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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious

Grinding the Diamond.

The poor sufferer lay in severe pain on her bed. It had been near twenty years since she saw a well day—more than half that time since she had walked a step, and nearly two years since she had sat up. Her limbs were jerked by spasms; her back had deep sores on it from lying so long; and whenever one was relieved by a new position of the body, another would be made. She never complained; and the cheerfulness with which she endured all this from day to day, and year to year was a matter of amazement to all. Her friends who saw the Bible always lying near her, knew well from what springs she drew water. They all said it was one of the darkest providences they ever witnessed.

One night, as the sufferer lay sleepless from terrible pain, she began to look back upon the past. What a wreck life seemed, dating from her bright school days! What a mystery that she must be so helpless and such a sufferer, while her school companions could walk, move, and act, and enjoy life! What was the object of her Heavenly Father in putting her into this slow, hot, long-continued furnace? As she lay there thus communicating with herself, the room seemed suddenly to fill with light, and a "beautiful" form seemed to bend over her. His face was calm and gentle, but full of pity. She was not at all frightened, nor deemed it strange that he was there, though she was aware that she never saw him before.

"Daughter of sorrow!" said he in a voice soft as zephyr that rocks the rose on its stem, "art thou impatient?"

"No; but I am full of pain and disease, and I have so long been a sufferer that I see no end to it, nor can I see why I must suffer, or that I see no end to it, nor can I see why I must suffer thus. I know that I am a sinner; but I hoped that Christ's sufferings, and not mine, would save me. O, why does God deal thus with me?"

"Come with me, daughter, and I will show thee."

"But I cannot walk."

"True, true! There, gently, gently!"

He tenderly took her in his arms, and carried her away, far away, over land and water, till he sat her down in a far-off city, and in the midst of a large work-shop; the room was full of windows; and the work-men seemed to be near the light, and each with his own tools, and all seemed to be so intent upon their work, that they neither noticed the new comers, nor spoke to one another. They seemed to have small, brown pebbles, which they were grinding, and shaping, polishing. Her guide pointed her to one who seemed to have a diamond, in a pair of strong iron pincers. He seemed to grasp the little thing as if he would crush it, to hold on to the rough stone without mercy. The stone whirled, and the dust flew, and the jewel grew smaller and lighter. "Ever and anon he would stop, hold it up to the light, and examine it carefully."

"Workman," said the sufferer, "will you please to tell me why you bear on, and grind the jewel so hard?"

"I want to grind off every flaw and crack in it."

"But don't you waste it?"

"Yes; but what is left is worth so much the more. The fact is, this diamond, if it will bear the wheel long enough, is to occupy a very important place in the crown we are making up for our king. We take much more pains with such. We have to grind and polish them a great while; but when they are done, they are very beautiful. The king was here yesterday, and was much pleased with our work, but wanted this jewel, in particular, should be ground and polished a great deal. So you see how hard I hold it down on this stone. And, see! there is not a crack nor flaw in it. What a beauty it will be!"

Gently, gently, the guide lifted up the poor sufferer, and again laid her down on her own bed of pain. "Daughter of sorrow! dost thou understand the vision?"

"O, yes! but may I ask you one question?"

"Certainly!"

"Were you sent to me to show me all this?"

"Assuredly."

"O! may I take to myself the consolation that I am a diamond, and am now, in the hands of the strong man, who is polishing it for the crown of the Great King?"

"Daughter of sorrow! thou mayest have that consolation; and every pang of suffering shall be like a flash of lightning in a dark night, revealing eternity to thee; and hereafter thou shalt run without weariness and walk without faintness, and sing with those who have come out of great tribulation."

—Rev. John Todd.

Immortality—An Illustration.

For many years previous to 1845 it had been known that the planet Uranus was subject to certain perturbations in its orbit, which could not be accounted for by the attraction of the sun, and of the other planetary bodies. From the nature and amount of these perturbations, Le Verrier, a French mathematician, demonstrated the existence of an undiscovered planet; and so completely did he determine its place in the distant heavens, that when Dr. Galle of the Berlin Observatory pointed his telescope to the place designated by Le Verrier, he not only found the new planet, but found it within one degree of its computed location!

Here, then, we have not only an unknown planet casting the spell of its attraction upon those that are known and seen, and producing thereby its visible effects, but to the eye of reason these mysterious effects became the infallible proofs of the existence and direction of another world, hitherto undiscovered and unknown. So with the human soul and its continued love for the dead. We follow them to the shores of the final river, and they recede from our view. No more do we listen to the music of their friendly voices, and behold the light of their smiling countenances. They are hidden from us by the veil of death, as from creation's morning Neptune had lain hidden from all mortal vision in the depths of immensity.

The misty veil

Of mortality blinds the eye.

That we see not the hovering angel bands
On the shores of eternity.

But though distant and invisible, we feel the spell of their celestial attraction. Yielding thereto our hearts are the subjects of tender perturbations, and sighs and tears are the witnesses of the susceptibility of our nature to its distant silent power.

Now we argue that the very existence of this continued love for the dead is, in itself, a proof of our continued and immortal existence. For if all souls perished at death, the infinite and all-merciful Creator would have so constituted us that the moment a parent or child or wife or husband was dead, all love for them would cease forever. Has the Creator so constituted the human soul that, despite itself, it remembers and still loves objects that have long ceased to exist? Has this palpable and tender effect no adequate cause? Comes this mysterious powerful attraction, that draws us so sweetly towards the unseen country, from the empty void of non-existence? To suppose this, is to impeach the Creator of the human heart, and to charge him with trifling with our most tender and most holy affections.

While, then, we follow our friends to the river of death, and after they have crossed wander sadly up and down its banks, still bound to them by the chords of a deathless love, every pang we feel when we realize that they are gone, every emotion of tenderness that thrills our hearts with its warm immortal glow, every tear that we shed, or sigh that we have, each and all, are but so many proofs in the soul herself that the dead, whose memory we so fondly cherish, still live immortal beyond the grave.—*Mattison's Immortality of the Soul.*

Knocking.

Many have prayed; but how many have prayed as our Lord directs in the Sermon on the Mount: Ask, seek, knock? This is prayer begun with supplication, continued with endeavor, and followed with patient

waiting at the door of blessing. A few days ago, a dispatch was received in the city of Detroit, from a military station at the South, announcing the approaching execution of a soldier within the passing week. It brought anguish to a woman's heart, who had cherished this boy from infancy as her own, and who had ever been to him a self-sacrificing mother. For her sake—one of the most singularly faithful of human beings—letters were immediately forwarded to the seat of Government, asking for a reprieve. That was her asking—and it was asked as the one, absorbing, agonizing desire of her soul. And this was but the beginning of her petition. In a few hours, she was upon a long and toilsome journey through what was to her an unknown land, a journey over States to the nation's capital, in anxious haste to anticipate the dreadful fate that hung over the condemned. That was her seeking—seeking through days and nights of uncertainty, delay, danger, cold, hunger and sleepless sorrow. But this was not all. For now she was at the place where deliverance might be found, and there she knocked with her remaining strength, and in the courage of despair. It was all her asking; but how she sought and knocked! Her perseverance was rewarded—the reprieve was granted, and afterward, a pardon. Let asking be only the beginning. If asking is not followed by seeking, we are like those who do nothing but spread the sail toward the breeze, and make no effort with the oars to push off the lee of the land, when the breath of heaven fills the atmosphere, and moves everything that is fairly committed to the waves.

Let us begin with asking God for what we desire as a spiritual gift. Then let our asking become seeking—true, prudent, careful search for every influence that brings us in the way of blessing. And let our seeking become knocking, as we wait at the door of the treasury, till it opens with the weight of what descends. Such prayer as this has its promise and its precious fruit. Asking is the blade. Seeking is the ear. Knocking is the full corn in the ear. The answer to all is a glorious harvest of rejoicing.

An impartial testimony.

In the lectures of Dr. Chalmers on the Epistle to the Romans, we find the following remarks upon the third and fourth verses of chap. vi: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death; therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "The original meaning of the word baptism is immersion, and though we regard it as a point of indifference, whether the ordinance so named be administered in this way or by sprinkling—yet we doubt not that the prevalent style of the administration in the apostles' days was by an actual submerging of the whole body under water. We advert to this for the purpose of throwing light on the analogy that is instituted in these verses. Jesus Christ by death underwent this sort of baptism—even immersion under the surface of the ground, whence he soon emerged again by his resurrection. We by being baptised into his death are conceived to have made a similar translation. In the act of descending under the water of baptism to have resigned an old life, and in the act of ascending to ascend into a second or new life."

Every-day piety.

Take at random one of the days which have made up this life, and what is the account which it would be likely to furnish, particularly in regard to Christian knowledge and peace. How to the faithful liver is each day filled with trials called petty, because they are familiar; with discouragements which would be insignificant in description, which sicken the soul, and palsify every effort. A chance word, a thoughtless interference, an unwelcome claim, a child, a servant, a visitor may disturb the composure of your plans. A light touch destroys the balance

that you had adjusted with such pains. The calmness and mental elevation to which in the morning you had attained with such effort of self-examination, contemplation and prayer, and which you thought would be preserved through the day, have yielded to a feeble, seemingly impotent assault. You have lost your just gained foothold on the rock, and are tossed about on the sea of your undisciplined feeling and unsound judgment. Or, like a stray child, you look around you bewildered and helpless in the world's wilderness. And you are a stray child! Confident in your knowledge of the way, you have withdrawn from the Father's presence, wandered from the path in which you were set, and the thick darkness of absence from the light of life now closes around you.

The first lesson in Christian service is humility; faith, dependence, zeal, and activity, are the second, and we may not invert the order, or we destroy the character and end of Christian performance. Preeminently do the sins of the tongue oppose our progress, and heap up occasion for shame and discouragement. You began a discussion in the love of truth and spirit of peace, but pride of opinion and impatience of opposition mixed themselves with the zealous affection for a good thing, and gendered a strife of words, in which you dishonored the cause you meant to recommend. You proposed to elevate your adversary to your own or a higher level, and you have descended below his. Often in your private and public discourse, the pleasant sound of your voice lulls your Christian caution, literary or religious vanity comes in like a torrent on your fluent periods, and it is no longer Jesus, your Teacher, your Saviour, but self, a crowned, exalted, applauded self that engrosses your thoughts and attracts your affection.

You possessed at one time a large measure of spiritual peace, a sense of being right with God, reconciled, and at rest with him. Almost imperceptibly, by want of watchfulness, by suffering other thoughts to intrude, this "joy in the Lord" has passed first into a natural and legitimate animal exhilaration, then into light-mindedness, and lastly into foolish talking and jesting, which truly were not convenient to your Christian character and attainment, for they have lessened your influence, prevented your growth, and separated you from your God.

Oh, to bring our religion into every day life to decorate and glorify that life, gloomy, distasteful unlovely as it often is—to hallow it, groveling, sordid, impure and idolatrous as we make it, with the brightness, sublimity and holiness of Christianity!—*Manoah.*

Temptation and Suffering.

Temptation, according to Luther, is one of the ingredients which goes to make a minister. I have before me two stones, which are in imitation of precious stones. They are perfectly alike in color; they are both of the same water, clear, pure, and clean. Yet there is a marked difference between them as to their lustre and brilliancy. One has a dazzling brightness, while the other is dull, so that the eye passes over it and derives no pleasure from the sight. What can be the reason for such a difference? It is this: the one is cut in a few facets, the other has ten times as many. These facets are produced by a violent operation; it is required to cut, smooth, and polish. Had the stones been endued with life, so as to have been capable of feeling what they underwent, the one which had received eighty facets would have thought itself very unhappy, and would have envied the other, which having but eight, had undergone but a tenth part of its sufferings. Nevertheless, the operation being over, it is done forever. The difference between the two stones always remains strongly marked.—That which has suffered but little is entirely eclipsed by the other, which alone is held in estimation and attracts attention.—*Oberlin's Memoirs.*

The Holy Ghost never will break all the bones in a man's body, turn him inside out, take him apart and put him together, in order to convert him. He that heeds not the "still, small voice," is in danger of going down to the grave without an interest in Christ's blood.