

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PAGE

A CHILD'S PRAYER

A young mother left her guests one evening to go up and bid good-night to the small daughter whom the nurse had just left.

"Why, Esther, you haven't said your prayers!" exclaimed the mother, as the child climbed into bed.

It was a perfunctory reminder, for she was anxious to be down-stairs again. She herself had almost given up the custom of saying her prayers, but her two children had been taught to observe the ceremony at bedtime.

"No, mother, I'm so very sleepy tonight. You know our Sunday School prayer begins:

'To say my prayer is not to pray
Unless I mean the words I say,
Unless I think to whom I speak,
And with my heart His favor seek.'

The mother did not like making excuses, and she little understood the spiritual life of this child of hers.

"Do you think it's nice to go all day without saying your prayers?" she asked.

Esther sat up in bed, surprised and hurt, and her blue eyes widened as she exclaimed, "Why, mother, dear, you don't suppose, you don't think, that this is the only time I pray, do you?" She was wide awake now.

"When do you pray?" demanded the mother, in return.

"Oh, many times in the day," answered the child, "whenever I need to."

The mother's glance fell before that of her child, and a tinge of crimson mounted to her cheek.

"Whenever I need to." Could she say as much with the same simple truthfulness? Were there not many times when the fretfulness, the selfishness, the sordidness had persisted, times when her better nature might have overcome if she had prayed "whenever she needed to?"

"What do you pray about?" she asked again, with a strange sense of distance between her heart and that of the child.

"Oh, I talk to God about the things I'm doing," said Esther, falling back on her pillow, "and when I do wrong I ask His forgiveness and His help to do better next time. Because He understands that and is so great, you know," she added.

Yes, her mother knew; she had known for many years! but was she as conscious of that Presence and that Power in her own daily life, or had her own praying degenerated into a more or less perfunctory "saying of prayers" at stated times, or a petulant demand for something which she could not secure through mortal assistance?

"And then," continued Esther, unconscious of the long pause, "sometimes I pray because I'm so happy. I just have to."

The mother suddenly felt her soul to be a small, darkened thing compared to the clear shining of her child's. How undeveloped her own spiritual nature seemed in that moment! She was a good woman; she cared for the little family; she took them to church; she made her contribution indifferently when she was asked to give something for missions; but beyond that her life was mostly one of pleasure. And her pleasures were many, but were they the sort which made her "pray because she was so happy?" Was it not usually only a trial or a disappointment that reminded

her for a moment of her dependence on a higher Power?

Esther's idea of praying was surely a very different thing from the "saying of prayers." Where had she learned the difference?

Her head dropped in self-accusation. Like many mothers, she had taught her child to repeat a childish prayer, but had she ever really taught her to pray? Now it seemed, in some strange way, the child was to lead her.

She stopped to kiss the earnest little face on the pillow. "We will talk about it more," she said, "and if you are sleepy you need not say, 'Now I lay me' tonight, for God likes waking prayers best, we know. But, she added, wistfully "won't you just pray one prayer for mother before you go to sleep? She needs it."
—Youth's Companion.

TO YOUNG WOMEN

I want to say a very few words of kindest warning and counsel, as though you were each my daughter or my young sister, upon a very delicate and sacred matter that concerns you as closely as life or death.

You are old enough now to be allowed some liberty in regard to your pleasures and your friends, and you find that lads and young men seek your company, and you, on your part, look for their attention and are pleased to have it.

Now it is just in this very natural matter that you may find your greatest happiness and the greatest blessings that life may bring you—or you may find the greatest temptations, which if you yield to them, will bring you shame and bitter sorrow.

There are two sorts of character shown by the young fellows who seek your society—they show their character by their manner and by their talk. Some are inclined to be much too free with you, in the hope that you may give them encouragement to take greater liberties. And then, too, the conversation of such as these is dangerous.

They hint at things that provoke unhealthy curiosity, and which you can not speak of without shame, in order that you may be led on to some hour of wrong when evil thoughts and words will take shape in sinful acts.

Against such you can not be too much on your guard. However attractive they may be, your character, your honor, can not be safe in their company. Avoid them as you would a hurtful reptile. If young men are fit companions for you, they will treat you with kindness and respect. They will be careful in word and act never to leave on your minds a thought which it would be sin or shame to cherish; they will be so careful for you, so unselfish in their advances to you, that you can not help but be the better for their friendship, and, if God lets the friendship deepen into love, the love of such men will bring you both joy and blessing.

You know why you should thus be careful, and on guard. You know that God may will that you shall become in due and proper course, honorable wives and mothers, at the head of Christian families.

How all-important, then, is it that you guard the purity and modesty that are your greatest charm, your highest honor, as you would guard your own life, from all that would destroy them.

Let me urge you not only to be watchful for that inward judgment by which God encourages or warns you, but to decline the friendship and attentions of young men until you know that they are such men as you can honor and respect.

It is good to take the advice of your parents, or of some friends older and wiser than yourselves. If often happens that older friends can give help or warning, for which you would thank God and them all the rest of your life. Above all, bring all your friendships before God, for His judgment and approval. If your relations with others have in them anything that you can not ask God to bless and to allow, they are wrong, and must be given up. If with a trustful heart and a clear conscience you can pray for His blessing upon all that enters into your relations with your young men friends, it is well.

If you are so prayerful over these, your highest interests in life, I am sure God will so instruct you by His wisdom, and protect you in His love, that you will escape the snares by which so many are taken, and be made, in your turn, blessings to those whose love you win, and to whom, because you can honor and respect them, you give the prizes of your love and regard.—Rev. George Brett, A. M., in *The Pioneer*.

THE WAY TO HEAVEN

Years ago little boys were employed by the chimney-sweeps of London to go up and down the tall chimneys where men could not go. They were often seen in the streets of London with their smutty rig, their kit of brushes, and their song, "Sweey-o-Sweep" ringing through the air.

One morning a gentleman met one of them.

"Show me the way to Hyde Park, little smut, and I'll give you a penny," he said.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the boy, "and I'll show the way to another place for another penny."

"Where is that?"

"The way to heaven, sir."

The gentleman, surprised, said: "Tell me, I'll give you the penny."

"Jesus Christ is the way, sir, and I know it is true, because He says so Himself."

The gentleman was so pleased that he gave the child a sixpence.

"I'll buy a pork pie," he said. "It will be good."

But he had no sooner bought it than he thought, "If I eat this pie it will be gone, and no good to anybody." He went right back to the shop and asked the woman to take the pie and give him his money again. She smiled but did not object.

Out he started again, and now to a store where books and tracts were sold, and asked the bookseller to give him sixpence worth of little books. "Pretty ones," he said, "with pictures on them."

"Where did you get your sixpence?" he was asked.

"A gentleman gave it to me."

"Did he give it to you sure?" asked the man, looking at him very sharply.

"Yes, sir, he gave it to me for telling him the way to heaven, and I'll tell you if you'll give me a sixpence."

"I will; tell me."

(Continued on Page 8)