

## The Family at Home: Familiar Illustrations of Various Domestic Duties

By [Gorham D. Abbott](#)

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### Section 3: HEALTH AND SICKNESS

This is a good place in which to set down a few hints about sickness, which I have gleaned from my good mother, and other friends.

She often observed, that many people make mistakes on this subject, and she took great pains to correct them wherever she had opportunity.

In the first place, she would say, "Do all you can to preserve health; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In order that you may be healthy, rise early, live temperately, labor diligently, cultivate a contented spirit, observe cleanliness, drink plenty of cold water, admit plenty of fresh air into your houses."

She used to tell a story of a certain great physician, who gave four rules for the preservation of health. When he died, his books were sold: one, which was said to contain very valuable precepts of health, but which the bidders were not permitted to open, sold at a high price. When the purchaser got it home, he was at first disappointed at finding that it contained nothing more than four simple rules; but, on further consideration, he was induced to put the rules in practice; by which means he was restored to a state of health to which he had long been a stranger; and he often spoke of the old physician's book as the cheapest and most valuable purchase he ever made in his life. The rules were these—"Keep the head cool. Keep the feet warm. Take a light supper. Rise early."

These simple rules comprehend a vast deal more than may appear at first sight. A word or two on each will show this.

1. "Keep the head cool." To "keep the head cool," people must avoid every kind of excess, and maintain moderation in every pursuit, and in every pleasure. The great eater and the great drinker have generally a burning forehead and a cloudy brain. The passionate man, and the intemperate, are strangers to perfect health, as well as to peace of mind. Even too hard study occasions an aching and burning head.

2. "Keep the feet warm." The same course suggested for keeping the head cool

will at the same time tend to keep the feet properly warm, namely, moderation, activity, and calmness of temper. An intemperate, an indolent, or an ill-tempered person, is never really healthy; and, as it is in the power of everyone to avoid such wicked habits, and even to resist and break them off when acquired, in that sense and to that degree, every man is the disposer of his own health, and has to answer for trifling with it.

3. "Take a light supper." It is a sign of ill health when people have the strongest relish for food late in the day; and the indulgence of that irregular appetite tends to increase the evil. Formerly it was the fashion, though a very bad one, to eat substantial and often luxurious suppers. There was then a common saying,

"After dinner sit awhile,  
After supper walk a mile."

In this homely distich there is much sound wisdom. One moderately hearty meal of food daily, is sufficient for nourishment, and conducive to health. After taking it, a short period of comparative repose is desirable, but not the total repose of sleep. After that, several hours of activity, and then a slight meal, such as will not require much exercise of the digestive powers, when the whole system ought to be resigned to complete repose.

Those who eat a hearty supper generally have disturbed, uneasy sleep, and wake at a late hour, languid and drowsy, feeble, sullen, and irritable, with a burning forehead, cold feet, and a disinclination to food and labor.

Some laboring men, however, are obliged to content themselves at mid-day with a slight refreshment, which they can carry with them, and depend on returning home to their principal meal when labor is done. In this case, the meal should be quite ready for them on their return home; and they should not go to bed directly on eating it, but employ themselves for an hour or two on some moderately-active pursuit, which, being of a different nature from their daily labor, will come in as an agreeable variation; such, for instance, as gardening, or carpentering, for the man who has labored through the day in the loom or on the shop-board.

4. "Rise early." Nothing is more conducive to health and excellence of every kind than early rising. All physicians agree in this; and all people who have attained a good old age, in whatever particulars they might differ from each other, have been distinguished as early risers. Some people require more sleep than others; but it may be laid down as a general rule, that there is no grown person to whom a period of sleep longer than seven, or, at the very most, eight hours, can be either necessary or beneficial. But a person in health may easily know how much sleep he requires, by going to bed every night at a stated time, and uniformly rising as soon as he awakes, however early that may be. By steadily pursuing this plan for a few days, or at most a few weeks, a habit will be acquired of taking just the rest that nature requires, and regularly awaking out of one sound and

refreshing sleep to new vigor and activity; and when this habit is thoroughly formed, it would be no less disagreeable, than useless and injurious, for such a person, having once beheld the bright morning sun, to turn on his pillow and say, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep."

The earlier rest is taken, the more satisfying and beneficial it will be found. "One hour before midnight is worth two hours afterwards." This is a common and a true saying; but it is not to be supposed that two hours in the morning will make up for the loss of one at night. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The loss of night sleep is injurious, but indulgence in day slumbers is still more so. In case of having been disturbed one night, the best way to replace the loss is to go to bed one hour or two earlier, rather than to be later in the morning. Attention to these particulars would do much to preserve health.

"In the historical parts of scripture," says Robinson, "we may observe in general that diligence and early rising are inculcated as a *doctrine*; as, 'You shall diligently keep the commandments'—'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' They are exemplified as a *practice*; as, 'Awake, I myself will awake early'—Abraham got up early in the morning—Jacob rose up early—Moses rose early in the morning—Joshua rose early—Samuel rose early—Job rose early in the morning—Jesus came early in the morning into the temple, and all the people came early to hear him. All these were, probably, early risers by habit; and it is certain most of them were. Moreover, the practice is encouraged by express promise; as, 'I love those who love me, and those who seek me early shall find me.'

"Besides this general view of scripture history, there is a particular and edifying view of some remarkable mornings, of which I will just give you a sketch to direct your meditations.

"That was a morning long to be remembered, in which the angel hastened to Lot, and led him and his family out of Sodom. The sun rose before he entered Zoar; and when Abraham got up early, and looked towards Sodom, he beheld, and, lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

"It was a happy morning in the life of Isaac, when peace and plenty were secured to him and his family by a contract, confirmed by oath, between himself and a neighboring king, to perform which they rose early in the morning.

"It was a morning sacred to memory with Jacob and his posterity, when, after his dream of a frame with steps opening a passage to the temple of the King of kings, graced with heavenly officers going up and coming down, to teach him the doctrine of Providence, he rose up early, set up a pillar, and dedicated both the place and himself to God. Nor could time ever erase out of his memory that other morning, when a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. 'Let me go,'

said one, 'for the day breaks;' 'I will not let you go,' replied the other, 'unless you bless me.'

"What memorable mornings were those, in which Moses rose up early, stood before Pharaoh, and in the name of Almighty God demanded liberty for his nation! What a night was that, in which the Israelites passed through the sea! and what a morning followed, when Moses stretched out his hand, and the tide rolled back with the dawning of the day, and floated the carcasses of the Egyptians to the feet of the people of God, on the shore!

"Early every morning, for forty years, the cloud was taken up, and the manna fell.

"What a busy morning was that on which Gideon suppressed idolatry, at the hazard of his life! What an honorable morning was that to Daniel, when a great king visited him in the lion's den! And, to mention no more, that was a morning sacred to memory throughout all generations, in which Jesus, the King of Israel, was cut off. A belief of these true histories furnishes matter for early meditation, prayer, and praise.

"If any of us have been so unfortunate as to have acquired the idle habit of lying late in bed, let us get rid of it: nothing is easier. A habit is but a repetition of single acts, and bad habits are to be broken as they were formed, that is, by degrees. Difficult habits, however, may be unraveled by application and prudence. Let a person, accustomed to sleep until eight in the morning, rise, the first week in April, at a quarter before eight, the second week at half-past seven, and the fourth at seven; let him continue this method until the end of July, subtracting one quarter of an hour from sleep, and he will accomplish the work that at first sight appears so difficult. It is not a single stride, but a succession of short steps, which conveys us from the foot—to the top of the mountain. Early rising is a great gain of time; and should the learner, just now supposed, rise, all the harvest month, at four instead of eight, he would make that month equal to five weeks of his former indolent life.

"Early rising is a habit so easily acquired, so advantageous to health, so necessary to the dispatch of business, and so important to devotion, that, except in cases of necessity, it cannot be dispensed with by any prudent and diligent man.

"Thanks to the goodness of God, and the fostering hands of our kind parents, this habit is so formed in some of us, that we would think it a cruel punishment to be confined to our beds after the usual hour. Let us prize and preserve this profitable practice, and let us habituate all our children to consider lying in bed after daylight, as one of the ills of the aged and the sick, and not as an enjoyment to people in a state of perfect health.

"Early rising is beneficial to health. I am aware that 'to ask what is wholesome, is

like asking whether the wind be fair, without specifying to what port we are bound;' for some animals live on poisons. However, it may safely be affirmed, that, in general, lying long and late in bed impairs the health, generates disease, and, in the end, destroys the lives of multitudes. It is an intemperance of the most pernicious kind, having nothing to recommend it, nothing to set against its ten thousand mischievous consequences; for to be asleep is to be *dead for the time*. This tyrannical habit attacks life in its essential powers; it makes the blood forget its way, and creep lazily along the veins; it relaxes the fibers; unstrings the nerves; evaporates the animal spirits; saddens the soul; dulls the fancy; subdues and stupefies a man to such a degree, that he, the master of the creation, has no appetite for anything in it; loathes labor; yawns for lack of thought; trembles at the sight of a spider, and, in the absence of that, at the creatures of his own gloomy imagination."

Great caution should be used in resorting to any advertised medicine. The more astonishing the cures said to be effected by them, the more strongly are they to be suspected. If these medicines sometimes succeed with peculiar constitutions, and in very desperate cases, it is perhaps because their inventors, who have no character to lose, administer powerful drugs in such quantities as no regular practitioner would venture upon; and one such case will serve to make a great talk about, and to print in hundreds of advertisements; but then they take care never to advertise the far greater number of cases in which the medicine has failed, or in which it has produced, instead of the benefits promised, consequences the most injurious—such as removing a pimple from the face, and bringing on the unhappy subject a deadly palsy.

We must pay proper attention to the sick, and not desert them, under a timid apprehension of taking the disease. "Go steadily on, do your duty, use every proper precaution, put your trust in God, and leave the event in his hands."

A very common prejudice among those who have the care of the sick, is that of avoiding any reference to pious subjects. The Bible, and other good books, must be put out of sight; no pious person must be permitted to visit the sick person, nor prayer be offered in his hearing, lest he should be alarmed with the apprehension of death and eternity. These cruel prejudices have kept godly people out of many a sick chamber, where their visits might have been a real blessing; but, as one of my friends used to say, "Does any person die the sooner for being prepared to die? and is it not of infinitely greater importance, that we be prepared for death, than preserved in life? Prayer calls in the aid of Him, who can do infinitely more both for body and soul than the kindest and best earthly friend; and danger cannot be averted by being kept out of sight.

Now the sick person is one of three characters, to either of which, the visits of a pious, prudent Christian, the holy word of God and the throne of grace, must be seasonable. It may be he is a **pious** person; one who has been accustomed to think of death; one who has felt himself a guilty, perishing sinner, and has fled for

refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the gospel: he has believed on the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world; the Holy Spirit has been operating on his heart, making him a new creature in Christ Jesus, daily more and more weaned from the world, and fitted for heaven—now to such a one, the Bible, and prayer, and Christian conversation, will afford a delightful solace and refreshment. Some precious promise whispered in his ear, so far from distracting his mind, and aggravating his disease, will be as a cordial to his heart; and, by tranquillizing and cheering his spirit, will tend to aid the efforts of the physician in alleviating his bodily malady. Besides, why should he be checked in those expressions of his feelings, which may be made a great blessing to others? Such a man is not likely to die from fear of death; and whether he lives or dies, it will be his ardent desire, and his chief happiness, that Christ may be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.

"But suppose the sick person to be one who has lived in ignorance, carelessness, and neglect of piety; and suppose that now some anxious forebodings oppress his mind. 'Death is at hand, and I am not prepared for it! How dreadful I find it to think about death, and judgment, and eternity, which yet I cannot avoid! Is there any hope for a wretch like me? What must I do to be saved?' Now, is it not a most cruel and wicked thing to treat these solemn inquiries as the vagaries of a disordered imagination? to keep back from the poor creature those who would lead him to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only way of salvation, the only foundation for a dying sinner's hope; and deny him the use of the appointed means for ministering to a disturbed mind?

"Even human reason alone would suggest the propriety of yielding to his wishes, and soothing his mind by satisfying his anxious inquiries, not by evading or stifling them; and the part of common humanity, if those around the sick person are strangers to his alarm, and know not how to meet his feelings, would be to inquire after and give access to those who know how to speak a word in season to him that is distressed. But there is a still higher consideration. Which of the surrounding friends is willing to incur the dreadful guilt of depriving one so dear to them of the means of his soul's everlasting salvation? Who can bear the thought of his perishing in his sins, and his blood being required at their hands?

"But should the person be still in a state of hardened indifference, then the criminality of concealing from him his real state, and allowing him to pass unconsciously into an awful eternity, is dreadfully aggravated indeed! To amuse him with assurances of recovery, and to keep away from him every means of awakening conviction, when it is but too evident that there is but a step between him and death; and, unless he be convinced of sin, and brought to Christ for salvation, but another between him and endless misery! Surely there can be no kindness so false and so cruel as that of concealing truths so infinitely important, however unwelcome! And no circumstances of a sick person, except a state of unconsciousness or delirium, can excuse the suppression of those things that make for his everlasting peace, and which are about to be hidden from his eyes."

## LOOKING FOR THINGS IN THE WRONG PLACE

Dick Rogers has been more than ten years looking for a fortune; but his countenance, his dress, and his dwelling—all say that he has not found it. Good reason why—he has been wishing that he might find a pot of money in his garden, or that some rich person would take a fancy to him, and make him his heir; or that some fine lady would fall in love with him, and marry him. Poor Dick! he has been looking for riches in the wrong place: he would have stood a much better chance, if he had sought them in the sweat of his own brow, and the labor of his own hands.

He is likely to go hungry, who go searching for *windfalls*. "The hand of the diligent makes rich," and "the sleep of the laboring man is sweet."

I could point you to many young women, who are looking for admiration in the wrong place. They dress themselves up in finery, and go flaunting about, and giving themselves airs of importance. But they never find what they seek. A gentleman does not admire them; for he sees plainly enough that they are not ladies. A poor man does not admire them; for he sees, from their very outside appearance, that they would bring misery and ruin to a poor man's cottage; and every man of sense, instead of admiring, despises vanity and affectation. Indeed, it may be said, that wherever admiration is looked for, it is in the wrong place: the likeliest way to find it, is not to look for it at all; but to think nothing about it, while we steadily go on doing our duty: then admiration comes unsought, like the shadow which flees the pursuer, but follows those who go right on their way. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised: give her of the fruit of her hand, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

King Solomon complained that he found not one virtuous woman, on whom dependence might be placed; it would have been strange indeed if he had, while he looked in the wrong place. He sought among a crowd of worthless beauties, not in the domestic retirement of marital felicity.

Those young people look for enjoyment in the wrong place, who seek it in a selfish, perverse following of their own way, and throwing off parental restraints. All who expect happiness in the indulgence of evil tempers and wicked propensities will find themselves grievously mistaken.

Even of those who are actuated by better motives and principles, it has been well said, "Christians are to blame: first, for seeking for that in themselves, which can only be found in Christ, namely, righteousness and strength, stability, fullness and perfection; secondly, for seeking that in the law, which can only be found in the gospel—pardon, consolation, peace, and hope; and, thirdly, for seeking that

upon earth, which can only be enjoyed in heaven—a settled home, and perfect happiness."

## **GOOD THOUGHTS IN THE MIDST OF BUSINESS**

It is one of the great faults of human nature, to suppose that attention to one duty—is an excuse for neglecting another duty. People who have their families or their business to attend to, are very apt to say, "I am so busy, I have no time to think about religion." Now, sure enough, worldly business has a tendency to put good thoughts out of the mind; and yet, if we try sincerely, we may generally find room to think of something good, without driving out necessary attention to our common duties. Indeed, full employment is a fine remedy against idle and mischievous thoughts, and one evil thought hinders piety, more than ten busy thoughts. Some good old writer says, "The grand secret to prevent bad thoughts, is to have plenty of employment; an empty house is everybody's property; all the vagrants in the country will take up their quarters in it: always, therefore, have something to do, and then you will always have something to think of." Such were the remarks of a good man to one of his neighbors, who said she never had a minute to look into a good book, or, indeed, to bestow a thought upon true religion. "Besides," he observed, "when employed in that with which we have by habit become very familiar, we may do it well, and quickly, without giving it all our thoughts. A weaver in his loom, a carpenter on his bench, a mother with her babe in her arms, or while sewing or knitting, often sing a song without hindering their work, or diverting their attention from it. Now, the words of that song might as well express *sense* as *nonsense*; had much better be the language of heartfelt devotion, than of profanity or indecency. I knew a godly shepherd," continued he, "who said he had always learned by heart a verse of scripture at breakfast time, which served him to meditate upon through the day; and so rich was the treasure of scripture thus laid up in his mind, in the course of a long life, that the neighbors used to call him a walking Bible. I suppose you could scarcely name a passage of scripture but he could take it up, and go on with the connection, and that in such a way as proved that he not only recollected the words of scripture, but relished its sweetness. The word of Christ dwelt in him richly in all wisdom; it was to him the joy and rejoicing of his heart, and it seasoned his conversation with the salt of heavenly wisdom, and rendered it profitable to those who heard it. In like manner, I knew a pious weaver, who used to have a hymn-book or a New Testament lying open on his loom, which afforded him many a refreshing thought. A poor shoemaker, I have often with pleasure observed hearing his children's catechism and hymns, while sewing away. A mother of a family always kept in her pocket 'Mason's Select Remains,' or some other little book of the same kind, which she could look at a minute or two while she was feeding her babe, or lulling it to sleep.

These examples show what may be done by trying; and, at least, no one should rest satisfied in having no time for good thoughts, who ever finds time to admit a



thought of vanity and folly. Those who sincerely try will find it much easier than they imagined, and still more refreshing and delightful than easy, to raise a thought to God and heavenly things, while the hands are busy for earth. Even if we are surrounded with bustle and clamor, it is not quite impossible to raise a secret thought in prayer, like Nehemiah, when, handing the cup to the king at the royal banquet, and his heart overcharged with care and distress—'So I prayed to the God of heaven.' Or, like Zaccheus, we may climb the sycamore tree, and get a sight of Jesus. Prayer can find its way to God above the heads of the crowd, and none but the holy soul itself, sees or knows what is transpiring. A penitent, believing heart is always in a fit place and frame for prayer; and a believing prayer is sure to turn the promises of God into performances. The mind of man is never so eagerly disposed to pray, but God is still more ready to give; and those who know the way to the throne of grace, will often say, with Melancthon, 'Trouble and perplexity compel me to pray; and prayer drives away perplexity and trouble.'"

### **WHERE THERE IS A WILL, THERE IS A WAY**

A gentleman once had a present from abroad of several flasks of fine Florence oil. He placed them in a cellar to which no one had access beside himself. One day, to his great surprise, he observed that two of the flasks were empty. The next day, he found another flask empty, and was still more perplexed to account for it. He could not for a moment think that any person on the premises had contrived secret means to get at the cellar; and lest such a surmise should unjustly be awakened in his mind, he resolved secretly to watch in the cellar. I forget by what means he kept a light, but I am certain as to the fact, that after his remaining in the cellar more than an hour, three rats issued from a hole in the corner, and proceeded to the next flask. One rat stood upon his hind legs, and with his fore feet held the flask steady. The second sprang on the shoulders of the first, by which means he could reach the top of the flask. With his teeth he very carefully drew out the cork, by means of a bit of cotton twisted round it; then, dipping in his long tail, he presented it to the third rat to lick. They then changed places, as regularly as a set of soldiers relieving guard, and continued to do so until the flask was empty, each rat having had a fair proportion of the spoil. They then left the cellar. I have often heard this gentleman mention this singular fact. He always related it, if any one, in a hopeless, indolent tone, said of anything that ought to be done, "I can't do it. It is of no use to try." He would say, "If you had but as much heart for your duty as the rats had for the oil, you would neither lack time nor ability to do it.

"How is it that Jem Price always looks decent and respectable, has a good coat for Sundays, and a mite to put in the savings' bank every Saturday, while his next door neighbor, who takes the same wages, and has not so large a family, goes like a beggar and a vagabond, and finds it impossible to make both ends meet? Just because Price has set his mind upon being decent and thrifty, and 'where

there is a will, there is a way.' No doubt he bestirs himself when his neighbor lies idle, and denies himself while his neighbor lives in swinish self-indulgence; but then success and satisfaction attend his endeavors, and he finds that, under the blessing of God, nothing is impossible to labor and patience.

"How is it that Mary Jones keeps her children so clean and decent, when every body knows that she must have many a hard pinch to get a bit of bread, now work is scarce, and her husband has had a very severe illness, and she herself also is sickly? If you give her an old thing for the children, you see it, month after month, tidily patched, and always clean. It is astonishing how she manages. Those little, dirty, ragged children at the next door have three times the money spent on them, and yet one should be afraid to come within three yards of them, for fear of being poisoned with their dirt—while Mary Jones's children are as clean as the children of a noble. What can make the difference? Just this—Mary Jones cannot live in dirt. She says, "the meals, if ever so little, do the children twice the good if they have but a clean skin; and though, poor woman, she has not wherewithal to change them, she sends them to bed early, and washes their clothes, and presses them smooth with a rolling-pin, for lack of a fire to heat irons, and gets them tidily mended to go to school the next day. Whatever hardships she endures, she must and will be clean, and will see her children clean about her; and 'where there is a will, there is a way.' Her neighbor, with better means, has not a *will*, and that is the reason she never finds out a *way*.

"How is it that John Richards, with his numerous young family, contrives also to keep his aged mother in comfort, and will not allow her to be a burden on the parish, while Thomas Smith cannot spare a shilling to help his mother, but lets her live in the parish workhouse, and does not even allow her a trifle for tea and sugar? Why, we must come to the old answer, 'Where there is a will, there is a way.' John feels grateful to his mother for her kindness to him in childhood; and he says it would break his heart to see her lack for comforts in her old age, or have to look to the parish for them. 'No,' says he,—and his wife heartily joins in the sentiment,—'if it pleases God to grant us health to work for her, she shall never lack: it is but working an hour earlier and later, and sparing a few things, which we, who are strong and healthy, can do very well without, and the dear old woman is made comfortable for her last days, and many a blessing comes upon us and ours, through her prayers and holy sayings.'

When the heart is thoroughly set upon duty, God gives ability and opportunity for the performance. One thing in which John had been used to indulge himself was a pipe of tobacco and a glass of gin and water, most evenings. He never took more than one, but he had been long used to it, and it seemed as if he could not do without it. When twins were added to his family of little ones, he was musing how they should be able to get along and do as they had done for his mother. They could not save in rent, or firing, or bread, or shoe-leather. 'But,' thought John, 'I might spare my pipe and gin and water, which cost me the best part of two shillings a week; it is but trying.' He said nothing of his resolution; but, from

that day, he left it off, and has found not only that he *could* do without, but that he has ever since been richer, and healthier, and happier every way. Self-denial not only puts in a man's power the means of doing good, and accomplishing what seemed almost impossible, but it is its own reward in real satisfaction of mind and independence of outward circumstances.

"Can anyone tell how Sam Driver got his learning? He was a poor lad, who had to work hard for his daily bread, and nothing to spare for going to school; but, somehow or other, he has got more learning than the schoolmaster himself, and a room full of books, about stars, and air-pumps, and foreign languages; and he understands them all. Why, Sam had set his heart on learning: there is the secret of it; and he denied himself, to save a penny or two pence a week, to buy books; and he spent every moment of his leisure in poring over them; and, if he met a friend who could instruct him, he never failed to propose some questions, or lay before him some difficulty; and, if he was baffled once, twice, or thrice, in any pursuit, he tried again and again, until he surmounted the difficulty. It was a favorite saying of his, 'Whatever man has done, man may do.' The further he advanced, the more easy seemed his progress. For many years he has been enabled to instruct others by his writings and experiments; and, while he gratefully acknowledges the goodness of God, in giving both ability and success, he stands as a fair example, that 'where there is a will, there is a way.'

"How is it that Ned Turner and his wife are seen, every Sunday morning, taking their whole family to the house of God, and spending every part of the day in holy leisure, as much as if they had servants to do their work, while Waters and his wife tell us they are obliged to drudge hard all day long, and can't see the inside of a church from one year's end to another? The thing is this: Turner and his wife know the value of the Sabbath, and their hearts are set upon enjoying and improving it. Many contrivances are employed through the week, to enable them on the Sabbath to lay aside all manner of work; but their success and enjoyment prove that 'where there is a will, there is a way.'

"May it not be added, 'Why is it that some people are found to excuse themselves in sin and neglect of religion, by saying they cannot change their own hearts; they cannot possess themselves with grace; they cannot even pray to God acceptably, unless he gives them his Holy Spirit?' All this is true; but what does it prove? Not that they are excusable in their neglect, or that they will escape the punishment due on account of it—but that they have no real desire after those unspeakable blessings, which they profess themselves unable to obtain. If they really felt themselves lost and undone without access to the pardoning mercy and gracious favor of God, through Jesus Christ, they would give themselves no rest until they attained it. They would use every appointed means of grace, as though all depended on their own diligence; and they would cry mightily for that aid, without which their endeavors must prove ineffectual. Salvation is not to be attained by a few faint, lazy wishes—but by an agonizing effort to enter in at the straight gate; by earnest, importunate, persevering cries at

the footstool of mercy, 'Lord, save, or I perish! I cannot let you go, unless you bless me.'"

## **CORRECTING MISTAKES**

Some people find it a very hard thing to say, "I was mistaken," and will persist in error, rather than give up a point, or alter a practice, even when convinced that they were wrong. This is a very foolish sort of pride. The wisest of men are most deeply convinced of their own ignorance and liability to err; consequently, they are the most humble and sincere. He who owns himself to have been in an error, only proves himself wiser than he was before; but, "Do you see a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

"My whole life," said a certain good man, "has been spent in discovering my own ignorance and mistakes, and in endeavoring to correct them; and now that I am an old man, instead of finding more reason than formerly to trust myself, I am, every day, more and more convinced of the necessity of praying for constant guidance, instruction, and correction from God. This is my daily prayer: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' I hope and trust I shall not be found mistaken at last!"

## **CONQUEST OF EVIL TEMPER**

People are born into the world with a difference of temper; but then they are accountable for the management of their tempers. Those who possess a gentle, even temper, should reckon it among their mercies; they should consider it also as laying a strong claim on them to be kind and forbearing to those around them; and, as much as in them lies, to take away the occasions of peevishness and irritability from those who may not, in this respect, be so highly favored as themselves.

It has been sometimes observed, that good-tempered people are apt to be forgetful; and hence they sometimes very unintentionally give provocation to others. A very easy, good-tempered servant girl has been heard to say, "Master was in such a passion, only because I did not hang his coat on the right hook," or, "Mistress was so angry, only because I did not put the bread in the right basket. They are such bad-tempered people, it is impossible to live with them." Now, even admitting that the master or the mistress might discover more irritation than the occasion warranted, the good-tempered servant should be reminded, that masters and mistresses have a right, not only to say what work shall be done, but in what manner; and if they choose to give directions in the minutest particulars, those directions should be obeyed. If a master says, "On this hook I wish my coat to be hung," the servant can hardly clear herself of disobedience,

who, even thoughtlessly, hangs it on another. If she did not think, she ought to have thought. Besides, very serious inconvenience is often occasioned by inattention to these little things. To a thoughtless house-maid, it may seem of very little consequence, when she has dusted a book, whether she lays it down shut or open in the place she found it; or whether she replaces a lot of papers on the desk in the same order as she found them, or turns them topsy-turvy. But either of these exploits may, perhaps, give the studious master hours of disappointment and perplexity. Besides, more irritation of temper in families arises from these petty vexations—than from more serious and willful faults. Before, then, the easy-tempered person reproaches him who is angry, with too great irritability, it may be worth considering whether part of the sin does not lie at the door of him who thoughtlessly gives the provocation.

Everyone has something to do in the management of his temper; and those who are themselves most highly favored, should consider it part of their task to remove occasions of irritation out of the way of others.

But some people are conscious of having a naturally bad temper. They are peevish, or passionate, or sullen, or resentful. The person who is the subject of these dispositions must be aware of it. What, then, is his duty? I will just set down a few hints of advice, given by a friend to one who was very near and dear to me, and who found them very beneficial.

"If you are the subject of ill temper, in the first place, *never justify it* by saying, 'It is my natural disposition, and I cannot help it;' or, 'It was enough to provoke anybody. Nobody can blame me for being so angry;' or, 'I don't harbor malice; but I can never forget the offence.' All these are but false excuses for a cherished evil.

"In the next place, *constantly resist* the risings of an evil temper; turn away from the occasions of it; and check its first emotions within. It is much easier to refrain from uttering the first angry word, than to stop short at the second or the third. 'Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.'

"But be careful *to resist on Christian principles*. To give way to evil tempers and passions, is not only foolish, and disgraceful, and injurious; it is also *sinful*. Too many people who would look upon theft, or drunkenness, as a sin against God, forget that ill temper and unkindness are equally so; and hence they neglect to control their tempers. But he who views evil tempers in their proper light, will say, before he ventures to indulge them, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against my God?'

"The Christian has a never-failing rule for the government of his temper, in that prescription, 'Whatever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so unto them.' Here mark the difference between the world's maxims and Christ's

maxims. The world says, 'Do to others as they do to you;' Christ says, 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.' If we never say nor do to others worse than we would wish them to say or do to us—we are not likely to say or do much amiss.

"Cultivate a spirit of Christian *humility*. This is a fine cure for evil tempers. Pride is always the companion, generally the origin, of petulance and passion: 'Pride only breeds quarrels.' "To think that anything should stand in *my* way! that anyone should presume to oppose *me!*" Such is the haughty feeling of the angry man; but where Christian humility prevails, the feeling is, "What an insignificant, unworthy creature I am! and yet from how many deserved miseries am I spared! how many undeserved mercies am I permitted to enjoy! Surely, I have enough to keep me contented and easy, and to reconcile me to any little inconveniences I may meet with."

"Look to the *example of Christ*, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, Heb. 12:3; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, 1 Pet. 2:23; who forbore to resent injuries, Luke 9:53-56; who pitied his persecutors, Luke 19:41; prayed for his murderers, Luke 23:34; and has left us an example that we should follow in his steps, 1 Pet. 2:21.

"Seek the *influences of the Holy Spirit*. The indulgence of clamor, wrath, envy, and evil speaking—grieves the Spirit of God, and drives him away. But if the Holy Spirit's aid is humbly and constantly sought, he will dwell in the soul, and subdue those tempers and feelings which are offensive in his sight."

The influence of Christian principles is not more strikingly seen in any particular, than in the conquest of sinful tempers. I remember hearing some remarks made about several people who, nearly at the same time, took up a profession of religion. Some one present observed, "What a striking change appears in Martha! she who used to be such a flaunting, dressy girl, has had her hair cut close, and will not even wear a bow in her bonnet." "Well, well," said a mother present, "I hope the change is not all outside." "And Susan, she who was always gadding about and taking her pleasure on a Sunday, now attends three or four public services every Sunday, and several more during the week." "Well, I wish it may prove abiding; far be it from me to say it will not; but, for my own part, I have much greater confidence in the far less glaring profession of Betsy, from the testimony of her mother, that, since she has attended to religion, *she strives to conquer her temper*, which was a source of continual uneasiness in the family." Many years have passed since these remarks were made; and I have seen Martha and Susan return to their finery, vanity and folly; but Betsy has gone steadily on, exhibiting the growing triumphs of divine grace over a naturally violent and stubborn temper.

I remember hearing a story of Socrates, who was one of the greatest philosophers among the heathens, and who was celebrated for mildness,

patience, and evenness of temper. Few men had greater trials than he, both from the perverseness of his wife, and the ingratitude of his country; yet he was never seen with a cloud on his brow.

A certain physiognomist (or one who professes to judge of a person's natural temper and disposition by the features of his countenance) was requested to give his opinion of the character of Socrates. Having examined the lines of his countenance, he hesitated in giving an opinion, "For," said he, "your established character gives the lie to my science." He was urged to speak his mind freely, and declared that the countenance of Socrates indicated much natural peevishness, irritability, and stubbornness. The friends of the philosopher reproached the physiognomist with ignorance and mistake; but Socrates himself declared that his native temper fully corresponded with the description given, and that it was only by dint of severe discipline he had gained such an ascendancy over it, and was enabled to maintain such a degree of mildness and forbearance; a proof that *something* may be done with the worst of tempers by proper management. If a mere heathen could do this, what may not be expected from those who profess to be influenced and animated by the precepts, principles and motives of Christianity?

Both the good-tempered and the ill-tempered may find their advantage in committing to memory the following precepts of holy writ—

"The discretion of a man defers his anger, and it is his glory to pass by a transgression."

"He who is soon angry deals foolishly."

"He who is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he who is of a hasty spirit exalts folly."

"A soft answer turns away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger."

"He who has no rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down, and without walls."

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city."

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

"Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus."

"Those who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves. Let everyone please his neighbor for his good to edification."

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." Colossians 3:12-15

## ILL-GOTTEN GOODS

"Ill-gotten goods never prosper," is a saying that has stood the test of ages. "A knave may get more than an honest man for a day, but the honest man gets most by the year." "Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow." "He who increases his wealth by exorbitant interest amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor." "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor."

Many, many times have these awful sayings been verified. Ah! there was poor old Farmer Hunter—I say *poor*, and so he was; though he was the richest man for miles round, he was far more an object of *pity* than of *envy*. It was he who used to gripe and grind the poor; who dealt harshly with many an honest little farmer, and brought him to ruin. There was not a mean trick of which he would not be guilty, to keep down the price of labor, or to keep up the price of corn, to overreach in buying and selling, in weight and in measure; and how did it succeed? Why, he got together a great property; pretty nearly the whole parish fell into his hands. He had more sheep and cattle than any farmer for forty miles round, besides thousands and thousands of money in the bank; but, poor old man, he had no enjoyment of his riches. He begrudged himself everything he ate or wore, and was always afraid somebody was coming to dispute his right, or take away his money, and that he should die in the workhouse. He had only one son, who was an honest man enough, and much respected in the neighborhood, but he died in early life, and left two little lads who were brought up as gentlemen, to inherit all their old grandfather's property. They came into it young, and contrived to spend it much faster than the old gentleman gathered it; for, before either of them attained the age of forty—houses, and lands, and money, were all gone! And they were far worse off than an honest day-laborer. It seemed most astonishing where it could all have flown; and though it was often said with very improper levity, it was perhaps said with too much truth, that "Satan helped to get the money—and helped to spend it too." Ah! those who heap together unjust gains, don't consider how much they put themselves and their children under the snare of the devil, to be led captive by him at his will.

Old Madam West, in the next village to ours, lived upon her property, much respected both by rich and poor. She had five nephews and nieces, whom she



had partly brought up, and among whom the property of her late husband was to be divided at her death. And it was her full intention to do the same with what was at her own disposal. The young people were very kind and affectionate among themselves; and not one of them, I believe, had a thought about being a favorite more than the rest, or a wish to gain anything at the expense of the others, until one of the young men married a crafty, designing woman, who left no artifice untried to work into the old lady's favor. By her artful tricks, she at last won upon her to make a will, leaving to that branch of the family considerably more than the rest; indeed, all that was in her power to will away, consisting chiefly of a large quantity of valuable household furniture and plate, wearing apparel, and ready money.

The other branches of the family had no idea of the selfish trick that had been played upon them. But shortly after, this crafty woman returned home, (for she lived in a town some miles distant,) Madam West had the rest of her nephews and nieces to dinner with her, and going to her bureau, she fetched out the said will, and threw it in the fire. "There," said she, "now my mind will be at rest, and the property be share and share alike among you all, as your poor dear uncle intended, and as I always intended myself; but somehow that artful woman came round me, and persuaded me to do a wrong thing before I was aware." After a very few months had elapsed, the old lady died rather suddenly, and then the full artifice came to light. Another will was produced, to the same purpose as that she had destroyed; for, suspecting the possibility that, when left to herself, she might repent and revoke so unjust a deed, her signature had been obtained twice, under the pretense of its being only one deed, while in fact it was two, one of which was left in her hands, to amuse her with the idea that the property was still in her own disposal; but the other of which was carefully concealed by the designing party, and in due time brought forward to establish their unrighteous claims. The rest of the family were indignant at the fraud by which they had been so shamefully injured, and grieved at the interruption of harmony in a family that had hitherto been united. They, however, resolved rather to bear injury than to engage in contention. But William and his wife had little reason to congratulate themselves on their unjust gains. Their own feelings were best known to themselves; but they had lost the countenance and assistance of the rest of the family, all of whom were more or less able to help them. The handsome old furniture was quite unsuitable to their little cottage, indeed, crowded it up as mere useless lumber. Confidence at home was also lost; for, though William, through selfish motives, had been induced to concur in his wife's act and deed, he naturally concluded that she who had acted so treacherously by others, was not very likely to be faithful to him; and from that time, though they lived together many years, it may be fairly said, they never had another happy hour together, nor had they any enjoyment of their ill-gotten goods. During their life, the money was hoarded, and the plate hid, as that which they were ashamed to use or to look upon; and, after their death, old Madam West's rich clothes and thick blankets were found consumed by moths, without having been worn, used, or even unpacked. The children, who came into possession of the property, soon

squandered the money, pawned the plate, parted with the furniture, one thing after another, and came into the depth of poverty. Of all the old lady's furniture, the little that remained in the family was that which the injured branches were enabled to buy, out of charity to the unjust possessors, in their times of distress. It is a dreadful thing to have riches corrupted, and garments moth-eaten, as by the secret curse of God on that which is unjustly gained.

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