We certainly do sometimes meet with people who never seem to be doing any thing—who have leisure to attend to many things, and to take an interest in what is going on around them—and who yet contrive to get through a great amount of labour.

Both earnestness of spirit and diligence in action, in worldly matters, need a guard, lest they induce the habit of being so engrossed by the one thing uppermost at the time, that no interest is felt in any other. All other matters must yield to that one object; and it is well if the more serious consequence of neglect of other duties does not follow, as well as the lesser evil of being considered a bore in society, or an unsympathetic friend in private. In all schemes for the diligent use of time, there should be a large margin allowed for family and social demands upon us. That time ought not to be considered as lost that has been occupied in thus promoting the happiness, by entering into and sympathizing with, the daily joys and sorrows of those among whom we dwell. The presence of young people in a house is generally considered to add to its cheerfulness, as well as to its activity. Let my young friends consider it as a *duty* to be thus cheerful, and to make

themselves generally useful ; and without yielding, on the one hand, to that mistaken diligence which is, in reality, only selfish devotion to the whim of the moment, avoid, on the other, all listless idleness or sluggish inactivity.

There are many hours in every one's life during which the claims of social intercourse occupy our time ; but now-a-days there is not the same stiffness and formality shown in visiting that there was ; and it is seldom necessary, for females especially, to sit with the hands continually idle when thus engaged. Needlework, and all kinds of ornamental or fancy work, may be then carried on ; and it is wonderful how much may be done by diligent hands in those odd moments of time. Never to be without a piece of work to be taken up while chatting, is a good rule for those who have much time to spend in this way. In spite of what I have elsewhere said of the *superior* importance of intellectual pursuits to a constant employment of the hands alone, I do think that diligence with the needle is a most important duty for every female, if it did nothing else but enable her to fill up even the social hours with pleasant and profitable occupation.

To those who are diligent, there are few losses

more grudged than that of their time, as it is only by method and regularity that they can get much done. Any interruption to this method often throws back several occupations which were waiting for their turn to be taken up; and one is apt to feel fretted at being thus interrupted, and of having, in consequence, still to look forward to work unfulfilled, and to burden to-morrow with the additional duties of to-day.

If this interruption, however, is unavoidable, and not your own fault, beware of losing your temper as well as your time. Endeavour cheerfully to take up what has been thus, as it were, brought to you, as you will generally find that your chosen work does not suffer in the end. It would be well, too, on these occasions, to take a lesson for our own conduct toward others, especially in the matter of punctuality as to time. I believe as much time is daily lost by want of punctuality as is stolen by that proverbial thief—procrastination. If you feel chafed, and with reason, at being kept waiting after an appointed hour till you have to neglect some other call of duty, resolve that *you* will never so waste the time of another, or of many others; for it is seldom, indeed, that

only one is a sufferer by having to wait for an habitual loiterer. Truly, time is one of the substances of a diligent man, which is precious.

In a certain degree, more can be accomplished by a diligent spirit who has, according to the common expression, "many irons in the fire," than when there is one absorbing object of pursuit. In general, the duties of women are of a miscellaneous nature, and it is seldom her calling to be devoted to one pursuit; but though there may be, and perhaps ought always to be, some work in which a paramount interest is taken, (besides the one great duty of seeking the glory of God, our own salvation, and that of others,) this need not interfere with a diligent employment of the rest of our time. For this purpose a variety of occupations is desirable; and she who can do so many things, is most likely to be the one who does the most. It is true that, with this facility of turning our thoughts and our hands from one thing to another, there is frequently combined the bad habit of beginning but never finishing—of taking up a pursuit only when fancy impels, and deserting it when some other novelty attracts us. This habit, so subversive of all true diligence, cannot be unknown to any one who

yields to it. Let her just look into her work-table, and other repositories, and see how many unfinished things are there—stockings half knit, trimmings half worked, articles of clothing half made, sketches unfinished, music begun to be copied, but either words or notes wanting—and then let conscience say whether these are the results of a diligent hand. What is worth beginning is worth finishing, or it must be worthless indeed. At all events, it is useless in an unfinished state, and your labour and your time have been alike wasted. This habit, however, is so frequent, that I would recommend young people to have periodical times of reckoning with themselves,—say once a week or once a month—seek out all unfinished deeds, and allow yourselves no new occupations till these are completed, and deal resolutely with yourselves in this matter.

On Influence.

“Let us therefore follow after things where-with one may edify another.”—*Rom.* xiv. 19.

THERE is no subject, perhaps, upon which the young think less, nor one on which, from its importance, they ought to think more, than that of *influence*. Direct, or indirect, we all exercise it—we are all under it, and whether consciously or unconsciously, we are ever bearing about with us, or are open to, influences manifold and mighty for good or evil.

The general idea many entertain of influence is, that it is the power of persuading another. Active influence is all they think of. They see not, think not, perhaps believe not, in the mighty power of unconscious influence. If we were fully aware how much we ourselves are influenced by the unconscious power exercised over us by others, we surely would feel it a duty to watch ourselves that at least we do not injure others. We do not like, it may be, to admit that we are thus swayed, thus formed by any thing of which we are unconscious. We

would rather admit, that where we have not acted from our own sense of right and wrong, we were influenced by actual advice or instruction openly received from others. But the fact is undoubted, that there is such a power as unconscious influence exercised and received by us. Few young people think of it; very few are able to trace its effects when they do think of it; yet it should be made a subject of deep and solemn thought by all; for since capability of giving and receiving impressions is one of the conditions God has imposed on us, will he not demand an account of the use we have made of it?

No one doubts that we are thus accountable for the *direct* influence we exercise on others; yet too many try to shuffle off that responsibility by alleging that “they have no influence”—they are too young, or too insignificant, or too ignorant, to possess such a thing. It is thus they sometimes succeed in blinding themselves to the guilt they are contracting, by indolently and from self-indulgent motives refusing to use one of the powers given us for good. Advice and entreaty are means of influence, no doubt, though it is not to them I principally refer; but it were well if young people con-

sidered more seriously their mutual responsibility in this respect.

Those who have felt the supreme importance of eternal things—who have been led by the Saviour into the narrow way that leadeth unto life, should surely do what they can to persuade others to go along with them. Is there no younger sister or friend, with whom you can thus plead? None of your own age who will be more likely to listen to you than to older advisers? It has been said, and truly said, “It seldom happens that we are very strongly influenced by those much older than ourselves. It is the senior of from two to ten years that most seduces and enthralls us. He has the same pursuits, views, objects, pleasures, but more art and experience in them all.”

The influence here alluded to seems to be merely worldly in its objects, but I quote the passage to prevent the objection being made, that young people can do little in the way of swaying their companions, for if their influence be thus powerful for evil, may it not be often so for good? At all events, it is worth trying, conscious, as all must be, that it is too often neglected more from apathy, indifference to the souls of others, and a want in ourselves of

earnest, lively faith in the great truths we profess to be guided by, than from having no one who may be induced, by our advice, to enter upon the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace.

“No man was ever yet convinced of any momentous truth without feeling in himself the power, as well as the desire, of communicating it.” And, surely, those truths which concern the salvation of our immortal souls are “momentous;” and, if thus believed, will we not assiduously seek to impart them to others? Let your manner be gentle—avoid every appearance of harsh dictation, or of self-sufficient superiority—but show that you are in earnest by abstaining carefully from the slightest levity on sacred subjects, (a fault into which not a few fall,) and, in general, try entreaty rather than advice. The former is not so easily evaded, and more rarely gives offence.

After all, it is chiefly by example that we influence others; for I am not talking at present of *instruction*, but of that unconscious good or evil we give and receive from all that passes around us, especially from the actings of others. It may seem that to be always on

the watch to exercise this power for good, and to abstain from its exercise for evil, would produce a constraint of manner, a bondage, in fact, too heavy to be borne; and generate, likewise, a perpetual self-inspection which is any thing but favourable to our mental or spiritual health. This is, undoubtedly, best promoted by looking out of ourselves to the cross of Christ, to his example and his revealed will, and ever remembering that, while "duties are ours, events are God's." The fact, however, that the influence of example is, in general, one which we exercise unconsciously, may prevent this fear, though it should also operate as an additional reason for careful consistency of conduct.

We are not to do good merely that others may be led to follow our example; neither are we to forget that, when we are perhaps least aware of it, our deeds and words may be helping or hindering an immortal soul in the way to life everlasting. The responsibility of this influence we cannot lay down, and are unable to shun. It attends our actions like their shadow, but we seldom see or know whom it has affected, or whether it has done so for weal or woe. Oh! let us, then, be careful how

we walk ; for light and transient as the impressions we make may seem, we know not which of them may remain to eternity. There are often *waverers*, those who may have begun to think, but whose tendency toward what is right is so uncertain, that a look or a word may be sometimes enough to make them falter on their way, but who would take courage and go on if they met with a steadfast character, whose example would encourage and fortify them. If these undecided ones see you, who profess to be guided by the highest motives, acting inconsistently with that profession—trifling your time—unwatchful of your words—eager after this world's wealth or pleasure—careless of the souls of others, and selfish or exacting—will they not hold themselves absolved from being much in earnest about what you thus seem to show you do not regard as of any great importance ?

Do not say as an excuse that you make no profession, and that therefore you are not answerable for the expectations others may form of you. If it be indeed the case that you make no profession, are you not greatly to blame for not doing so ? Are you not thereby influencing others to be ashamed of confessing that

they are the followers of Christ? And are you not in danger of incurring the awful doom denounced by him against those who shall be ashamed of him and of his words? The phrase "making a profession" is too often misapplied to those who make a talkative or outward profession, and content themselves with mere lip-service; but the dread of making a profession often arises from cowardice. The fear of ridicule is as potent as the dread of dishonouring the holy cause—which is often the ostensible reason given for silence—and the evil rests not upon our own souls alone, but upon those around us, who may become fatally infected by our faint-heartedness. On the contrary, an honest avowal of our sentiments—a quiet but decided and consistent profession—does embolden and encourage, does influence and sway, those who are just beginning the Christian life; while it may not seldom be the means of leading such as are careless on the subject, to consider their ways.

You must expect, it is true, to meet with ridicule and opposition. But remember, when tempted to be silent when you should speak—or to comply when you should stand firm—that you know not what "little one that be-

lieveth" on Christ you may be "offending," or what timid and doubting soul you may be encouraging and strengthening by the influence of your example.

If we really felt it to be a fact, and a serious one, that we thus know not, and probably never will know, all the consequences for good or evil of our own actions, we would less frequently indulge ourselves in what is at best *doubtful*, under the plea of "just this once." That once may be the turning period in another's history who may see or know of us only "this once," and may never lose the impression then made. He may know nothing of our habitual course of life; and however unfair we may regard it to be judged of by a single deed, or condemned for unknown results, yet as the influence thus exercised for evil would have been avoided had we not done what our conscience disapproved of that "once," are we not in some measure responsible for such unfaithfulness?

While I would thus seek to impress the young with a sense of responsibility as to the influence they cannot help exerting over others, as well as in regard to more direct influence with respect to the things that concern their eternal peace, I would also wish them to remember

that this silent effect follows them equally in all their every-day duties. Who has not felt the enlivening, the brightening influence of a day's contact with a cheerful mind? Our cares seem less, our hopes brighter, our efforts more vigorous, our thoughts less desponding, than before; and yet, though we may have met with sympathy, we have not received either advice or assistance to account for such a change. It is chiefly, if not entirely, the effect upon us of another's cheerful, hopeful heart.

Who has not left the sick-room of some poor, patient, yet contented sufferer, humbled at the thought of how often we have fretted over trifles, mourned over slight ailments, or grumbled at very small inconveniences? Ah! let not thus even the sick and suffering say that they are laid aside from usefulness. They know not how often their Christian cheerfulness, their patient endurance, has humbled and yet encouraged the hearts of those who witnessed them. Their *influence* is a talent still left them to be used for God's glory. The reverse of all this takes place when we are thrown much into contact with gloomy, easily-depressed, or discontented persons. They mean no evil; but besides their own discomfort, they

would do well to remember that they may unconsciously be damping the spirit and depressing the hearts of others, by yielding too much to these moods of mind. "A merry heart," says Solomon, "doeth good like a medicine;" and as the young in general possess this as a prerogative of their years, let them use it to cheer the care-worn and disconsolate hearts of those whose burdens are heavier than their own.

Besides, being careful what influence we exert, we must also guard against that which we ourselves receive, and for this purpose some study and knowledge of ourselves are requisite. There are some who are most apt to be influenced by companions—others by the books they read—many by the incidents daily occurring around them,—and as each class of causes may be productive of good or evil, we should watch well their effects upon ourselves. It is often scarcely possible for us to withdraw ourselves from society or circumstances, which yet we feel to be injurious to us; but if we are in the path of duty, in the sphere where God has placed us, we need "fear no evil." A double portion of grace to help will be necessary, but it will assuredly be given, if earnestly sought for; and a more vigilant watch over our own

hearts will be required when we feel conscious that there is an enemy within but too ready to open to the insidious influences from without. Let us beware, however, of placing ourselves in situations of temptation, and then hoping to be preserved from danger, for there is no promise to those who thus "tempt the Lord." If we find that certain habits, certain society, certain books, exercise an evil influence over us, we ought certainly to lay them aside, even if by so doing we have to deny ourselves what is pleasant, and what to others may be harmless.

Have our young friends never felt that some books, some circumstances, have made impressions on their minds that they cannot shake off, and that are never effaced? These impressions are influencing them, whether they think so or not. Unconsciously, it may be, they are thereby either roused to more activity, or betrayed into more thoughtlessness; and are thus led either to seek a nearer walk with God, or (fearful alternative!) are hardened into cold indifference; and even when the causes have been forgotten, they may have left effects on their characters that will benefit or injure them *for ever*. "Take heed," then, "how ye hear." Take heed also what you read; and be not only

earnest and diligent in seeking to secure good for your souls from whomsoever you come in contact with, but faithful in avoiding, when possible, all that may harm them.

At the risk of being thought to descend to too trifling details, I must just give a hint on the subject of resisting the influences of *petty annoyances*, which are of frequent occurrence, and sometimes unavoidable. Hence it would be well to exercise a little self-control regarding their effects.

It has been well said, "There are two classes of things we should never fret about—what we can help, and what we cannot." It is not the aged person or the invalid merely who has felt depressed and irritated by such things as a continuance of bad weather, an east wind, a cold morning, or, most provoking of all, a bad fire. Now, we cannot help the first-named evils. Our climate is pretty sure to try us with them very frequently, and it were certainly wise to watch against their inward as well as their outward effects. If our cheerfulness and good humour, our pursuits and pleasures, are thus left at the mercy of an uncertain atmosphere, alas for the boasted happiness of our hearths and homes!

Plenty to do, and a diligent spirit with which

to do it, are the great preventitives of these idle repinings. We should learn the happy art of "setting traps to catch sunbeams," by resolutely looking at our many comforts and blessings, instead of fretting over discomforts that cannot be remedied, and thereby infecting others with our own discontent, or at least making them almost as uncomfortable as ourselves. It is childish, to say the least of it, thus to be influenced by comparative trifles, though, of course, where it is in our power, we ought to surround ourselves and others with cheering influences. Let us, therefore, keep not only bright fires burning on our hearths, but bright hearts and kind words to make these firesides happy.

On Wandering Thoughts.

“I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.”—*Psalm* cxix. 113.

“When I detect myself in unprofitable revery, let me make an instant transition from dreaming to doing.”—*Dr. Chalmers.*

WE are too much in the habit of considering the wandering of our thoughts as an unavoidable and allowable infirmity. Though we regret our inability to control them, we seldom resolutely endeavour to do so, but leave the chance of our thoughts following any subject to depend on their interest in it for the time—much as foolish parents trust to the obedience of spoiled children, *i. e.* when they *like* to do a thing. It has been said, that by regular and proper discipline, our thoughts may be brought into such obedience that they will not only fix themselves when required on any given subject, but do so at regular periods of the day. How this is to be done is not so easily determined; but surely we must all feel that it is desirable. There are times when every one must have felt this mischievous habit most distressingly,

namely, in reading the Scriptures and in prayer. At such periods how earnestly do we wish for a cure for what we then consider to be sinful and irreverent! Surely, then do we feel that indulgence in this habit of mind brings its own punishment. Besides the sense of sin left on the conscience, what practical good can we get from either reading or prayer, when the mind is thus wandering, so as to leave no possibility of a deep or serious impression being made? This should be one great argument in favour of a constant and resolute strife against this state of mind, for the benefit of such self-government will not be confined to secular pursuits, but must extend to our most serious studies and exercises.

What I believe is generally meant by wandering thoughts is really a difficulty, almost amounting to an impossibility, of controlling the thoughts at all. The mind seems like a pathway crowded with passing travellers; and if asked what we are thinking of, we justly answer "*nothing*"—no impression is made, no connection between the ideas exists, and, in fact, we are not thinking, although wandering thoughts may seem of their own accord to come and go. No direct mental effort appears

to do any good; indeed, it is not till we attempt to fix our attention on a book or subject that we become aware of our state of mind. As this is the most common, so it is the worst form of wandering thoughts, and the one most difficult of cure. Much may be done by resistance, but unfortunately this mental condition brings along with it a desire of indulgence and an indolent sense of amusement that too often plead for its continuance. We lay down the book, or cast aside the subject demanding thought, because our minds desire to wander, and thus, to many, this state becomes habitual. To those who are endeavouring to obtain some control over their minds, I would say, never willingly indulge this state of wandering thoughts. It is quite as idle an amusement as sitting at a window watching the passers by. But do not lay aside the book, or resign the occupation, in hopes that your mind will be steadier at some other time. Do not betake yourself to some mechanical employment, merely that you may let your thoughts wander at their own free will.

The great cure for this useless frame is, no doubt, to have the mind much occupied with solid and useful knowledge and reflection.

This not only drives away vain thoughts by pre-occupation, but strengthens and disciplines the mind against this wandering habit. Even lesser helps may be found useful—such as fixing the attention for the time by writing, or learning by heart, or, where practicable, by reading aloud. If while reading the Bible, or in prayer, we thus find our minds are, like the fool's eyes, "in the ends of the earth," some assistance is often obtained by thus using the voice; and learning a few verses by heart, or seeking out and writing down parallel passages of Scripture, frequently arrests and fixes the thoughts, and helps to produce and deepen serious impressions. After such discipline the mind is more easily kept steady.

A second description of wandering thoughts may arise from pre-occupation of mind, and this we sometimes feel to be inevitable. There are, no doubt, times or events which properly exercise such an important influence over us, that no other thought seems admissible; but, at present, I am not alluding to that condition of being during which such frequent and careful thought is a duty. I am referring, rather, to that state generally known as absence of mind. Any one, who watches his own men-

tal feelings, must be aware that this frequently arises from mere want of control, and not altogether from the engrossing nature of any ruling subject of thought. Even when it does so, however, it were well could we learn to turn our minds at will to other subjects. It is often necessary and desirable to be able to do so, both on our own account and that of others.

When we find one subject is apt thus to engross the mind and exclude every other, I think it may be advisable to treat this kind of wandering thought differently from the former. Yield to it sometimes, set yourself to think about it. If it is painful, look at it resolutely, and see if it can be amended; if pleasant, indulge what is gladsome and grateful; if perplexing, ponder over it, and commit it, by earnest prayer, to Him who alone knoweth the end from the beginning, and *leave it there*, whatever it be that thus engrosses you. But consider, also, whether you have done all you ought, and let thought lead to action. While thus thinking, endeavour always to see what spiritual benefit you may derive from the circumstances under which you are placed, and how you may act so as to glorify God. Having thus, at proper times, given your mind leave of absence, as it were, reso-

lutely set yourself to some employment that will engage the thoughts as well as the hands, and refuse admittance into your mind of the predominant feeling, as a forbidden guest for the time. Unseasonable thoughts, though good in themselves, are still wandering thoughts, and so must be refused admittance.

There is a third description of wandering thoughts which are very fascinating, and which, likewise, have their times when it may be lawful to indulge them. I allude to the suggestions, associations, analogies, or memoirs, occurring to our mind while reading some work of interest or genius, or while revisiting, after long absence, some once well-known spot. It is delightful to follow out a train of thought thus awakened, or to linger over some old association till the present fades from our view, and we live again among those who are gone, and seem to see once more the scenes we loved so well of old. We should, indeed, beware of strengthening a habit of idle revery, however fascinating; but, surely, there are times when this may be indulged in, and when so doing cannot be considered unprofitable either to the head or heart. I do not, however, include building castles in the air among my permitted

reveries. The future may be given to us, but the past is still, in one sense, our own; and much that is profitable, as well as pleasing, much that is encouraging, as well as sad or soothing, may be found there when sought in a proper spirit. It never can be useless for a Christian thus to look back, and consider all the way in which God has led him.

But I must not forget that I am writing for the young, to whom looking back can seldom be the sad luxury it is to those of mature years; so I will only advert, further, to the class of suggested thoughts, which ought sometimes to be followed out. If they occur during the time devoted to steady reading, or while actually studying a subject, it were better to take a note of them to be thought out afterward, than to allow them to lead away the mind at the time. You will never travel far along a road if you run into every opening glade you pass, merely to see where it may end.

There is no remedy more effectual for the cure of the first-named class of wandering thoughts, than to have the mind well filled with useful knowledge, with something, in short, to think about which is not vain or trifling. And, surely, our reflective faculties were given

to us for a nobler use than to run to waste and bring forth weeds, which weaken their productive powers and choke the growth of all serious, earnest thought.

Let us remember, then, that it is mentally as well as morally true, that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Minor Morals.

“Let all things be done decently, and in order.”—
1 *Cor.* xiv. 40.

“Decision and propriety in the smaller movements of life is a great constituent to comfort.”—*Dr. Chalmers.*

THERE are many points of duty, coming up in our daily intercourse with others, that involve principles of social duty by no means unimportant, and yet too apt to be overlooked.

In our social visits to friends, how many little offices of kindness can be performed which will take nothing from the pleasure we give or receive, and yet will greatly ease whatever trouble our presence may occasion? The proper care of the room we occupy—the avoidance of unnecessary calls on others to serve us—the making the best of any little crosses or annoyances—and the rendering of little services wherever they will be useful and acceptable—are among the things to which I refer.

In visiting, the habits and tastes of the family should be as much studied by the guest, as the amusement and pleasure of the guest

are studied by the host. Much has been written on the subject of hospitality, but a good deal might be said on the proper enjoyment of it. Every one knows what a pleasure it is to have a visit from one who seems to fall naturally into the ways of the house—whose cheerful, accommodating temper makes every thing done to please her seem the very thing she likes best—who is not too eager for excitement or amusement, can bear to be disappointed in prospective plans, and, capable of finding occupation for herself, never hangs heavy on your hands. My young friends, therefore, should, while visiting, seek to be as much as they can the givers of pleasure to those with whom they sojourn, as well as the recipients of it.

There is yet another source of small annoyances from young guests which I desire to point out, to induce them to avoid it; for, like the others I have mentioned, few will tell them to their faces of these petty faults, and yet they will blame them behind their backs. I allude to untidy habits and ways of doing things. Look at a room where a young lady of this slatternly kind has been at work, the sofa cover rumpled, the tidies crushed, her work littering one corner, an open book on the mantelpiece, the music

scattered over the piano, her writing or drawing materials left on the table in confusion, and frequently her bonnet and gloves lying where they had been tossed down when she came in from walking, instead of being taken up-stairs! If the lady of the house has to exercise a constant oversight to keep her drawing-room in decent order, what must be the toil and torment of those who have to look after matters up-stairs! Of course all these faults are equally bad at home; but many, who from the family habits, or from being under the check of parental superintendence, cannot indulge them there, give way, when absent from home, to thoughtlessness and inconsideration, and thus fall into the bad practices alluded to.

To keep our engagements—no matter how unimportant they may seem—is a moral obligation, the neglect of which often occasions much irritation. To put others to inconvenience on our account by an engagement, and then without any sufficient reason, or from mere whim or caprice, to break it, is a clear violation of duty. We have already referred to a want of punctuality as a serious fault. We allude to it again to say that it is especially annoying in relation to social worship and meals in well-

regulated families. To be in season for a journey, or walk, or reading, or at family prayers, or at breakfast, or at public worship, and indeed whenever a precise time is fixed for the observance of any duty or the fulfilment of any appointment, is a rule of universal obligation.

Young persons *from* home are apt to overlook little duties toward those they leave *at* home. There are sympathies between parents and children, brothers and sisters, which should be carefully cherished. "To write home," at suitable intervals, is a little matter, perhaps; but if we are conscious that it gives pleasure, should we suffer indolence, or forgetfulness, or procrastination to prevent our doing it? Should we not, on the contrary, be glad to give those we love some share in our enjoyments, by exchanging on paper those expressions of affection and sympathy which our separation will not allow to be otherwise uttered.

Be careful and particular on the subject of small debts. There are few things more annoying than recollecting such things afterward, except having to pay them for others. Coach-hires, postages, a small sum borrowed because you had forgotten to bring your purse out with you when walking, trifling commissions exe-

cuted for you: all these are apt to be forgotten, and left unpaid; and as they are seldom asked for by those who have accommodated you, it becomes you to be doubly watchful, lest you forget to repay them.

Will it be thought strange if *dress* is alluded to, as among the "things to be thought of" by the young; or is there quite enough of consideration bestowed on that subject already? I mean, however, by the thoughts on dress which I wish to inculcate, something different from what is generally understood or practised in this matter; and perhaps my suggestions may save some from thinking so long, or so incessantly upon it, as they are apt to do.

First, then, let me say, that the frequently expressed, though more seldom believed, maxim, that it is of little consequence what we wear, is not true. It *is* of considerable consequence, and so most people would think if they heard all the inferences and innuendos that are drawn and hinted as to their characters, from their style of dress. Besides the indispensable attention to cleanliness and neatness, there ought to be thought bestowed upon suitability to the station and age of the wearer; there ought to be attention paid to the goodness of the materials

purchased; and there ought to be enough of observation of how others succeed in being becomingly dressed, to enable us to do so likewise. Let this expression, "becomingly dressed," be taken in its widest sense, as including the above hints, and not merely as referring to personal appearance, and we cannot go far wrong in our practice. Attention to economy in dress is another of the "things to be thought of" with regard to it, and this is not always to be attained by buying cheap goods. Dresses judiciously selected as to colour and materials last longer, as well as look better, than "bargains" do; and it is a doubtful point if two cheap dresses last as long as one good one. The love of bargains, however, is not very common to the young. They need guarding rather on the points of squandering money upon superfluities, and of carelessness, or waste of what they already possess. This is a sort of thoughtlessness very contrary to a true, a Christian economy, as to those means given to us as stewards by God, and for which we are accountable to him. If by a little self-denial as to new purchases, or by a little more care of what we already possess, we can afford to serve others, surely we cannot doubt the duty of do-

ing so, or excuse the selfishness that precludes us from this power.

In the matter of taste in dress, there will be, of course, a diversity of opinion. It seems to come naturally to some persons, and to fly from others all the farther the more they labour after it. Plainness and simplicity are pretty safe rules for attaining it. A quiet and inconspicuous style of dress is generally ladylike.

I may conclude this subject with a hint to the effect, that we would do well sometimes to consider, in purchasing for ourselves, what use we can afterward make of our cast-off garments by giving them to others; and to let this consideration lead us to the plain and useful, rather than to the showy and flimsy. It is not at all necessary, in following this hint, that a lady should dress herself meanly; but those who know how valuable to many of their poor and humble neighbours is the gift of clothing, will gladly, I hope, avail themselves of even such a mode of "looking not only at our own things, but at the things of others," as to render them not only careful of their garments, but *thoughtful* in the purchase of them.

These hints are intended to apply chiefly to those whose means are not so ample as to place

them above the need of "thinking twice" on the subject, and to them may also be addressed a few words on the subject of economy. When first young persons become entitled to the dignity of *an allowance*, be it much or little, they should make it a rule to keep an accurate account of its expenditure, and they must remember that it is not inexhaustible. Some advice, too, should at first be taken as to this expenditure, for I could bring forward a good many laughable instances of the unprofitable investment of first-quarter allowances, that left the young purchasers somewhat at a loss for more essential articles.

Carefully avoid running in debt, however small the amount. The contrary habit is easily acquired, and it is a ruinous one, not only on account of its immorality, but of its power of deceiving; for the purchases that we pay for soon check themselves, while those for which we run in debt are soon forgotten, or it may be, are culpably allowed to slip out of our reckoning, when we come to consider how much we are spending, or how much we have to spare for some other purpose. If you cannot pay for what you need or wish *now*, wait till you can do so before you get it, or do without it for a time.

Better, far better, the temporary pain of self-denial, than the sin of wilfully or carelessly incurred debt.

Do not spend money recklessly and profusely upon any object. Do not mistake extravagance for generosity, for they are very different, and indeed incompatible things. Do not think, because you have little to spend, that you can stand in no need of this advice, or that if you pay for what you get, there is no harm done. Remember your stewardship,—your money is no more your own to spend as you like, than any of the other talents God has given you; and whether it is a small sum or a large one, it was not given to be squandered. Be careful at first, when the command of money is new to you, of indulging yourself in buying all you wish, just because you wish it, and can now pay for it. This is a selfish habit to acquire; so do not misspend your means on what you do not really need, merely from the love of buying,—and never buy trash because it is cheap. Do not grudge a little thought and trouble to enable you to regulate your expenditure properly, so as to enable you to give to others, as well as to fulfil your own reasonable desires and requirements. No scheme of expenditure

should be considered a right one in which there is not a liberal allowance made for the claims of charity; and no economy can be allowed any other name than parsimony, which saves from any other motive than to increase the power and privilege of giving more largely to those who need.

Economy, however, may be exercised on other matters than money. It ought to be applied to whatever is valuable; and in this sense of the word, economy of *time* is as necessary to be thought of as economy in money matters. A wise economist of either will not grudge necessary outlay, but neither will he waste or lose the one or the other. There is a sauntering way of doing things—a minute trifling in work—that, in reality, wastes as much precious time as more open idleness does; while there is sometimes a careless hurry, or a grudging carefulness in spending such time as perhaps we would prefer to employ on something else, that as effectually defeats the end in view as if we had omitted the duty altogether.

Among the many and important things that the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, desires them to “think on,” are included “whatsoever things are lovely and of good re-

port ;” and on this ground ought not good and pleasing manners to be more thought of and more practised by the young? It will not do at your age to say, that habit has so fixed your manner that you cannot alter it, and that as it means nothing, you ought not to be blamed for mere manner.

Think on these things, and you will find, I fear, that faults of manner almost always spring from faults of character or feeling, and can only be cured by attacking them at the source. Ignorance is a frequent cause of a faulty manner in the young. They are apt, under its influence, to give their opinions too decidedly,—to blame where they cannot see half the reasons or motives at work,—to have a self-satisfied and conceited manner, or an interfering and dictatorial way, that is most disagreeable and quite opposed to the humility becoming their years.

The forms and modes of egotism are so various and numerous, that they can but be referred to here. Assuredly this habit of mind, or fault of manner, is neither lovely nor of good report, but is one of so insidious a nature, and of such frequent occurrence, that I fear it is often unknown to the person exercising it, or never thought of as a fault at all. We are all

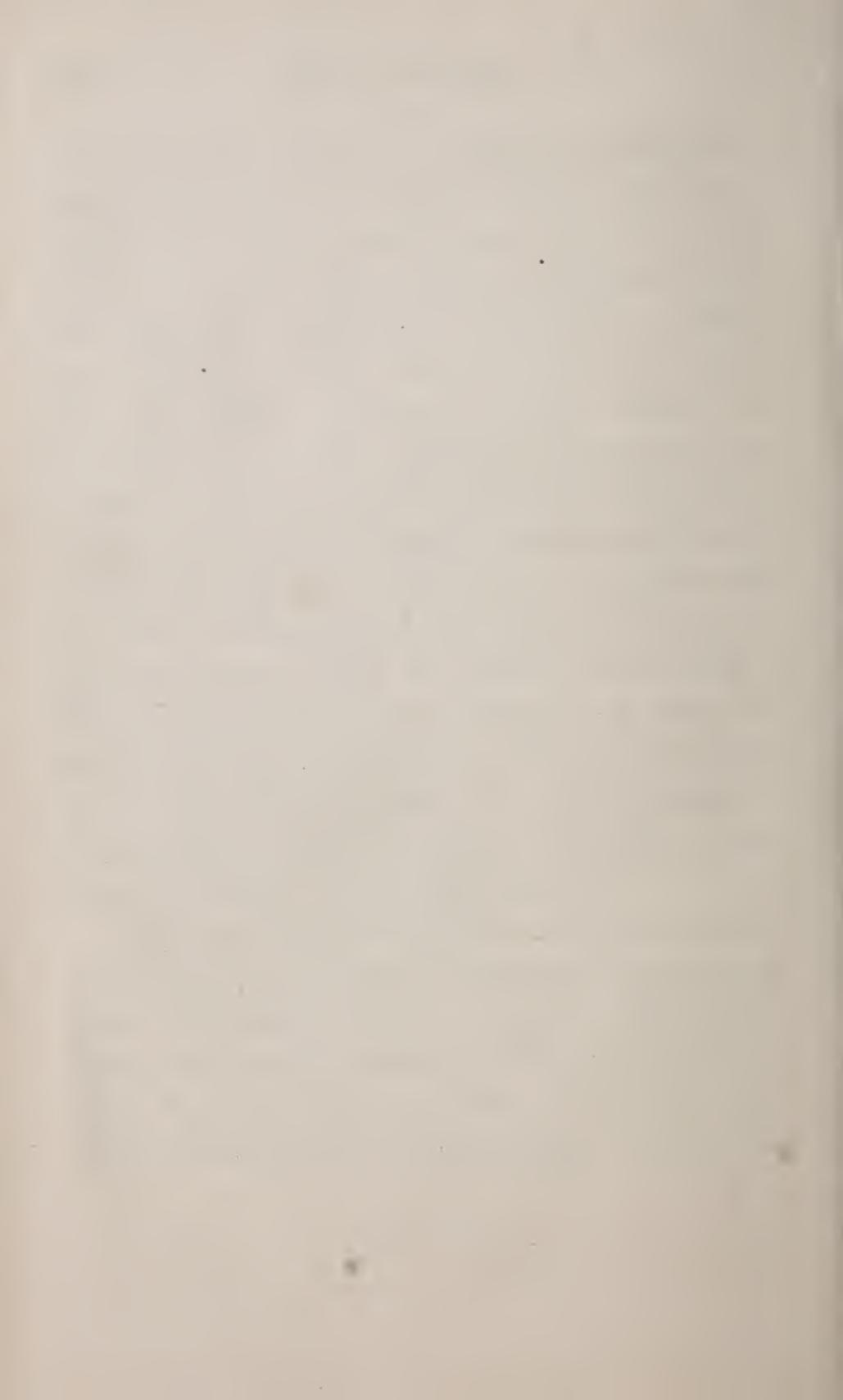
ready enough to condemn it in our neighbours, to blame it as springing from self-esteem, from disregard of others, or from petty vanity; but there are egotistical people who are neither selfish nor vain, and perhaps the worst we can say of them is that they are *tiresome*. The fault is more frequent in those with uncultivated minds than in the educated. It seems almost as if they must necessarily fall into it, if they do not degenerate into gossips about their neighbour's concerns; and this fact is one of the many arguments in favour of cultivating and enriching the mind, not only with solid acquirements, but with accomplishments. It is no sin to be tiresome, certainly, when we cannot help it; but it so often proceeds from narrow-minded ignorance, or loquacious, trifling egotism, or even from an uncultivated imagination, that it ought to be guarded against, as far as the means of improving the mind are within our reach.

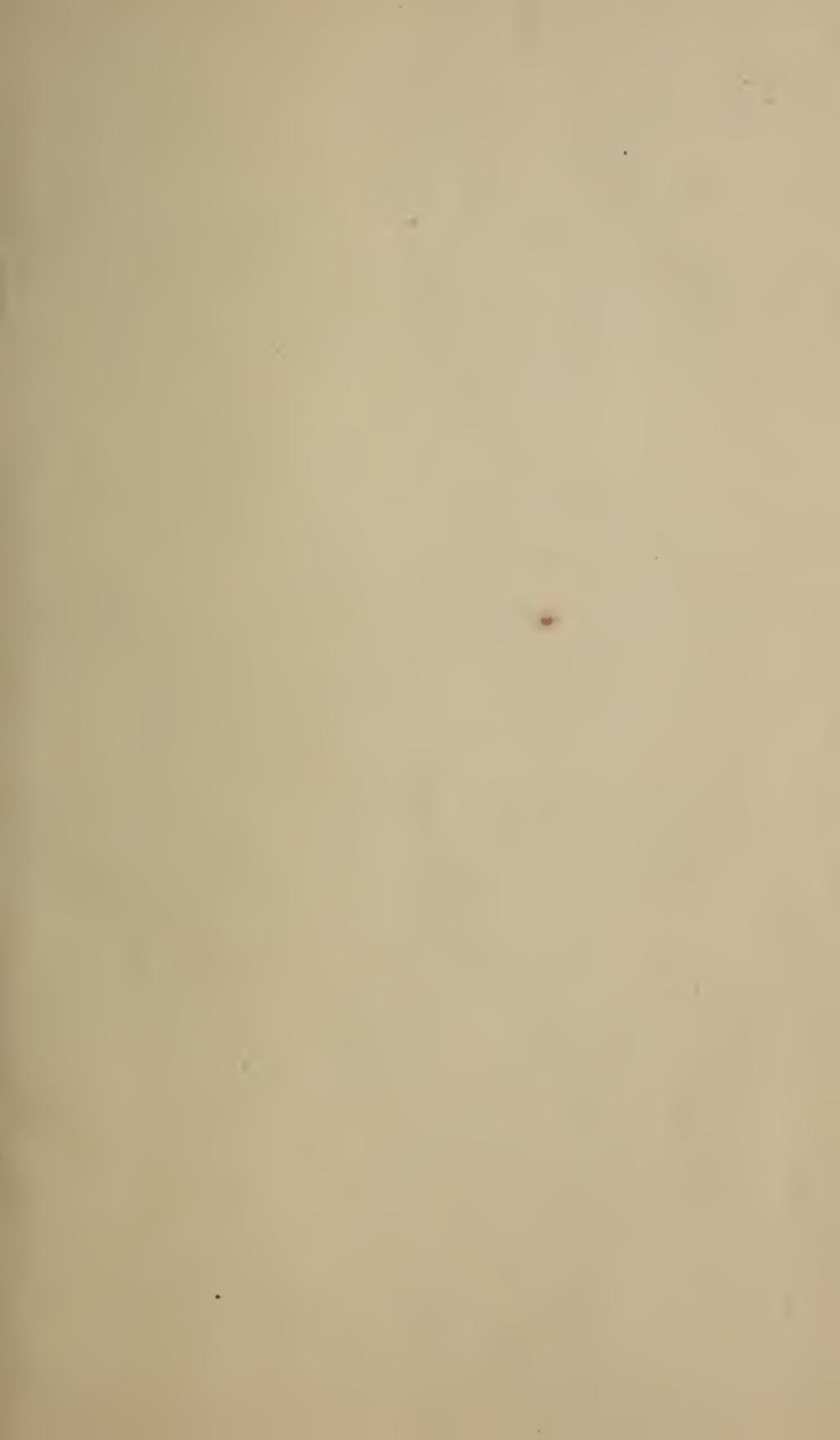
Self-control, in its higher manifestations, is too important a subject to be brought forward among such fragmentary hints as those with which we are now engaged; but there are minor matters in which it were well that the young should learn to practise it, both in relation to inward and outward things—in regard to mind

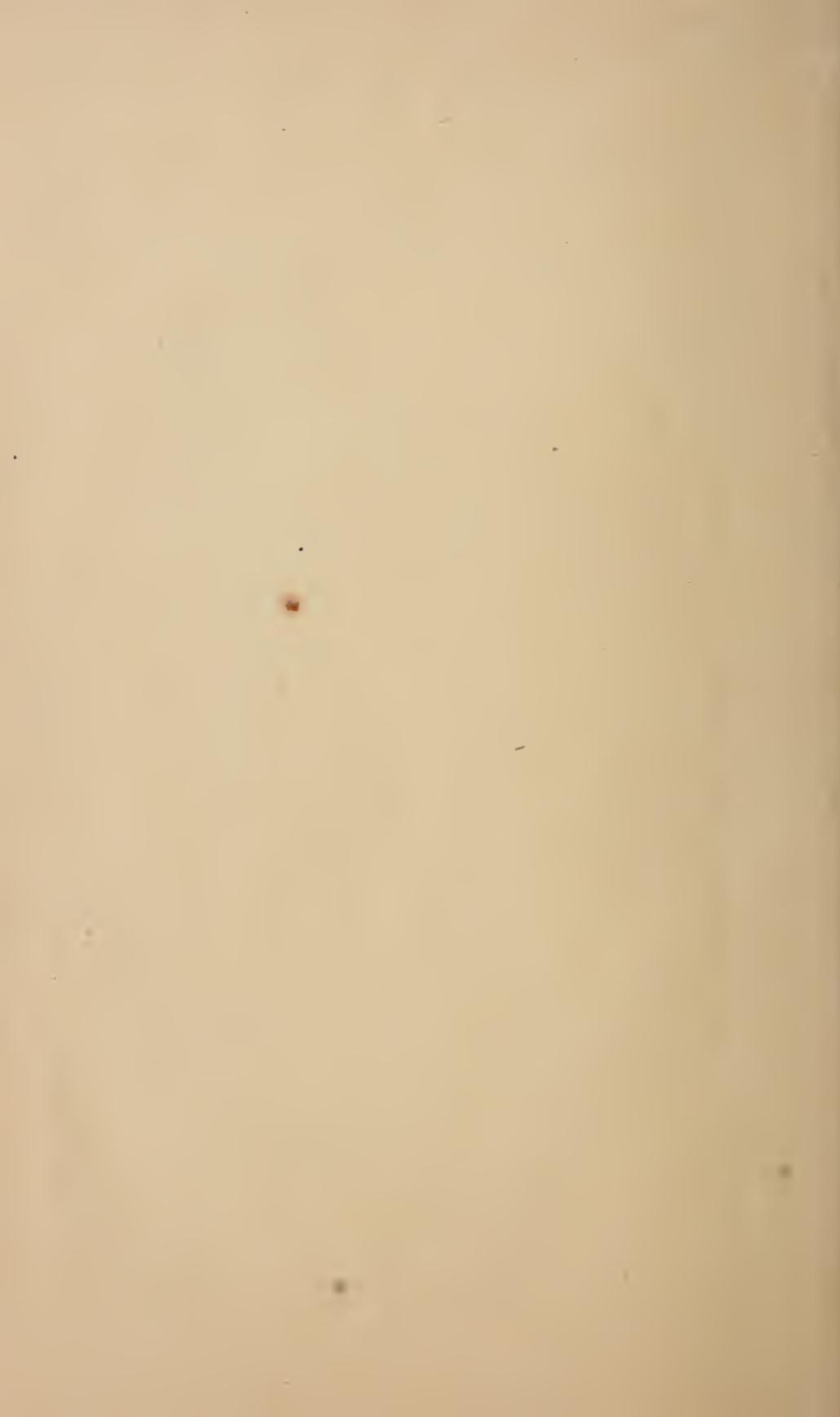
as well as to manner. Acting from heedless impulse, giving utterance to sudden and hasty words (no sooner spoken than regretted) and levity of manner, frequently arising from high and uncurbed spirits, over which often ere long they deeply mourn, are the fruits of a want of that proper self-control which serves as a check to our first impulsive impressions, as well as a guide in carrying them into effect in a sedate and regulated manner, when ascertained to be well-founded. Self-control in great and in small matters (whether in character or manner) is indeed a high and difficult attainment; but it is well worthy of whatever it costs to attain it, being the necessary ballast to enable us to "do all things decently, and in order," as well as to adorn our profession by the graces that are lovely and of good report.

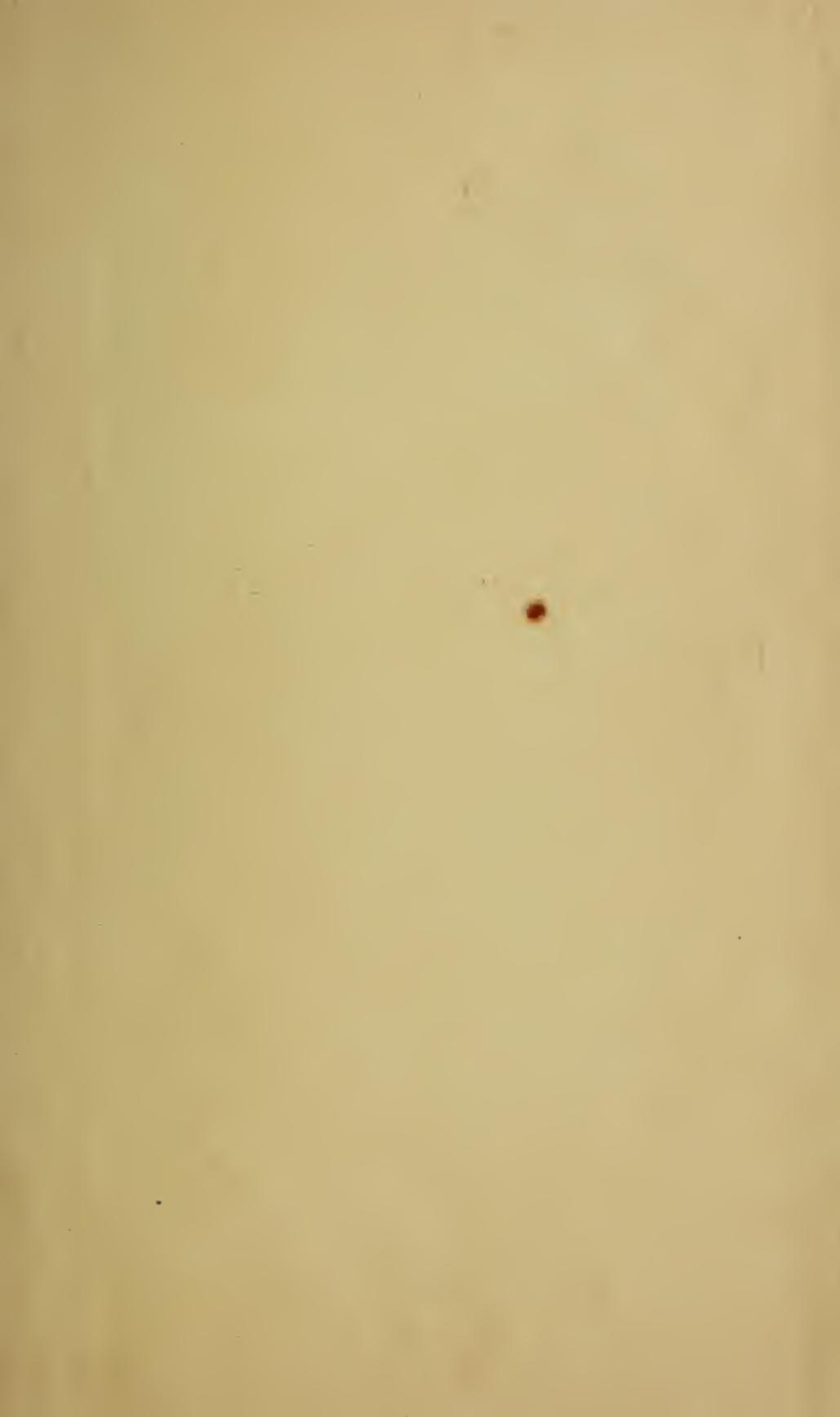
"Finally, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS." Phil. iv. 8.

THE END.









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