

POSSIBILITES



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*To my brother,
William H. McClure,
In affection and appreciation.*

Contents.

	PAGE
1. Finding Our Possibilities	7
2. Asserting Our Possibilities	23
3. Protecting Our Possibilities.	39
4. Developing Our Possibilities.	54
5. The Possibility of Being Like Our Heroes .	70
6. The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere.	83
7. The Possibility of Our Time.	98
8. The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life .	113

FINDING OUR POSSIBILITIES.

“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

ACTUAL facts are sometimes serious, and reported facts are sometimes even worse. To be in a bad situation is unfortunate; to be in a bad situation that has a bad reputation associated with it is even more unfortunate. It was really bad enough for Nazareth to be away off in Galilee, where only the more ignorant and unpromising of the people lived. Nazareth was a little, provincial village. Lines of travel had nothing to do with it. It was cut off from the enlivening and brightening influences of intercourse with the world. To city people and to people of culture and fashion it seemed a most out-of-the-way spot. No one looked for anything bright or startling in Nazareth, that far-away village up among the hills!

Besides, Nazareth had a bad reputation. Places get a bad name sometimes, whether justly or unjustly it is difficult to say. Nazareth seems to have had many rough, uncultivated people in it, people who stood ready to throw a person over a

Possibilities

precipice if they disliked him. A bad reputation for a place is like a stone about a man's neck, it helps to drag the place down. Its people are at a discount in the market of the world. Then, too, they look upon themselves half hopelessly. When persons do not expect much of themselves, very little good results. A bad reputation hampers and hinders the whole life of a community.

So it came about that no one expected much of Nazareth. Nazareth had done nothing in the world's advance and no one thought it ever could do anything. As we to-day say "Can water run up hill?", so people then said "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The sentiment of the time was, that it was a foregone conclusion that a good thing could not come out of Nazareth.

But contrary to all expectation, and contrary to all precedent, a good thing did come out of Nazareth. A little boy grew up there, a mechanic matured there. In a general way his fellow villagers knew him favorably. His home circle did indeed wonder at him. But no one outside of Nazareth cared anything for him. Then a day came when, in his full manhood, he stepped out into the sight of Palestine. He taught, he labored, he lived. And lo, out of Nazareth had come so good a thing that the name

Finding Our Possibilities

and power of Jesus of Nazareth filled the earth, and men were inspired to the loftiest sentiments and to the bravest deeds by him, and more, the whole world was being redeemed through him.

That little, rude, provincial village indeed had "possibilities" of which no one had ever dreamed.

We are now to think of the way in which we as *persons* find our possibilities for good. But before doing so let us touch on the thought that many *places*, like Nazareth, places that people do not expect much from, are capable of great things.

In Massachusetts is the little town of Andover. All about it are bustling cities. In the year 1812 it had a mere handful of people and was of no consequence as compared to great Boston, a few miles away. When Andover Seminary was founded, such was the antipathy to it that it was doubtful whether a charter could be obtained from the Legislature. Who in scanning the towns and cities of the United States at that time, would have thought that any special possibility of influencing the world existed in Andover? But in the house of one man, a teacher, in that village, were born the ideas and plans whereby the first American Foreign Mission Society originated, and also the American Monthly Concert of Prayer for the world's conversion, and later the

Possibilities

Concert of Prayer for Colleges, the American Tract Society and the first organized movement in the world founded on the plan of entire abstinence from intoxicating drinks.

Eleven miles back of Albany, New York, there is a range of half-mountainous hills called the Heldebergs. Here dwell "the hillers," as the people on more level farms contemptuously call those whose homes are among the rougher and rockier lands. The "hillers" are supposed to be of no account. But from those very hill settlements there came a man who, for a score of years, sat upon the Supreme Court bench of the United States at Washington, and had part in some of the most beneficent and far-reaching actions that that Supreme Court has ever decided.

There is not a place, wherever it be, that has not amazing possibilities of influencing human life. A man may dwell in the remotest wilderness, but if he is a great thinker, there will be a beaten pathway to his door. In this land of America, with its post-office facilities and its communication with the public press, every place can get its ideas to the front, and if they are worthy ideas can get them into recognition. It was from the wilderness that the greatest movement of history was heralded by a

Finding Our Possibilities

John the Baptist, not from Jerusalem. And to-day many of the great movements for the blessing of humanity, like fresh-air projects and seaside and mountain homes for needy children, originated in the country and forced their way into the city. The great Christian Endeavor organization had its start in a town unnamed beside the largest centers of population. The rills that start rivers began far away from the haunts of the multitude, and no one knows but that out of some remote hamlet which to the superficial eye might seem incapable of affecting the age shall come a power that shall transform the world.

It is with *persons*, however, rather than with places, that we are to associate this idea of finding our possibilities. What a joy it is when any one discovers his special capabilities and learns that he really has a work that he can do ! How dignified and significant his life then becomes.

Again and again the pages of history tell us that women have entered palatial homes as nurses, and menial as their duties seemed and circumscribed as their opportunities for influence appeared, they have so moulded the young hearts entrusted to their care that when the children grew up, they have been benefactors of the human race. Such

Possibilities

nurses have often overcome the debilitating and worldly atmosphere of the family itself, and made the boys strong and spiritual. Later those boys have gone into London and Paris to correct evil tendencies and stand for a noble type of manhood. It was a nurse that thus found her possibilities and made Shaftesbury what he was. "The history of the working classes in this century," said the present Prime Minister of England, "is very largely the history of one man's life—that of Shaftesbury."

Over in Scotland there was a gardener who might have wondered many times what he had to do for the world's good. He was a man who prayed in his family. Sir Walter Scott would go, under the cover of darkness, to that gardener's house and wait outside the window to listen to the evening prayer that asked blessings on him and on the world, and then with cheered heart would turn back to his work, that brighter words and higher ideas might enter into the romances that were to be read in all the earth.

There was David Livingstone at the age of ten working as a "piecer" in a cotton factory near Glasgow. What opportunity is there for him? He buys a Latin grammar with part of his first week's wages. He sits up nights studying till his mother sends him to bed, for he must be at work in the

Finding Our Possibilities

factory at six in the morning. He places a book upon the spinning jenny that he may catch sentences as he passes it. He paid his way at the Medical, and Greek, and Divinity classes at Glasgow. He passed his examinations and became a licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons. He was ready now for service in China, but war prevented his going there. So he puts himself under the care of the London Missionary Society to be sent to Africa, for the first time in his life being dependent upon others. In Africa he built houses, dug canals, taught schools, cultivated fields, made explorations and helped everybody. When he died, the world sorrowed. In all Westminster Abbey there is not a more impressive spot than that where the grave of Livingstone calls upon all men to heal Africa's sores. The poor little boy of the Scotch home did indeed find his possibilities.

It seems as though every kind of life and every kind of situation admitted of influence, Granville Sharpe was an apprentice to a linen draper in London. What can he do? He finds himself unable to talk understandingly about the meaning of the New Testament, and he resolves to learn Greek. Later he finds the same inability to tell the exact meaning of the Old Testament and he learns Hebrew.

Possibilities

He has a brother, a surgeon, who in giving gratuitous relief helps a poor African, Jonathan Strong. The negro had been cruelly treated by his master, and now lame, almost blind and unable to work, is turned adrift to starve. The two brothers help him. They cure him. His old master recognizes the cured man on the streets, and claims him as his slave. Then Granville Sharpe steps forth. He resolves that this negro never again shall be in cruel bondage. But what can he do? He is poor, unknown, without influence. Besides, the position of a slave in England was at the best but doubtful. Lord Chief Justice Mansfield believed that a slave did not become free by coming into England. Every one and everything seemed against Granville Sharpe. But he gave all his spare time to the study of law for two years, he wrote a tract on the "Injustice of Tolerating Slavery in England," he kept agitating on the subject, until at last Lord Mansfield changed his mind, and there came the declaration that the claim of slavery never can be supported in England. Then the slave trade, openly carried on in the streets of Liverpool and London, ceased, and any slave became free the minute his feet touched England. Granville Sharpe had found his possibilities.

Finding Our Possibilities

It is not long ago that Harlan Page was a merchant in New York City. What could a busy man do for the world's good? What were his possibilities outside of making money for himself and his home? He saw how many people there were to whom no one ever spoke a personal word about their Christian purpose. He resolved that he would speak to as many as he could, or write to them. He sought them in their homes and in their offices, he met them on the streets and walked with them, he sent them direct and persuasive letters when he could not reach them otherwise. It was no easy work. It was not always successful. But it did good, great good, and scores upon scores of people came forth under his influence as avowed and worthy Christians. Like him, another, a Sunday school teacher, a business man, too, followed the individual members of his classes, praying for them and with them, giving them his heart's interest, until he saw over one hundred and fifty young men and young women place themselves within the ranks of the Church of Christ.

The thought of such possibilities is inspiring. How are we to find our own possibilities? First, we must *believe that we are on the earth for a purpose of good*. That belief we must never give up as long as

Possibilities

we live. God has created each of us for something definite and distinct of usefulness. He did not put us into being carelessly. He had an end in view, which he expected us to meet. We have a particular mission. Each of us is a unit, made for a special influence. This belief must lie down with us at night when we are utterly wearied out, and must rise up with us when we, still wearied, have to face a day of difficulty. Let people despise us as people once despised Nazareth, and say that no good thing can come out of our lives, nevertheless we must hold fast to our conviction that we are in this world for as distinct a purpose as Christ himself was in the world.

And second, this belief must be *kept in mind*, when we hold it. Care must not drive it out. Meriment must not dissipate it. Whether odium or flattery is ours, still we must think about our possibility. There *is* some good for each to do. That good is the main thing of existence. Eyes and ears must be open to it. We must watch and pray about it. There will be hundreds of occasions when it will seem as though there was no use of thinking about it, so blocked and unpromising will be our situation. But it must be kept in mind, a dominating, inspiring belief.

Finding Our Possibilities

Fowell Buxton, once started on his purpose of good, would not allow himself to let it out of his thoughts. What could such a one as he do? He was the dunce at school. What an idler he was as a boy, how awkward. His father was dead. How could his mother deal with his violent, domineering, head-strong obstinancy? She never gave up hope. At last he got the idea into his head that the work Granville Sharpe had begun he must complete, that not only must there not be a slave in England, but also there must not be a slave in the *British Colonies*. That was a tremendous undertaking. Could the dunce succeed? Without genius, without intellectual acuteness, but with resolution and the growing perception that comes from energy and high purpose, he plodded on, and ere he died the cry went up from every quarter of the globe where England rules, "Slavery is forever over."

Then, third, we must *plod on*. When we know what God wishes done, we are to do it, on and on and on, unceasingly. Endurance is more effective than brilliancy. Continued industry is what tells. They are the men and women that most bless the world who never give up. Dull plodding that does not relax will win the day from meteoric enthusiasm. Seeming failure may be the best means of final success.

Possibilities

Paul and Silas exerted a more powerful influence when they were in prison, by their happy songs than when they were in the streets, by their eloquence. Let all the events of earth and all the providences of heaven appear to be against us, and we not give up, but go right on, plodding away at the good, and in due time our possibility will show itself. So Arthur Cumnock found at Harvard College. He entered that college when the moral standard was low. The fast set had marked the college, in the eyes of the outside world, for its own. Unclean and unmanly things were in the air. "The chief end of man was to drink, and gamble politely, and wire pull for societies, and cut recitations." High ideals of character were all in the shadow. But he lived his life, on through the four years, strong, sturdy, bound to put the best to the front, in himself and in his conversation and in his influence. It was up-hill work. The odds were against him. One man trying to remake a college life! But when class day of his senior year came and the class wished to acknowledge the manliest one of them all and publicly proclaim who it was that had toned up the life of the college until purity and good held high place, they singled out Arthur Cumnock and shouted his name with joy and gave him their united praise.

Finding Our Possibilities

More than all and above all we are helped to the finding of our possibility by remembering that our *personality* is our power. It was the man Christ Jesus that made Capernaum a center of influence; it was Himself, more than his teachings and miracles, that impressed society. It is always so. Wherever great and permanent good has been done it has been done very largely through the worth of the individual. No man may complain that his place is small, his opportunity meagre, when his effectiveness will depend almost wholly on what *he* makes his place and his opportunity. Arnold of Rugby was not out in the stirring scenes of Parliament. Many a one thought his position of teacher in a school was paltry. But Arnold was such a man in himself that he reached the minds of thousands with his strong views and made the name of teacher to have new possibilities of influence associated with it for all time.

What cheer and comfort there are in all these thoughts about our possibilities. Poor and rich alike have them. Michael Faraday is a London street boy, living over a stable and loaning newspapers for a penny apiece; then an apprentice in a book bindery; and then he is one of the most distinguished chemists and natural philosophers of his

Possibilities

day. Charles N. Crittendon is in business, burdened with care, and he goes into the slums, sees their wretchedness, and lo! the man of cares has become the man of benevolence, establishing in several cities homes of refuge for girls who are lost to God and to themselves. A railway president bows his head over the family meal and repeats the Lord's Prayer as a grace, and hundreds that know of that custom try to live better lives. The Christ dies upon the cross, and when all others have fallen away and fled, the rich Joseph of Arimathea comes forward, and now wealth has its possibility to show interest in the Master and make provision for his body, and nobly does wealth meet its opportunity.

We never know what possibilities lie in any man or in any place. A waiting-maid may outshine the richest lady in what she will do for the world's good. A slave Joseph may some day save a nation from famine. Matthew the despised may become Matthew the glorious. Unlearned men have often taught the wise. Ian McLaren has shown us a little village, Drumtochty, that no one ever heard of, and then has told us how the teacher and the minister and the farmer, together, found the most promising boys in that village and sent them out educated men to be the blessing of mankind. In a hamlet of

Finding Our Possibilities

sixty souls in Texas, men and women are to-day revolutionizing surrounding society and stamping it with godliness.

Let some one who knows the history of the towns of New England, or of New York, or of Pennsylvania, tell that history. He will point to a house here among the hills and say, "There the merchant prince of Chicago was born;" to a house there and say, "That was the early home of the great editor of New York;" to a house beyond and say, "In that home grew up the generous philanthropist of Boston." It was in a small school house, plain and unattractive, in the Hampshire Hills, that Wm. Cullen Bryant studied. No wonder that the teacher up among the miners of Germany touched his hat to the noisy boys of his charge, for one of them some day would be Martin Luther. There is not a cottage in any glen, along any roadway, to be despised for its possibilities. There is not a town so small but that out of it may come a Hampden. There is not a school, a store, a shop, but that may have in it now those who shall hereafter enrich and beautify the earth.

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" There certainly can. What good things have come from most unsuspected sources! How

Possibilities

sure we may be that every position in which we are placed admits of good!

Let us be brave, then, and hopeful. *Human nature* is grand. We may well believe in it. It has magnificent possibilities. Do you recall the story of the "Birkenhead"? It was off the coast of Africa. There were four hundred and seventy-two men on board, and one hundred and sixty-six women and children. The men belonged to several regiments. They were principally raw recruits lately entered upon service. It was two o'clock in the morning when the vessel struck a rock. All were asleep. A hole was stove in the bottom. It was evident that the vessel would sink. The women and children were put in the lifeboats and the lifeboats were started away. Then the captain shouted to the soldiers drawn up in file on deck, "Every man that can swim, jump into the water and make for the boats." Captain Wright of the 91st Highlanders heard these inconsiderate words and shouted, "No! No! If you do that, the boats with the women must be swamped." The brave men stood motionless. Not a word was said. Not a murmur escaped any lip. There they stood, the vessel plunging, and with her last lunge they fired a volley, and sank beneath the waves. Yes, there are possibilities in human nature. God help us to find our own possibilities.

ASSERTING OUR POSSIBILITIES.

“Peter sat at the fire warming himself.”

THIS experiment is sometimes seen in gun factories; a great bar of steel weighing five hundred pounds, eight feet in length, is suspended by a very delicate chain. Near by is also suspended a common bottle-cork by a silk thread. The desire is to see whether the cork can set the steel bar in motion. Such an effect seems impossible. Let the cork be swung gently against the steel bar and the steel bar remains motionless. But let it be done again, and again, and again, for ten minutes—and lo! at the end of that time the bar gives evidence of feeling uncomfortable, a sort of nervous chill runs over it. Ten minutes later and the chill has been followed by vibrations. At the end of half an hour the great bar is swinging like the pendulum of a clock.

Great possibilities are in that little cork as held by the silk thread. The *assertion* of those possibilities makes it a power.

Once there was a man who sat in the courtyard of the high priest's house at Jerusalem, warming

Possibilities

himself at the fire. This in itself was a very proper thing to do. The night was cold. Only, his Master was in need of friends, and the man was warming himself rather than comforting his Master. It was simply a case of doing nothing. The Master was within sight and within hearing. A friendly word about that Master would have given great cheer; but it was not spoken. There he sat in quietness, having no care, keeping as much in the shadow as possible, and he let a noble soul pass through trial and distress without so much as lifting a hand, an eye, a lip, to help Him.

But perhaps he was a mute, perhaps he was incapable of a brave deed, perhaps there were no possibilities in him of being helpful and heroic. Let us see.

It is a month and a half later. There is a great gathering in Jerusalem. Thousands are present. They are listening to a man who is talking to them earnestly and directly. He is talking about One lately crucified at the wish and by the instigation of the chief authorities of the city. He speaks right out and says that this One is his Master. He goes further, and charges these very authorities and those who acted under their instigation, with a cruel and unjust deed, even this deed of crucifixion.

Asserting Our Possibilities

It is an eloquent, brave, even daring man who is doing this. What power he has ! How forceful is his utterance ! He is afraid of no one. Who can he be ?

Suppose a stranger to the facts of the story should ask this question, and then some one should answer: "This is the man who sat at the fire warming himself, and in the supreme hour of his Master's peril was speechless." Would not the stranger say: "It can not be." Yes, but it can be. That speechless fellow who crouches at the fire is this daring orator. Sitting there among the servants of the high priest and never lisping one word of loyalty he has in him all the possibilities of bravery and speech. These are not two men, but one man: one man, first, with possibilities unasserted, and then, with possibilities asserted. As he sits moping over that fire he cuts a pitiable figure; he is a poor weakling. But as he stands forth at Pentecost he is a hero—a hero who, having once dared to assert his possibilities, will go on, facing danger and at last death, so that he will die with an honored name and will be called forever a magnificent man.

The point I wish now to press is that besides finding our possibilities we must *assert* them. Power for good is latent in every one. God never has

Possibilities

addressed a human being as unqualified for useful service. His whole manner of dealing with persons is considerate. He never asks a lamb of a man who is so poor that he can give only a dove. "It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." He makes no demands other than those that are based on possibilities. And the very fact that without an exception or a qualification he calls upon every single one to be useful for good in this world indicates, that in his omniscient sight every one has the possibility of usefulness for the good. Men and women are like seeds. All inwrapped within them are possibilities. Small things are capable of producing much. One seed may grow sixty seeds, one grain of mustard a tree, one acorn may help make the ship that carries blessings across an ocean.

There is something very charming in this fact. Christ never stood before one soul and talked to it as though it were incompetent for good. He did just the opposite. He said to men who, to the best of our knowledge had never anticipated a day's work outside of Palestine, "Go into all the world," and he charged men who had given no promise whatever of useful, not to say large, deeds, to let their power out and bless everybody. A man

Asserting Our Possibilities

who denies that he can be useful for good in life distrusts God, Father and Son, in his heart, and contradicts them with his lips. If Moses, who has never been eloquent, is told to plead with Pharaoh, God, who made his mouth, knows its possibilities of speech. If the paralytic is told to take up his bed and walk, he has within him the power to do so.

“Ah, but it does not seem possible that *my* life can ever accomplish anything,” some one says. That is just the beauty of it. It means so much more to a man himself when he actually does do something of which he once thought himself incapable. The satisfaction which comes to a Demosthenes, who seemed to have no power of speech at all in his stammering days, when he can stand upon the bema at Athens and plead with the people to rise against the Philip who is invading their nation and threatening to make them slaves, and can persuade them to assert their manliness and save Greece, is most comforting. The man or woman who, seemingly without gifts, still does good and crowns a life with helpfulness, has wondrous cause for gratitude.

And what an inspiration it is to others to see little men do blessed things. Every human being that I have ever met (who was well balanced and sensitive, who was not proud and arrogant), has needed en-

Possibilities

couragement to believe in his possibilities for usefulness, and encouragement to assert them. In many respects most people are retiring. They shrink from great responsibilities. Except in matters of getting money or public place or social standing or literary reputation, they are diffident. It seems as though meekness and humility, as though real worth, often were associated with distrust of oneself. And when men and women, quiet, unobtrusive, untalented, prove to be blessings, then other diffident people may hope that their lives too will do good.

The Bible is full of such lives—David, who was a mere shepherd lad, not enough of a man to be called to do service in the army, only a carrier of provisions for others who were the real heroes of the hour; Esther, who was merely one of many in a king's household, belonging to a people under ban, without an open door of opportunity; Zerubbabel, who was so powerless that everybody said he could no more do the work which he saw was needed in Jerusalem, than a human hand could topple over a mountain; the woman of Samaria, whose whole career of evil was an estoppel upon any effort to bring her villagers to any true idea of a holy, blameless life. But they succeeded, every one of them; as did Amos, taken from the sheepfolds, and Elisha, taken from

Asserting Our Possibilities

the plow, to be prophets; as did those untaught fishermen, who became the leaders of the thought of the academies of Greece and the universities of Europe and the market places of the whole earth. From the most unexpected persons the powerful agencies of life have been called forth, and in the light of the Bible every one has his chance of bettering the world.

And in the light of all other true books beside the Bible, everyone has his chance. Thorwaldsen was turning a spit for the cook in a kitchen in Denmark. The cook let him peep through a crack in the door at the children met for a party. He overheard the children saying, "My father is in high office, and no one with a 'sen' at the end of his name can be anything at all. We must put our arms akimbo and make the elbows quite pointed, so as to keep these 'sen' people at a great distance." "And my father is a rich merchant and can give away a hundred dollars' worth of bon-bons," said another. And "My father is an editor and can make people afraid of him," said a third. What was there for this little boy whose name ended in "sen" and who was penniless? Only this, his one possibility. What was it? He found it later. It was the possibility of being a sculptor. Then he

Possibilities

asserted it. And one day those very children grown to be men and women came to look at the beautiful work that *Thorwaldsen* had done, and best and most beautiful of all was his "Christ." And so the little boy put high and great ideas before the eyes of people concerning God and God's works, ideas that blessed Denmark and blessed the world.

No, we must not let this fundamental thought escape us, that every one who exerts it has his chance for usefulness, not for fame perhaps, but for usefulness; not for larger place, but for usefulness. We must believe this and believe it with our whole soul, believe it as Kitto did when he begged his father, deaf boy as he was (he had fallen from a ladder when carrying mortar), to take him from the poor-house and let him struggle for an education. It was a drunken father he appealed to as he said, "I know how to stop hunger. Hottentots live a long time on nothing but gum. Sometimes when hungry they tie a band around their bodies. Let me go. I can do as they do. There are blackberries and nuts in the hedges, and turnips in the fields, and hay-ricks for a bed. Let me go." And so one of the greatest Biblical scholars in the world began his work, and layman as he was the Univer-

Asserting Our Possibilities

sity of Giessen saw such value in his work that it named him a Doctor of Divinity.

But be it noticed that in every case mentioned (and hundreds more are waiting to be mentioned) it was the *assertion* of the person's possibilities that determined the degree of his usefulness. David *sought* his opportunity. David said, "I will go against Goliath." David put forth his skill. In the face of Eliab, his brother, who charged him with pride and naughtiness of heart, this modest youth took his place. Esther sought her opportunity. It was not at hand. She, timid, distrustful, knew that life itself was in danger. What was her power of eloquence in pleading for a cause with a king whose high officers had persuaded him to a decree already published throughout the kingdom! But she exerted her possibilities, at fearful risk, and she too saved a nation, as did David.

You know already the story of Fowell Buxton, a most unpromising lad, a lad of no stability and no purpose, becoming the man who labored for the day when there should not be a slave in English domain and living until he saw that day. The story of his life is exhilarating. But how came it about that this unpromising youth that was no more to the good than Peter warming himself at the fire was to

Possibilities

the good, became the man he did? All because of a home into which he went as caller and then as visitor, whose influence was wholly noble and uplifting. The thought of that home caused him to strive at Dublin University for honors. In that home was the woman whom he afterward married. But beside her there was her sister, a girl of thoughtfulness, who was merry and bright, could sing and dance and play games—and who could do more, who could and would *think*—about matters of human welfare, and who thought of slavery and who exerted gently and persuasively and effectively all her powers upon this young man, first a friend and then her brother-in-law, to have him to take up the cause of the slave. And her power told, and his power was aroused, and he labored, and succeeded, and when the world applauded the man who asserted his possibilities and made England a free land, Heaven applauded Priscilla Gurney, who dared to exert her possibilities and changed a semi-useless ornament of a man into a vigorous worker for the world's betterment.

The possibilities of womanhood for good are great, if womanhood would only *exert* them. Still it is true, as it ever has been and ever must be true, that to most women home circles will be the first

Asserting Our Possibilities

place for such exertion. There are set thrones of glory. Ethelberga was wife of Ethelbert when the missionaries came to England, heathen England. She was a Christian wife. She won his heart for herself, and still not for herself but for Christ, and when the hour was ripe she exerted all her power over that rough heathen king and she saw him baptized a Christian. It will be, it is in some respects already so, a sorry day for human good when the possibilities of women in making husbands, brothers, sons, visiting men and youth noble, unselfish, spiritual are overlooked, are not exerted. Stories by the hundred, and all true as God's firmest truth can be told, of the possibilities of influence for good of women, young and old, in homes and in all social pleasure. It is a fine question, this question of how to assert one's possibilities, but assertion does not mean rough, unattractive, repellent methods. The sun exerts its possibilities when it shines, as the hurricane its possibilities when it blows, and exertion is equally true of the gentleness of the one as of the bluster of the other. Opportunities for such exertion are constantly occurring, and oh, the possibility to any woman of saying the wise word, of doing the right

Possibilities

deed, that will lodge a thought, perhaps develop a purpose in another mind.

How well I recall the day when as I was making a call, conversation gave a young woman the possibility of saying that she wished I was a Christian!

Madame de Stael was anything but beautiful, but she knew how to shape the careers of men, as if she were omnipotent. Even the Emperor Napoleon feared her influence so much that he destroyed her writings and banished her from France.

Is not this the real reason we do not exert our possibilities for good, because we are not *inspired* by the good? Here are scores of men that have just as much possibility in them as Peter at Pentecost; they can talk as well, write as well, live as well as he, but to-day they are like Peter at the fire, they follow the good but they follow it afar off; they get within the courtyard of the place where good is, but they are doing and saying, oh, so little for the world's help. They could be up and helping. The possibilities are there, but are not exerted. They are not in love with the good.

I have seen men in business who believed themselves capable of making money, exerting their possibilities to make money. They go day after day to business, they try this method and that, they

Asserting Our Possibilities

keep eyes and ears and hands open. They *will* make money if they can. They say, "I have a home and family dependent upon me." So they exert themselves to the full. Then I have seen people in social life use their every possibility to get ahead. They will dress, will call, will entertain, will give and accept invitations, and they leave no means unused that their every possibility may tell. And once again, I have seen people in athletic sports who felt that there was that within them which admitted of their playing better than they were doing, who felt that they had possibilities of a better score, and they would play, and practice, and play again, that they might make that score better. Here is the charm to many a golf player, that he may exert his possibilities.

Oh, that men and women loved to do Christ's work in the world as they love other interests. What changed Peter, the man looking out for his own comfort, into the world's benefactor was a new view of Jesus Christ. Hitherto Christ had touched the surface of his life, touched it so that he admired Christ and in a burst of enthusiasm could say that he would stand by Christ to the death. Yes, he did love him, in a sort of way. But it was a poor, weak way. He was not carried captive, body, mind and

Possibilities

soul, by Christ. And so he warmed himself by the fire. But later it came to him that the supreme work of life was just this work of Jesus Christ; that to live for him and get others to live for him, and put Christ's life into their homes, into society, into the world, was the best thing he could do. Then he waked up. Then he opened his lips and put forth his powers.

What we all need is an inspiration. "I, too, can be a painter," Raphael said when he saw good painting. "I, too, can be good and helpful" all should say when they see such a master as Christ summoning them to devotion to human welfare. Yes, we all can be good and helpful, and that not in any "average" way either. It is well enough to let average intellect and average health and average position satisfy us, but never average goodness and average helpfulness. Let every possibility for blessing the world, out. Let the cork keep striking the steel bar unceasingly.

The boy Coley Patteson at Eton was not particularly clever, though he studied well and was captain of the boats and was in the cricket eleven. There were bad customs at Eton, as there often are in the best educational institutions. At certain gatherings coarse songs were sung, songs unbecom-

Asserting Our Possibilities

ing high-minded boys. They had been sung for years. They were a part of the traditions of the school. But Coley Patteson quietly declared that they should not be sung in his presence, and when one was sung he dared to get up and leave the room. Then and there the custom stopped. For the boy asserted his possibilities, and he carried the day. And what a preparation that youth-time experience was for the dangers when, as Bishop Coleridge Patteson, he faced the Melanesians with their clubs and arrows, and daily risked his life to save them !

My heart burns with desire that all the unexerted possibilities of manhood for good may be exerted. There have been plants upon which a stone has fallen or been placed, so that it would seem as though the plants could not grow, and they have come forth from beneath the stone, and have grown out and around it, and they would not let the stone crush them or keep them down. There are men in business, in sports, in pleasures, who can not be kept down, because they will exert themselves. So may it be with us in our possibilities for good.

For I charge you to remember that so long as Peter did not exert himself for Christ he was in danger. He was growing weaker in courage. De-

Possibilities

lay in exerting his possibilities caused him to deny his Lord, and to deny him meanly.

The man that does not exert his possibilities for Christ is in danger of sinking lower, of growing weaker all the time. Our own safety and the world's good depend on the assertion of our possibilities.

PROTECTING OUR POSSIBILITIES.

“ And his strength went from him.”

ONE of the questions often asked children about the Bible is, “ Who was the strongest man?” The answer is almost always ready, “ Samson.”

It is interesting to see how eagerly the story of Samson is heard and how easily it is kept in mind. That Moses was the meekest and Solomon the wisest man may be forgotten, but that Samson was the strongest man is remembered.

It is said that everybody loves a hero. The kind of hero that most people can understand quickest is a physical hero. All that they have to do is to look at him and see his deeds and then they know about him. A spiritual hero, one who does his strong things in his heart where motives and purposes are the battle ground, is not so easily comprehended.

So children and untaught people and in fact the great generality of mankind have their attention caught by a physical hero. We love to hear about him. One like Samson is a fascinating subject to most of us.

Possibilities

We know nothing of Samson's size, whether he was tall or short. All we know is that he was strong. What power he had! His hands and wrists were so strong that he could take an ordinary bleached bone of some ass that had died in the fields, and he could wield it so that a thousand men were struck down by it. His arms were so strong that he could tear apart new ropes which had never been used until they were bound around him. And his back and shoulders and legs were so strong that he could lift great timbers and carry them even up to the very top of a hill.

To see him when at rest was to wonder where his strength lay. He certainly had strength, It would not do to trifle with him. He had possibilities stored away within him, and woe to the man that called them forth. Nobody could resist him. He was like an Alpine avalanche bursting on a peasant's hut and crushing it as though it were an eggshell, when his possibilities expressed themselves.

Yes, Samson *was* the strongest man, and he did stupendous deeds. No one in all the catalogue of Bible characters was so strong in body as he. But what became of all these possibilities, what was the outcome of his wondrous powers?

He did not protect them. For a time he did. There

Protecting Our Possibilities

were years when no one could persuade him to relax his care of them. No miser ever hoarded his gold more carefully than Samson his possibilities. Neither threats of men nor wiles of women could put him off his guard. Like John Knox, who would not be moved from the path of integrity even by the tears of a queen, he would not be moved by enticements and entreaties and the plaints of love to surrender his possibilities.

But there came an hour when he lost his sense of danger, when the voice of pleading found its way past all the sentinels of discretion to his passion, and he let an influence prevail with him which robbed him of his possibilities, and lo, the strong man is strong no more. Any one of hundreds of men are stronger than he now. He is powerless to resist his foes as they seize him, bore out his eyes, lead him like a slave, put fetters of brass upon him, and make him do a woman's work of grinding meal, in the prison house.

Surely there is something startling in the fact that the strongest man in all Biblical history becomes a weakling. What can it mean?

It is not enough to have possibilities, not enough to exert them upon many occasions; they must be *protected*.

Possibilities

I recall that when the war of 1861 broke out and men were enlisting and starting for the front, companies would pass along the streets of a city, on the way to the railway station or steamboat wharf. As the people, in the crowd that lined the streets, saw one and another among the recruits whom they knew, they would shout out to them, "Take care of yourself," "Take care of yourself." It is a common expression, used so often that its meaning is almost forgotten, but it was just the word to say to those soldiers. They were going out into peril, the peril of bad associations, the peril of new temptations, the peril of disease and the peril of battle. "Take care of yourself." Yes, they needed just that word. They had health and strength then, they were pure and manly then, but how would it be in the new dangers? The thousands of instances of men who gave up all their virtue and lost their manliness and stood powerless for good among their fellows before the war was over, tell us that that charge was not an idle one.

One of the most difficult things for mankind to realize is that this world always stands ready to strip us of our possibilities for good. Here is a young man leaving home to make his way in the world. He is pure as the light, he is consecrated

Protecting Our Possibilities

to the good, he has all the power within him that comes from large ideals. In his home, in his church, in his surroundings he is a blessing, and accordingly much is expected of him, for his possibilities are known. Here is a home which stands for all Christian earnestness. No one can come within it for a visit without feeling its godliness. How careful it is about family worship, about the special features of Sunday, about devotion to church duties and helpful work. Here is a man whose voice and deeds have told for the good for years. People listen to him with respect. People quote his deeds with quiet approbation. He has proved himself a great inspiration to the world's advance.

But will these men and homes remain always as they are? Because they have started well, will they continue well? Everyone knows how young men have left their simplicity, have grown lax in their conduct, have drawn away from activity and have become pleasure-seekers and money-getters, and their possibility was lost. And homes, we have seen them change as completely as Samson was changed. Instead of being strong for good they have become weak for good. Household religion is neither their aim nor their inspiration. Conversation centers on people rather than principles, upon the evanescent

Possibilities

rather than the abiding. The Sabbath has calling and eating and light reading and earthly conversation. And the home never inspires anyone now to serious thought. No stranger coming into it will be helped to offer his life to a distant but needy mission field. No child will grow up in it to think that he must lay down his life for the good of the world. And the man! Let him grind corn and do all sorts of every day ordinary things, for his voice is not wanted nor his influence asked when men are trying to lift their fellows to high levels of disinterested zeal and beautiful holiness.

It is reported that one of the firm of Baring Brothers once called on Stephen Girard, who was working in his hay-loft, and said: "I came to inform you that your ship, the 'Voltaire,' has arrived safely." "I knew that she would reach port safely," replied Mr. Girard; "my ships always arrive safe. She is a good ship." But ships, good ships, whomever they may belong to, do not always reach port safely. The best ships, manned by the best crews, officered by the best officers, have never reached port. Something has occurred. Some factor not considered has come forward and there has been disaster. The "Ville du Havre" had a magnificent record, but there was an error in the calculation of

Protecting Our Possibilities

a distance, and she was struck, and went down. This very spring a steamer, the "Drummond Castle," with two hundred and fifty-three souls on board, struck on some rocks off the coast of France, and all perished excepting two sailors and one passenger; and the theory of the wreck is this: That there are currents along that coast which run so quietly and so strong that that vessel was carried twenty-five miles out of her course before she knew those currents had affected her.

Up in the waters of Alaska I saw the largest steamship that sails those waters turned right about by one of the many currents that play so gently but so powerfully around the multitudinous islands. No one was aware of the influence of these currents until they had done their work. The drifts of life, the influences that take a life out of its course, a home out of its purpose, like silent, unsuspected currents, are the cause of many a ruined possibility. No, every good ship does not reach port in safety.

There is something very suggestive in the way in which Samson lost his possibility. I mention but three features of it. One was, the oft repeated influence of a companion who had not his welfare at heart. This influence gradually bore in upon him until he gave way to a seemingly harmless weakness.

Possibilities

Delilah kept at him. At first she accomplished nothing. He was strong in his resolution. It might have seemed as though she would be chagrined by repeated failures, and leave him alone. But no, again and again she brought her persuasiveness to bear upon him, and at last the man that had not given a sign of weakening all at once surrendered and let her know the secrets of his heart.

He is not the only one who thus has been led on to sorrow. The constant beating of the raindrops has often worn a hole into a stone, and the constant hearing of low views of honesty, of virtue, of spirituality, has taken away many a man's vigor. I have known cases where the oft-repeated criticism of the good has at last made the good almost ashamed to show itself. I have seen husbands and wives persuade one another into that which meant the despiritualizing of their household lives. I have seen children wear away their parents' robustness by their continued claim for something different.

There is a terrible danger in letting one's self be exposed to the same deteriorating influence again and again. Scarce any man, unless he is firmly on his guard, can stand it. No matter how strong men may be, they are unconsciously at last affected by it. I knew a man who stood behind his bar and

Protecting Our Possibilities

never touched a drop of liquor. Until he was seventy years old he would not drink either alone or with another, however winsome the invitation, and then when he was past seventy he yielded to the very atmosphere of his surroundings and died a drunkard. There are some temptations which a man can not recklessly resist forever. If God provides a way of escape and he does not avail himself of it, those temptations will surely overpower him. To keep in their presence is to tempt providence. John B. Gough must not breathe the air of a saloon if he can help it, and he can help it by crossing the street and walking on the other side as far away as possible from the saloon. What may be called the quiet seductions of evil are terrible. Through them the lotus eaters lost their valor.

But what next confronts us in Samson's case as most palpable, was his sleeping in the presence of danger. There never has been a man so strong that he could afford to do this. A mighty past is no provision for a sure future. Vigilance is the unceasing requisite for safety. To be off one's guard is always to be in peril.

We should not be angered because peril is thus everywhere. There is great good in peril. It keeps us awake. It makes us alert. Once let re-

Possibilities

laxation enter a camp of soldiers and discipline goes. A condition of danger made Hannibal's soldiers attentive and strong. When they came to Capua and had naught to do but think of danger as far away, they let the sleep of inactivity and weakness creep over them.

Nor should we be angered because deterioration ensues as certainly as our possibilities are not guarded. It is true that flowers are ready to fade and fruits to decay; that fires unprotected go out, and all good things left to themselves grow weak. "If I neglect my practice a day, I see the difference in my execution; if for two days, my friends see it; and if for a week, all the world knows my failure." So wrote the singer Malibran, and the experience of all mankind bears testimony to the fact that even virtues must be kept in practice else they suffer.

What wondrous possibilities have been lost simply because their possessors were careless. Esau had health and strength, was a lover of all out-of-door sports, was in the line of inheriting one of the largest fortunes and one of the happiest blessings mentioned among mankind. But what availed him those possibilities, when he forgot to take care of them, and without any seeming realization of the significance of his deed, let them all go and lost

Protecting Our Possibilities

them, that he might indulge a temporarily urgent physical appetite. David, too, stood among men endowed as no other man of his day. What a mind he had, what a reputation he had earned, what power he had won ! How he could write, and sing, and play ! How many his soldiers, and how devoted his followers ! Yes, but this man that had made so much of himself, that had developed from the unknown shepherd lad into the king whose praise was upon a thousand lips, let one hour of forgetfulness lay hold of his vigilance and lo, David's name is in the dust, and the mighty man is a poor, helpless, disgraced sinner.

Was there ever such an opportunity as was Solomon's ! Treasures of every kind were his when he began to live. Those treasures increased as he used them, until before him was none like him and after him was none to compare with him. Whatsoever he put his hand and heart to opened like a great palace to him and invited him to enter and enjoy its riches. And he did enter, and he laid hold of all the wealth the whole world could offer. And then what ? Like Samson, he slept. He let all consciousness of danger pass from him, and his very possibilities lay prostrate, as when a superb temple be-

Possibilities

comes a mass of ruins, walls fallen and debris everywhere.

The better a thing is the more it needs guarding. If Satan knows of a man with possibilities like Job's, surely he will keep his eye on Job and do the best he can to strip him of those possibilities.

But the most startling feature of Samson's loss was, his unconsciousness of it. His strength had all gone from him before he knew he had lost a particle of it. He was all unaware of his deterioration. There he slept, as sweetly as ever he slept when his power was still magnificent. When he opened his eyes and looked about him, life seemed just the same as when of old he made masterful fights. Why should he not do the same now? So he shakes himself as of yore. But it is in vain, all in vain. *His strength is gone.* He has wakened too late.

That was a most suggestive statement that Hosea once used concerning the kingdom of Israel, in describing its weakness: "Grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." One by one they had come without Israel's realizing their coming. And little by little strength had been undermined without Israel's being aware of the fact. Such unconsciousness of one's true condition is pos-

Protecting Our Possibilities

sible and is terrible. At last a moment of emergency creeps upon the person and there is no force with which he can meet the emergency. He calls to his servants to help him and they have all fled and not one is left to answer to his wish. The man is deserted in his hour of need and in his desertion is powerless.

Unconscious deterioration ! It has captured its thousands. They have begun well, but somehow they became bewitched and they left their first love and their first earnestness. But it need never be. Our possibilities can be protected and preserved. There is such a thing as "the continuity of goodness." Timothy had it. He was always godly. He never lost his possibilities, nor did Paul ever lose his possibilities. He kept all he had, until the very end. So, too, St. Louis of France. He mingled in the courts of kings. He went among the busy, traveling crusaders. But wherever he went, he lived worthily of that mother who said, "I would rather see him dead at my feet than have him commit a mortal sin."

We can not recover the irreparable past. There are things which once done never can be undone. There are influences started in other days that have gone beyond all our reach and control. This fact

Possibilities

we have to face. But while facing it we still have hope for the future. We can reassert ourselves. We can recover our vigor, we can turn again to God and strengthen ourselves. We can bid farewell to every Delilah that has robbed us of our vitality. We can shun sweet allurements. We can find again the place of private prayer, we can restore the broken altar of our homes, we can lay hold again upon our old ideals and we can be like the Nazarite, consecrated unto God and unto God alone.

More carefully than a mother ever guarded her child, more carefully than a sentinel when he knew an attack was impending ever protected a garrison, should we protect the wondrous possibilities with which God has endowed us. He has a work for every one of us as truly as he had a work for Samson. Sweet dalliance with evil was Samson's ruin. Ah, if Samson had only kept aloof from insinuating influences and had not drifted ! If he had only realized that God wished him to be His own helpful servant, an enemy of his enemies, and a friend of his friends !

Well for us will it be if we cling tenaciously to the highest ideals that come to us in the most exalted moments of life, and guard our possibilities with unceasing appreciation of their preciousness. See

Protecting Our Possibilities

to it, every one, that a voice is constantly heard calling the charge from Heaven itself into your heart of hearts, “Keep, *keep* the good thing I have entrusted to thy care.”

DEVELOPING OUR POSSIBILITIES.

“ Let your light shine.”

ANY one who knows the facts can take a candle and say so much that is interesting and instructive about it that child and man alike will be entertained.

Mr. Spurgeon told his students for the ministry that every one of them ought to find illustrations enough in a tallow candle for a sermon. Some one expressed doubt as to the possibility of so doing, whereupon Mr. Spurgeon wrote a whole lecture about candles and the way they illustrate truth.

Nineteen hundred years ago the lights people depended upon were few and, as we would say to-day, feeble. There was the light of the kindled fire, and it was often used to show people a path both on land and on water. The great lighthouse, the Pharos, that was one of the seven wonders of the world, at the mouth of the harbor of Alexandria, kept a fire burning at night, and that fire threw beams forty miles out into the ocean. Then there were the lamps, little bronze vessels, in which

Developing Our Possibilities

oil was placed, and the wick, when ignited, gave light. The light was small and a great many such lamps would not make a building bright. Also, there was the torch, any piece of combustible material, one end of which might be lighted, while the other end was held in the hand or fastened to a secure place. Besides these, there was the candle. Nobody knows when it came into use. But it is a very old friend to the human race and has had part in the household life of mankind for many hundreds of years.

All these lights were very useful in their day and place, and are useful still. No one feels like laughing at them nor disregarding them. Light is so valuable, so necessary, that from the outset of the history of our earth people have been accustomed to associate it with Deity. The Greeks used to say that Prometheus brought fire, artificial light, down from heaven, and that all the gods of the upper world were angered at him because he had taken from them and conferred on man one of their chief, their distinctive treasures. Light came to be the symbol of Deity, and so men bowed down before the sun, moon and stars because they were givers of light. They built altars and kept alive fires on them in order to show reverence for the gods from whom

Possibilities

light sprang, and they put lamps and candles in their temples as symbolical of their gods.

It is very easy to see how lamps and candles got into Christian churches. They were already associated with worship when Christ came. And then he spoke of himself as "Light," and James spoke of God as "the Father of lights." And besides, Christ called Christian people "lights" and likened them to candles. And once again, many of the early meetings of Christians were held in secret places, under cover of night, where all was darkness, excepting as a few well placed candles showed the preacher and made clear the ways of exit.

The candle is really a very interesting object, merely in its historical association with Christianity. How many times preachers have pointed to it and likened it to Christ! How many times people have used it to find their path as they threaded one of the unlighted towns of Palestine, or picked their road in the deserted quarries of Rome to the Christians' gathering place, or walked in the labyrinth of the catacombs to a burial of a martyr, forty feet below the pavement on which the multitude who had seen the lion kill the Christian were carousing after the show was done.

But it is this feature of the candle that is to be

Developing Our Possibilities

in our minds just now, the feature of the effort that men have been making for many, many years *to increase the power* of its light. Here, they said, is a candle. It gives a certain amount of light and that amount is good. Can we increase that light? Can we get a light that will be equal to two candles? Can we, even if we do not bring twenty candles together into a room, get a light that will be equal to twenty candles? What are the possibilities of artificial lighting that may be *developed*?

That was a great question. It is always a great question when a man says of any particular thing, can this be made more? When James Watt sat down before the fire-place and seeing the lid of the kettle rise and fall, and recognizing that the steam from the heated water had power to lift the lid, wondered whether steam could do more than lift a few ounces, and *how*, he had started the whole development of the steam engine and of what has grown from it. When cotton planters in the south came to the northern school-teacher who had just begun to teach their children, and asked Eli Whitney if there was not some way of saving expense in the picking of cotton so that the time lost in separating the seed from the fibre could be saved, and Eli Whitney began to develop the idea of the

Possibilities

cotton-gin, then there was the commencement of a new period of prosperity for all who raised cotton. The man who says, "My field raises ten bushels of wheat, can I make it yield twenty?" is the man who has the idea within him which leads to successful farming.

There are many things that are capable of development. It seems as though nothing ever came to our hand at its best. Everything allows of effort, if the most is to be made of it of which it is capable. Here is the wild grape. A few good uses can be made of it. It may be dried perhaps, it may be pressed and a wine made of it, it may be eaten out of hand when fully ripened. Birds will seek it, bears too, and Indians. But suppose we take it and develop it, and lead it on, little by little. Then some day what shall we have? Think of the graperies of the Old World and the New, of the raisins made from great Muscatels, of the wines pressed from beautiful Moselle for the invalid, of the clusters of the Hamburgs grown in the Queen's gardens at Windsor. The little has indeed become the much.

Nor is the grape an exception. Here is a wee apple of the woods; and then match it with what it may become in the Pippin or Spy. Here is a beach

Developing Our Possibilities

plum, little and bitter; and behold, here is the magnificent specimen from California's largest ranch.

It is the same with flowers. See the rose of few, weak petals by the road-side, and then see an American Beauty. The same with vegetables; and the little love apple, no larger than a good sized bullet, has become the tomato that covers a breakfast plate.

All the voices of nature seem to be crying, "Here I am, what can you make of me?" And the appeal constantly is, as we look at every object, from the sap in the maple tree to the rough iron rocks of the mountains, to take hold of the object and develop its possibilities.

What a lesson comes to us from the development of the candle. No one may ever laugh at the candle. It has done a blessed work since the beginning of its career. When men were discussing great themes in the legislative council of 1780 at Hartford and the eclipse of the sun came on and the question was, whether the day of judgment had arrived, it was Col. Davenport who said, "Let us be found doing our duty, if this be the day of judgment. So let the candles be brought."

But how small and weak the candle seems before

Possibilities

some great search-light! How many times greater than the power of one candle the search-light is! Here are lights one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand candle power. And now the arc light is having its day, and other new methods of producing strong light are being pondered, with every prospect of success, and more and more and more man is making light to *shine*.

I think it a rightful use of Christ's words to say, that scarce any man knows the possibilities that are in him until he *develops* them. "Let them out, Let them out," is his message to all. Who knows what may be, if you only keep making the most of what you have and are? In many respects it was a very crude set of men whom Christ called "lights." The wits of Greece had never heard of them, nor the scholars of Egypt, nor the nobles of Rome. They were nobodies in their own nationality. But they had a few ideas of good and purity and helpfulness that no one else had as they had them. And these were worthy ideas, blessed ideas. Now let them make these ideas *shine*, even as a candle lets out its light. And they did; untaught men, unrecognized men as they were. They made it their *work* to shine. Men marveled at them, unlearned ones, who became what they became, even as we marvel at the

Developing Our Possibilities

search-light beside the candle. They were afraid of no one. They spoke earnestly and tellingly. They had the power of ten thousand men of their former selves.

What a loss it would have been to our world if people of possibility had not developed their possibility! Here was the Lord Christ himself, spotless in his integrity. Never, in all the history of mankind, was there one of whom it might be said, "He is Light," more truly than of him. At thirty years of age he was a perfect man. All the beauty, all the whiteness that we associate with the idea of light were in Christ. His heart was warm and pure like light itself, and so was his example. But if he had then hidden away in some mountain retreat or some desert cave or some city alley and had never shined forth upon men and upon the world, how unspeakably great the loss to us, and how absolutely impossible for him to save the race. The mission of a light is not to hide itself away under a bushel or anything else, but to shine. Christ duplicated his power millions upon millions of times by living out his views, telling out his views, making to-day's advance help on tomorrow's advance. It was his way when here; it is his way now. He is bound to be more and

Possibilities

more effective, and let his light be stronger and go farther and pierce deeper. "I shine" is his motto, not "I hide."

I hold that it would have been a fearful crime against humanity had this not been true. If Jesus Christ knew what he did of God and of God's wish for humanity, if he had within him light upon life which others did not have, so that they walked in darkness, and he did not shine, let out that light so that all in the house of earth might see the truth and be helped thereby, he would have done a wrong for which God could not forgive him. It would have been a dastardly thing for Christ's twelve, who had views of life that were inspiration and comfort and courage, to withhold them from a needy and heavy hearted world. It never will do, it never has done for a human being to say, "I am a good man and that is enough." It is not enough. What was written of John the Baptist was, first, that he was a "burning light." That is good in itself and so far as it goes. "A burning light." But it was added "And a shining light," a light that gave its message, that let out all its possibilities, rebuking wrong, steadying weakness, setting straight the crooked and pointing, with ever increasing earnestness, to the good.

Developing Our Possibilities

The trouble with the great bulk of mankind is that they do not *shine*. They do not take what is inherent in them and let it out. Good ideas get no expression; high aspirations stop with the individual. The amount of good in men's minds sometimes when they leave a church service is enough, if it should shine forth, to illumine the whole world. But though they are burning they will not suffer themselves to be shining, lights. They say, "My religion is not to be paraded, my goodness not to be proclaimed from the housetops." Yes, it is. Whoever taught the other idea is a helper of Satan. You a light to be put under a bushel or under a bed! Not a bit of it. You are to get the most prominent place you can find, a candlestick, and shine and give your light.

It is a very interesting process which goes on when an eastern peasant takes his candle and puts it under a bushel or a bed. His bushel, so called, is less than one of our peck measures, and the candle, if of any respectable length, is very apt to be put out in getting under the bushel; and his bed is the rug laid upon the floor, and when a candle is placed beneath it, with no air and with a heavy rug above it, it becomes extinguished. Possibilities go unless they are developed. The grape runs back to the

Possibilities

wild seedling if not cared for. The best of all possible apple trees will deteriorate if not protected. Disuse is abuse, and abuse is injury, and the more tender and the more delicate the thing injured the sooner its vitality ceases and it loses its power.

I claim that just as light shines to give light to others, every human being must shine out all the the good that is in him for the world's help. Goodness is not immaculate selfishness; goodness is love, goodness is unselfishness.

Immaculate selfishness pays a fearful penalty. It quenches the light itself. A light cannot continue to be a burning light unless it is a shining light. Good dies out of that man who does not use his good for the world's help.

But if he uses it, and keeps using it, and tries to have it shine more and more, so long as life lasts, what comes of it? You and I have seen men and women who seemed without promise, just letting what they had exert its power for the good of the world, keeping shining whether people laughed or condemned, keeping shining in all sorts of weather and under all sorts of discouragement, and we have seen them, ere they died, so effective in what they actually accomplished for good that the candle had become an arc light. Lady Huntington, going

Developing Our Possibilities

to a ball and thinking "Is this the best way to spend my time?" and determining to use her time and strength and power to the greatest advantage and becoming, instead of a social queen and a recipient of attention, the mighty helper of Christ and the mighty benefactor of others, is a case in point. So is any man who, like Mr. Moody, once was powerless in the world's influence and now is a force in that influence.

These are not rare instances. When the Bible says, "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called," it says a truth we all can recognize if we think back to the beginning of those who to-day are the greatest blessing to the human race. The men and women to-day, that in the realm of human helpfulness seem mighty, wise and noble have *grown* to be such. They were not such originally. They let the light shine and so they became what they are.

We live in an age which is thoughtful about developing possibilities. Here is electricity. What have we not already done with it. Men knew about lightning long before Franklin's day. How much Franklin developed from lightning! But what has been developed since, the telegraph and the telephone, the application to lighting and transporta-

Possibilities

tion! Is the end yet? No one believes that it is. Men are saying, "We will try to find something more." So, too, what have we not done with air, even common air, compressing it, utilizing it until it forces up weights and pulls down buildings and resists blows, and no one knows what may still come from it if its possibilities are only developed.

I long for men and women who in the realm of helpfulness, will make their life study the study of development in power to bless. Already there is lodged in everyone of you enough power to make you a great help to the world. You have light. You have thoughts, views, aspirations; you know what is good in life. Oh, if you would only let the light shine.

"I am only like a pine knot, so far as my life is concerned," says one. Ah, but a pine knot kindled a light once by means of which a poor boy learned to read in the evening hours and then he went out from his little cottage to stand before thousands and thousands to speak to them words of comfort. And how often, again and again, a simple lamp placed within the window of a home has guided wandering footsteps back to the doorway of safety and peace. And how some small taper has been

Developing Our Possibilities

the means of kindling the light whereby a sailor has found his way through storm and darkness.

There are many, many things concerning which we may be in doubt, but concerning one, never. That is, that the power of any one's life is small. No living being knows what it is and what it may become.

To-day, and with us all, there is opportunity for increasing what might be called "the natural power" of our lives. Take the simplest light and see how strong it becomes when a reflector is put behind it. Take a lighthouse and see one lamp surrounded by lenses of various sizes and shapes, all meant to so converge and so direct and so send forth the light of that lamp that it shall shine miles away and shall be bright and helpful for navigation even then.

There are a hundred ways by which we duplicate, triplicate the power of our own light. We put a good book into another's hands, we bring another to a helpful Christian service, we connect ourselves with some institution that blesses the world, and so we increase our own power immensely. Our one candle light becomes, by the use of these lenses, twenty, one hundred candle light.

Is it not inspiring to have Christ call us "light"

Possibilities

and bid us *shine!* What possibilities he suggests. Men in awful peril perhaps will see our light and be guided thereby to safety.

Inspiring did I say? Yes, and arousing too. For what if the light does not shine! Then, alas, wanderers dying in the darkness, and sailors wrecked, and homes made desolate.

Out into the darkness it is ours to shine. Noise has naught to do with shining, nor has commotion, but power has. How light penetrates darkness! how it finds a way into darkness! how it makes itself seen! No one can tell another the exact things he should do in life, but this he can tell, that every one should shine, should let out the good, should give it to the world, should try to be a help and a blessing.

What I am pleading for is indeed a sense of the worthiness of our own lives, of their value, of their possibility. But I am pleading for more, for such a determination to take the possibility, and use it, and develop it, that it shall shine more and more. Be a better man to-day than yesterday, and so make the way clear to be a better man to-morrow than to-day. In yourself be a larger light to-day than yesterday, and by means of those things which you can place about you, as

Developing Our Possibilities

the lenses about the lamp, be more of a light today than yesterday. Never stop growing in goodness, nor in purposes to help the world.

Herein is my wish, that on this day you consecrate yourself to a purpose unfaltering as was that of Christ, that more and more you will try to use your powers for the good, and that you will ask that you may shine clearer, farther, deeper into the darkness of this world's needs.

THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING LIKE OUR HEROES.

“ We all beholding are changed into his image.”

THIS story is told. Two young women lived in the same home. They were cousins. One slept in a room where she could look at the picture of Marie Antoinette. In the very next room slept the other cousin, and at the foot of her bed, made by the same artist, bought at the same store, was a picture of Joan of Arc. Each girl at the opening of her eyes every morning, looked upon a picture; one saw Marie Antoinette, and the other saw Joan of Arc. Whenever the first heard of the time of Louis XVI. or of the time of Marie Antoinette, she was interested. She read of its viciousness and vice and foolishness, and her mind followed the line of Marie Antoinette. The other heard of Joan of Arc, of her purity and nobility and unselfishness, and whenever she saw a statue of Joan of Arc or heard any account of her, she thought of that picture she had seen. She loved to read anything about Joan's

The Possibility of Being Like Our Heroes

devoted life. The one who looked upon the picture of Joan of Arc has become one of America's benefactors—a life so sweet and pure that the memory of her name carries with it a halo and a blessing. The other became one of the worst of characters—so bad that we do not mention it at all. Constant looking at two pictures and dwelling on the lives back of the pictures had led two persons to their destiny, the one upward and the other downward.

It is not a new fact in the study of humanity that what we long gaze at admiringly and approvingly affects our hearts and lives. Men found it out thousands of years ago. Moses once went up into a mountain summit and had a peculiar fellowship with the God of Light. For days he dwelt in that bright presence. The effect was that when he came down again from the mountain he carried with him that which he had seen, and behold, the face of Moses did shine with the reflected light of God. So to Paul it was one of the beliefs that are indisputable, that constant beholding of a character by a person, as a mirror beholds an object that it may reflect it, causes that person to be changed into likeness to that character. This fact was to him an indication of what it is possible for a person to become in character, and an indication of the means

Possibilities

whereby a person can be changed into the very image or likeness of Christ from glory to glory.

Whether the change which was claimed to have taken place in the body of St. Francis of Assisi was true, or not, can never be settled. The claim made for this simple hearted man who mingled lovingly with birds and who sought the spiritual good of his fellows, was this: That he had gazed so long and so adoringly at the cross with Christ outstretched thereon as the wounded sacrifice for man, that the wounds of Christ had reproduced themselves upon his own body, so that these "stigmata," made by the spear and the nails, appeared upon himself. The Franciscans to this day hold that marks of discoloration did come to their great master's body in hands and feet, and that blood did exude from his side.

But be this story as it may, the very claim set up by it is instructive. St. Francis would never have conceived of such a view as this, nor would his followers have dared to press it as they have, unless there was a philosophy of life, an idea beneath it, which gave it a foundation. That idea is, and all who study mankind are aware of its truthfulness, that he who deliberately fixes his gaze on an object is affected by that object. It is not always a pro-

The Possibility of Being Like Our Heroes

cess of which the person is conscious. He is influenced and changed in most cases without his recognizing what is going on. None the less the process goes on, and fixed visual and mental gaze becomes a shaping and transforming power over our inmost being.

There are two sides to almost every truth. Truth is often said to be a sphere so that it has to be turned around in order that all sides may be known. It is one side of the truth to say "We see what we are," that is, that according to what we are within will be the objects upon which we will fasten our gaze. Foul minds will find foul things in life. Pure minds will find pure things. Every outward object is seen in the light reflected from ourselves. So our inner selves make exterior life. A brave heart will see opportunity for effort in a crisis, and another will see only reason for discouragement. Two out of the twelve spies looked up at the walled cities of the promised land, and said, "Ah, we must take those cities and make them strongholds for Israel," and ten others looked up at those same walled cities, and said, "Alas, those cities will take us and all Israel will be put in their dungeons." Yes, much, very much in life

Possibilities

does depend upon the spirit of the man who sees. Life is one's reflected self.

But the other side of the truth is just as clear and forceful, namely, that what we see makes us. Looking at foul things makes us foul. Gross things in literature tend to make us gross. We may not intend to take our coloring chameleon-like from the objects about us, but if we surrender ourselves to the influence of those objects they do give our minds and hearts their coloring.

This is true of all things long pondered, whether in material objects or in spiritual characters. A man fastens his attention, for instance, on wealth and he "becomes conformed in his inner man to the image which, through his gaze, has come to be the delight of his mind." He more and more thinks wealth, dreams wealth, estimates life by wealth, fears the loss of wealth, and indeed is himself the embodiment of all the ideas of wealth. Just as in this day there is what is called "a smoker's heart," a condition of heart action which smoking has produced, so there comes to be a wealth heart. And so with every other exterior object that bears in upon the person until it photographs itself on his mind and then so possesses that mind (as though the photograph had struck roots into every portion of

The Possibility of Being Like Our Heroes

his mind), that it controls the mind, virtually is the mind.

Hawthorne has used this profound truth in his allegory of "The Great Stone Face": There was a great stone face on the side of a mountain overlooking the village where a young man lived. The face had a local prophecy concerning it, that some day a pure and noble man bearing an exact resemblance to the great stone face would come to the village and be a blessing to everybody. Somehow this prophecy sunk into this youth's soul. Others let it touch the surface of their thought, but he would go out and look up at the stone face and think and think again, and at length, upon that face and what it stood for, the pure, noble man that was to be a blessing to everybody. As he thought he wondered whether he should not prepare the way for the coming of the good man. So he began to be a toiler for the good of his village, he tried to be himself what the great stone face would wish him to be, he let helpful words drop from his lips and kind looks go from his eyes—and, lo, what came about! As the young man grew old and the gray about his face was like the mists about the face in the mountains, the people began to say, "The prophecy is fulfilled, the man resembling the great stone face is with us."

Possibilities

So thoroughly had the gaze of hope and the gaze of admiration configured his features that he had been changed from feature to feature into "The Great Stone Face."

So sure is God that this very process will take place in every instance of admiring beholding that he has forbidden the use of idols. Every time a man bows in adoration before anything that he sees he becomes like that thing. Cruel appearing idols have always made cruel men out of their worshipers. Effeminate appearing idols have always tended to create effeminate men. Say to a boy, "This block of stone represents the god of war, of bloody, selfish, terrific war," and then bid him make that block of stone the synosure of his rapt gaze, and you can count upon it that he, too, will have war within him in due time stamped upon his soul and flowing in his blood. Idols never have been impotent factors in the world's welfare. The creation indeed of some men's fancies, they have been the creators of other men's fancies. They that make them are like unto them, and so is every one who worships them.

Once and once only in the long history of the world has God set a visible form before us and given us leave to behold and to adore. For thousands of

The Possibility of Being Like Our Heroes

years all that he ever did was to put men of special virtues before the race and call upon them to look at those virtues. And he did a wondrous work thereby. Men were bidden gaze long at Abraham's bravery, and then they became brave. They were shown the great-heartedness of Moses and were encouraged to keep the eye long and intently on that great-heartedness and then they became great-hearted. One by one God introduced men on the scene, saying of Pharaoh, Baalim, Manasseh, these are not to be admired, but saying of Joshua, Isaiah, Daniel in all their manliness and purity, look at these—look at them until you, too, have manliness and purity in the fibre of your being.

Ah, it was not a poor way which God used through those thousands of years. It was a good way then, and it is a good way now. We are helped to magnanimous characteristics by keeping the eye on magnanimous characters. Heroes of our admiration make us their reflectors. The stories of the valiant souls of other days and of our days must be told, if we wish valiant men in these days. Let the fidelity of the martyrs be reiterated with genuine admiration, let the integrity and self-denial of the Reformers be kept before approving eyes, let the finest words of Bunyan and Newton and Livingstone and Lincoln

Possibilities

and Phillips Brooks be words that vision shall rest on. Then the days of martyr fidelity and Reformer courage and heroic beauty will still be here.

But better than all else was it and is it, when God puts before us Jesus Christ and bidding us behold him assures us that through this process of beholding we shall become like him. Here is the art of sanctification. Here is the great possibility of human character. No man is necessarily a spiritual weakling forever. What a man may become in likeness to Christ is never limited by his temperament nor by his surroundings. Paul grasped a great idea when he gave this truth universal application and said we "all" may be changed into Christ's image. The composition of human minds is indeed different. No two persons are alike. But dissimilarity in individuality does not prevent reproduction of the same character. Here are several materials, wood, stone, gold, silver, bronze. In any one of them an image can be made of an object. Different as the materials may be they all are capable of setting forth the thing imaged. Even if in stone, there are many varieties of stone, dark and light, soft and hard, granite, marble, porphyry. Still each can bear the image that is desired and bear it after its own kind. No two persons can

The Possibility of Being Like Our Heroes

reproduce Christ in exactly the same way, but they can reproduce Christ in the way possible for each to reproduce Him. And they can reproduce Him clearer and clearer, until His figure stands out and is recognized. The image of Christ by the business man will be the business man's image of Christ, so will the farmer's, so will the lawyer's, so the mechanic's. Christ may not be reproduced in one set of clothes and classified with one style of life, as for instance of a minister or a mechanic. Christ is capable of being reproduced by any one who bears humanity and who will make Him his heart life.

It is told of Dannecher, the German sculptor, that he occupied eight years upon a marble statue of Christ. Previously he had exercised his genius upon subjects taken from the Greek and Roman mythology, and had won a great reputation. His work is often ranked side by side with that of Michael Angelo and Canova. When he had labored two years upon his statue of Christ he called into his studio a little girl and directing her attention to the statue asked her, "Who is that?" She answered, "A great man." He saw that he had not worked out a true image of Christ. So he began anew. A few years later he called the child into his studio, and repeated his question,

Possibilities

“Who is that?” After looking silently at it for a while she said in quiet tones, “Suffer little children to come unto me.” He had succeeded, and little by little during all those eight years his work had been advancing and the vision of Christ that he thought had come to him in his solitary vigils had been worked out from step to step, from glory to glory, until a child could recognize it.

Dannecher believed then, and ever afterward, that he had been inspired by God to do this work. And it is true that in every human soul the Holy Spirit does stand ready to inspire a person to this same reproduction of Christ in himself. It is His work by suggestion, always. It is His presence that gives purpose and secures success. No man can work out Christ’s image in himself unaided by divine help. Whenever a person desires to be like Christ, the Holy Spirit has given the desire and is watching over the desire. Like Dannecher we are inspired when we wish to be changed into Christ’s image.

But here is the thought that now is to be prominent, that the means which the Holy Spirit asks us to use is “beholding” Christ—and on that means He promises a blessing. People who admire others do grow to copy them. They hold

The Possibility of Being Like Our Heroes

the sentiments of those they admire. They see things in their light. They again and again express views which have become theirs because once they were the views of the other. Drummond tells of two fellow students who lived for eight years together, and by the end of that time they had become so like each other in their methods of thinking, in their opinions, in their ways of looking at things, that they were practically one. When a question was asked, it was immaterial to which it was put, and when another made a remark, he knew exactly the impression it would make on both. "There was a savor of Jonathan about David, and a savor of David about Jonathan." Looking at one another to reflect one another had caused likeness to one another.

Looking unto Jesus is the great help to being like Him. The study of Christ as he resists temptation under great stress, makes any man feel that bread and power and fame are not so vital as a true adherence to principle. Such study makes our hearts more eager to be brave and spiritual, even in the midst of allurements to be material and to find our joy in place and pomp. It is keeping the eye upon Christ, in all His circumstances, which teaches us the manner and the beauty of self-control, which

Possibilities

teaches us the strength of patience and the nobility of self-denial.

A man can never do wrong, who, looking adoringly upon Christ, takes guidance only from Him. And here is the marvelous possibility open to us, that, if we *keep* seeing Christ and *keep* reflecting this Christ that we see, there comes to us a *habit* of seeing and reflecting which at last causes us to be images of Christ, ourselves.

Oh, how many times when we have been lulled into carelessness, the earnest beholding of Christ has aroused our old-time vigor ! How many times as we have gazed admiringly on His strong, magnanimous, unselfish life, we have been rebuked ! Who can possibly cherish bitterness, or discontent, and still be trying to reflect Christ ? Who can be self-willed, who cowardly, and still be looking adoringly on Christ as he struggles and conquers in Gethsemane ?

Truly ours is a marvelous possibility. Nothing like it is known on earth. Here is Christ. He is the "Altogether Lovely One." And we can be like Him ! Wonder of wonders ! It is possible for every one of us, in spirit and in deed, to bear the image of the very Son of God.

THE POSSIBILITY OF LIVING ARIGHT ANYWHERE.

“ With the temptation a way to escape.”

IT was after I had been in the ministry five years that I spent a year in traveling abroad—solely for educational benefit. Nothing so surprised and dismayed my heart as the *luxury of principle* which I so often saw in persons as they passed from one set of surroundings to another. Those who had been good and pure in America were not necessarily good and pure in France, nor in Turkey. A man who had been known as immaculate in New Haven was not immaculate in Rome. A woman whose religious observances were most careful in Massachusetts was so absorbed in sight seeing in Germany that religious observances had no place in her conduct. It almost seemed as though what we call Christian principle was a thing of clothes, to be put on like a fur coat when the weather was cold and to be taken off like that fur coat when the weather was warm. People acted as though their religion was a matter of place and occasion, and it was no excep-

Possibilities

tional sight to see men and women spend time and money as they never would have taught children to do when they were still in their American churches and in their permanent homes. The Sabbath, the church, the ideas of self-control, of unselfishness, of godly example were often like the ten tribes of Israel; they were "lost" out of the lives of people.

The question could not but come to my mind repeatedly, what does this mean? Is not our religion a thing of all places and all occasions? Can it be that it is dependent upon surroundings? May I not hope that when I have been laboring to get Christian ideas into men's lives for these five years, they will carry those ideas everywhere and be dominated by them? Or is not Christianity, with its high purposes, a life for all men, in any and in every circumstance?

One Saturday I came to Nazareth. Easter Sunday followed. On that Easter Sunday afternoon, after the morning church services, I sat upon the hill back of Nazareth and looked out upon the scene which Christ often saw as he grew to manhood and pondered His mission. The Holy Land was indeed in sight. It told of all God had done in Israel, fighting Israel's battles and delivering Israel out of distress, and it made clear that God was the God of

The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere

that Holy Land. But more was in sight than the Holy Land. The Mediterranean was in clear view. Vessels were passing up and down it. They were coming from Alexandria and going to Corinth. They were coming, too, from Rome and going to Antioch. And this was the very scene Christ often saw ! So he knew about Alexandria and all its special evils, and about Corinth and all its vice, and about Rome and its temptations and about Antioch and its seductions. Never was it easier to do wrong than in those wondrously intoxicating cities. Never was it so hard to keep clean and beautiful as in the civilization around that luxurious Mediterranean. And still Christ expected men and women to go out into all these cities and into all these seductions and to be firm Christians ! And this was no assumed expectation, no desperate bravado ; it was so real, so complete an expectation that he talked of men going everywhere, exposed to every kind of temptation, and continuing faithful, as though no other idea was to be entertained. *Christ evidently believed that a man could be a Christian anywhere.* Christianity was to conquer circumstance, not to be conquered by circumstance. Yes, Christ knew the world, knew every phase of human nature and every phase of temptation, and

still he held that a man could and should carry his Christianity triumphantly everywhere.

The vision which came to my heart on that hill-top at Nazareth was like the vision granted John at Patmos, an assurance of the divinity, universality and success of Christianity.

Lately a young man who has been active in Christian work and who has borne a spotless and an earnest life, on the eve of departure for Berlin, where he is to spend some years in the study of music, came to me, and asked whether I thought that he could sustain his Christian zeal and Christian conduct in Berlin. Sustain them in Berlin! He can sustain them anywhere upon the face of the earth. It is not true, nor has it ever been true, nor will it ever be true, that a human soul can be overcome of evil unless it is willing to be, that is, unless it acquiesces in evil, which is, virtually, choosing evil. Young men have gone from the quietest, and if one pleases to use such a title, the "narrowest" homes of America, and they have come nearer to God in Berlin than anywhere else, and when they have returned to America they were braver, manlier, sweeter souls than when they went away. Place does have something to do with our religious life. There are circumstances in which we are more

The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere

exposed to evil than in other circumstances. But everything depends upon whether we let circumstances use us or we use them. Turn a sharp sword against yourself and you suffer; turn it against the enemy and he suffers. Circumstances need never overpower a man. They are to be overpowered by us.

Ah, but think, some one says, of the many students who have gone to Germany to study and have come back despiritualized. The churches that knew their service know it no more. Think of the many, many people who have gone into new surroundings and they were stripped of their zeal, and faithfulness, and, perchance, of their goodness. And was there not a Lot who dwelt over by Sodom, and did not his life and the life of his whole family grow faint hearted and even careless? Instances upon instances arise. We know them by the hundreds. Men went to South America to engage in trade and they never have cared for Christianity since. They went to India to make a visit, and they lost their religion. Women stepped into circles of society to which they were unaccustomed, and, like Lot's wife, they have always had their faces turned away from the Promised Land since. Boys go off to school and college, and they never are the

Possibilities

same afterward. They are careless or unbelieving or low. And youth by the scores pour into cities and their early piety disappears as dew before the sun, and fathers and mothers know, as the years pass, that their sons have lost the elements of soul-life that to them were beyond value. And then goes up the cry: It was the city, the college, the school, the business that ruined the life. The temptations were too great.

No, they were not too great. They never can be too great. The fault is not in the place, but in the person. Joseph is far away from home in a most luxurious and debased court, where acquiescence in evil seems to open the only course to success, but he remains as pure as the day his mother last kissed him. Daniel is in the very center of political influences tending to the lowering of his religious standards, but he is just the same praying man at the ending as at the beginning. Let Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be sent away to school and college in wicked Babylon and let everybody around them do wrong if you please, but they will hold fast to their ideas of integrity and they can no more be moved than Gibraltar can be uprooted by a dash of spray. Paul enters Athens, and lo, the whole city is given over to idolatry and if he does aught else

The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere

than acknowledge idols, the bulk of the people will mock at him. But we might as well think of the sun being turned back in its course as of Paul putting garlands upon the beautiful statues around him, though handsome men and beautiful women are all doing so.

These are not solitary instances of ability to meet temptation. The history of humanity is full of them. The best people that the world has ever known have been those who have stood uninjured in trying circumstances. The wickedest cities, the wickedest schools, the wickedest courts have had their moral heroes. These heroes have shown what people could be if they wished to be. Whitfield grew up a tavern boy. The Wesleys came to the front when earnestness was dead at the intellectual centers of England. So true is it that good can exist in the most trying circumstances, that mankind has a saying that the place to find an honest man is not where honesty has been easy, but where it has been difficult.

It is one of the persistent and pernicious ideas of every generation, and of many, many people in that generation, that possibly circumstances of evil may be too much for a person! Once let a parent give that idea to his child (and the child receive it), and

Possibilities

the child's future is hopeless. For a person to take that idea into his heart is to meet life with the expectation of defeat. That idea is a lie. Christ does not authorize it. The Scriptures do not exemplify it. History does not illustrate it. The very opposite is the truth. "You can kill my body," many and many a man has said, "but you can not kill *me*." "You can browbeat me and curse me, ridicule me and strike me, but I will not do what you ask of me," has been heard hundreds of times in offices, in lodgings and in castle dungeons. Calmly but firmly youth, both in woman and man, has said "no," when evil deeds were being forced upon them, and that "no," said so quietly, was a finality. All the powers of persuasion or of threat could not alter it an iota. The very gates of death stood baffled before it.

What I say is Scripture and is fact, no people and no circumstances can ruin a soul. Wicked, wretched people may force liquor down an unwilling man's throat and may do other cruelly wrong deeds to men and women, but the persons temporarily injured need never submit to the *moral evil* of the injury—unless they please.

Here is the liberty and the opportunity of us all. Proclaim it to every youth growing up, every child

The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere

leaving home, every man of business and every woman of society: You can make yourself, circumstances need not make you. If you are conquered by circumstances of evil it is because you lie down before them, not stand up before them and fight them. Evil and you are face to face. Evil will surely down you unless you down evil.

But I hear some one ask, as once a young man did ask of me, "Can any man resist his supreme temptation?" Undoubtedly to each man in the course of his life there comes some supreme hour or period when temptation assails him as never before. Christ had temptations always but he had one experience with temptation that was superlatively his temptation. He stood his temptation and we may stand ours. Rarely does a soul know at the time that this is the hour of its supreme temptation. The temptation may be to make the slightest deviation from right, and so get started in a wrong course. It is not always, nor usually, to do some heinous evil, but some little evil that will be a mere relaxation of virtue, a mere unsettling of the good, that perchance will eventuate in a larger evil. Whether we shall let the camel put his nose within the door may be the supreme question our lives will have to decide.

Yes, there is a supreme temptation, a temptation

Possibilities

which has in it the making or the marring of our lives. It may come in youth and it may come in manhood and it may come in age. It is the most ignorant folly to forget that every period of life has its own temptations, and that temptations of age may be as hurtful as those of youth, of the heart as hurtful as those of the body. What an hour that was in Cranmer's life when he had to choose between seeming loss of all things and God's will! What an hour in the life of Polycarp when it was Christ and the fire, or selfishness and safety.

But come when and come how the supreme temptation may come, we need not be overpowered by it. No temptation has ever yet come to any one that is not "common to man"; that is, is not a part of ordinary human life. There are no such things as irresistible temptations. Other people have resisted what may come to us, and we can resist. God will not agree to take away temptation. The testing part of temptation is an element of his infinitely wise and good dealing with us. We should be a sorry set of people if we did not have the discipline of tests. Nobody would want us in any position of trust, untested. The man or woman who has not had and overcome temptation would better never be asked to help make a home. The bank that

The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere

takes a man for its cashier who has not been tested for capacity and integrity is unworthy of confidence. Where in all the world is there a strong athletic team that does not try its men first and then accept them afterward? The test in Eden and the test now is not an evil in itself. It is a good. God ordains it. Human life would be weak and flabby without it. What would skill and integrity and manhood be were it not for temptation? It is man's great helper toward robustness. We go away from home, we have our losses in business, we mingle in new circumstances, we are surrounded by wicked people, and all these features of life are our opportunity for developing our *strength*.

But though God does not take away temptation he does enable us to escape its power. This does not mean that we necessarily are to get away from it, but to *escape its power*. This is always so. Never yet in the history of the human race has it been otherwise. I say this on the "faithfulness of God." He bids us judge his trustworthiness, on this record. He provides with the temptation some way to escape its power. A man can escape the evil of temptation if he will.

Why then, you ask, do so many fall into its power? My answer is, first, because they do not believe

Possibilities

God. They are theoretical and practical atheists. They think, and they act upon their thinking, that God has not told the truth when he has said that every man may escape the power of temptation. Their whole view of life is moulded by the idea that they are here to suffer many a defeat from temptation. So they are not resolute, undaunted. They do not grow up with set purpose to be immovable. They feel that they are justified in being weak in trying hours, in being discouraged when attacked by difficulties, in hanging their heads like bulrushes when storm sweeps over them. Whoever knew an army that was looking for defeat, to succeed? But when an army knows that the possibility, aye, and the probability, aye, and still more, the surety of success will be theirs if they fight desperately, what fighting they do!

Then, secondly, this is true: they do not study the Bible. People are allowed to stand in the place of temptation ignorant of their situation. Every boy and girl should know what life is exactly as they are to meet it. No expurgated edition of the Bible for me! Every one of its stories is needed, and needed just as it is told. They tell of all kinds of wrong life—and they tell of them plainly. It is much help to youth when we say to them, “You will be sur-

The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere

rounded by dangers on every hand. Therefore, be careful. Live guardedly. You must remember Christ's own words, 'Beloved, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' There is suggestion, wondrous suggestion of the dangers to which we are exposed, in such words.

But even more than these general warnings are needed. Christ specified the particular dangers of his time, to those whom he sent forth. So should people now have specific dangers mentioned to them. Every child should have his father or his mother sit down beside him and tell the meaning of all parts of the book of the Proverbs. Let the boy know the evil of strong drink, let him be told of the wretched harm of all uncleanness of thought, vision and deed, tell him *how* evil will approach him, let him have his eye open for the disguises of wrong, as well as for the wrong itself. There is no need of a girl moving out into life the plaything of any persuasive worldling that may meet her. In times of war—and war it is—I want to know not alone that there is an enemy, but what the enemy's methods are, where he conceals himself, who are his spies and his emissaries, what he will try to do to weaken me. Give the information to youth and others about particular dangers—and then if they *will* be

Possibilities

blind or *will* yield, the evil is their own, their own distinct choice.

This also is true as a reason why people go down before wrong: they do not meet life as knight-errants of Christianity. They do not stand before life *intending to conquer*. Evil is conquered only by fighting it, and by fighting it through putting good in its place. To get the better of temptation a heart has to be a missionary, overcoming evil with good. Merely to resist evil is eventually to be overcome by evil. Lot's family were not missionaries to Sodom, and behold, what happened! No man can continue to be good unless he lives, wherever he may be, to make life better. It is war to the death on both sides. We are to force the fight. To be good and not do good is to be conquered by evil.

Yes, we can succeed. Christ succeeded, and so can we. Christ believed that God was over him and with him in His temptation. Christ held fast to God's word and quoted it and refreshed His heart with it. Christ came into the world to conquer it, and not to be conquered by it. The thing for us to do is, like Him, to avail ourselves of every divine help we can get, to put on the whole armor of God—hope, faith, watchfulness, prayer and ready

The Possibility of Living Aright Anywhere

obedience—and then stand our ground and force the issue.

I proclaim to-day the possibility of conquering temptation, and making life a success against evil. Better, far better to die physically in fidelity to the right than to yield to the wrong and live. A man can always, always escape temptation. He can die, if need be, and be, once and forever, triumphant.

THE POSSIBILITY OF OUR TIME.

“Redeeming the time.”

ONE of the scenes which great actresses love to put on the stage is the death of Queen Elizabeth. Painters too, love to put it upon the canvas. But such is the action of the scene that living beings are required if its pathos is to be brought out. Here is the queen, who for forty years has ruled a strong nation. Power has been hers. She has had gallants and warriors in her service. She has had great successes by sea and by land. Her name has stood for able government and for indomitable will. She has gathered about her intellects like Shakespeare and courtiers like Sidney. Hers has been a brilliant reign. But at last health fails, her courage falters, and she must die. Her attendants are with her. Nobles and beautiful women await her word for their services. Gold and silk and luxurious drapery are present. Her will asserts itself and she seems to hold death back by her very resolution. But she can not live. Her mighty name, her wise physicians, her daring warriors are impotent. There

Possibilities

have time for personal helpfulness to others, and for direct fellowship with God. The statement is often heard, "I could not crowd another thing into my life than is now there;" and when deeds of Christian service are asked for, and requests come for work in special lines of church attendance, Sunday school teaching, district visiting, counseling for benevolent institutions, the answer is that time is so fully occupied that not a moment can be found for these things.

It is true that the whole world of mankind thinks itself busy. This idea has to be reckoned with in speaking to others about any good work desired of them, and has to be reckoned with just as carefully in discussing with ourselves whether we shall be active in helpful endeavor. People are very sensitive on this subject, all people are. Every person who is an employee feels that the demands on his time are very many. Clerks everywhere will say this. So will all laborers, all household servants. Employers will say the same. The men that talk the most about "the rush of life" are those who are their own masters, the men who are over others and who map out work for others. "How busy life is!" women say, who may have four or five helpers to do their bidding. Persons in factories, or in harvest

The Possibility of Our Time

fields, or in tailoring shops, think, "Oh, if I had as much time at my disposal as college youths or the men and women who live in large houses!" while the very ones whom they have in mind think themselves almost out of breath in trying to keep up with what they have to do.

Yes, it is a subject one has to present carefully, even to one's own self, when the consideration is about "an inch of time."

It would be interesting to know the process of thought which passed through the minds of the priest and of the Levite as they came upon the needy man when they were going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Did the priest say as he saw him: "The man certainly ought to have help. He is in a bad way. But I am in a great hurry. I cannot stop to look out for him. I must get to Jericho and back so quickly that I have no time for doing anything here." Did the Levite say as he saw him: "Poor fellow, he has had a hard time. He ought to be helped. But the sun is going down and it is impossible for me to tarry. Should I do anything for him, it will take me an hour or two at least."

We do not know what they thought or said, but we can imagine. For when the Samaritan came along it did take his time to bind up the man's

Possibilities

wounds, pour in oil and wine, set him on his beast and bring him to the inn. Perhaps he was the busiest man of the three, for it would seem as though the priest and Levite were sauntering along the road inasmuch as they were going over it "by chance," while the Samaritan had a definite and distinct object in view, inasmuch as it is written of him "as he journeyed." Probably it made a heavier demand on his time and interfered more with his plans than a similar act would have done in the case of the priest or of the Levite. However, he did it. He worked it in somehow. He got time for keeping himself in actual touch with an individual case of need. He got time for cultivating the brotherly spirit. He got time for putting himself into sympathy with the purpose of God and for winning the plaudit of "well done" from the very lips of the Saviour. It was out of the line of his business, out of the line of all his plans for his travel, but he got time to do it. Others had more time than he and still they had less time. He had no time and still he had all the time that was needed.

There are particular scenes in history that are pleasant to recall in this connection. One is of a boy named Hugh Miller, born at Cromarty, in Scotland, and losing his father when he was five years

The Possibility of Our Time

old. What was to become of him? His relatives were poor; they could do nothing for him but find him a home and send him to the village school for a while. Then he must do for himself. So we see him as a boy of sixteen breaking stone by the roadside for the roadbed. Then later we see him going to the red sandstone quarry as a laborer, and still later we see him building walls as a stone mason. But what is so interesting in him? This: that busy as that boy was from early morning to late at night, with hard, manual, exhausting labor, he made time after his hours of work to read every good book he could lay his hands upon, and then all day long he pondered what he had read, and pondered most of all what he had read concerning God and concerning God's revelation of himself in red sandstone and in other stones. He worked so well that he was always employed; he put conscience into road making and wall building; he never skimped.

Others when they had fulfilled their task, had not time for anything but to eat, sleep and talk desultorily. He published a volume named: "Poems Written in the Leisure Hours of a Journeyman Mason." He studied fossils, he communed with God during all the hours his hammer was going up and down, he worked out a strong, vigorous, help-

Possibilities

ful character, and when the time came in Scotland's history that some layman should plead for her ecclesiastical freedom from state domination, Hugh Miller was ready with a word for her defense, though until he was thirty-three years old he was stone mason, and stone mason only. What made him was the use to which he put his inch of time. No man in all his day was working longer and working harder at his assigned labor, but he made spare time and he got value out of it.

Then there is this scene which is pleasant: It is in a house in Epworth, England. It is a minister's home. The stipend is very small, three or four hundred dollars a year. The family is very large. Child after child is born into it. If ever a woman's hands were full, the hands of Susannah Wesley were. Where were the clothes to come from for her many children? How was the household life to be ordered so that there should be bread enough day after day? The whole neighborhood was poor. Parish work too, demanded time and attention. It might seem as though not a minute could be left to that woman, cultured and thoughtful as she was, for the training of her children and for any special influence in their behalf. But she made time. Over sewing, knitting, cooking, she taught her

The Possibility of Our Time

children. From her they learned to spell and read, at five years of age. From her they received the Bible, its history and its principles. From her they heard the story of the great and good of all ages, and from her they were taught that spiritual nearness to God is the need and the possibility of every human heart. A busier woman can scarcely be imagined than a woman who has the thousand details of a large family in a narrow home where every article of food and clothing has to be planned for. But with all her maternal duties, she made time for John and Charles Wesley and all their brothers and sisters to receive from her the instruction whereby through them blessings came to all the world.

No life is too busy, nor can be too busy to be good. The right employment of minutes may give character to all the remainder of one's time. Purposes and wishes can be made in instants. Such purposes and wishes may shape the whole life. What makes a person's life is its spirit. Given the right spirit and no one on earth can be so occupied but that he will have time and will make time for the noblest purposes and deeds. There is not one word in the Bible about honest employment or necessary care interfering with our good. Rather

Possibilities

is there word upon word that every calling, however active and engrossing, may be and should be a means of grace. It is the distinct charge of Paul, in order to guard against the idea that a man to be good should change his business and get into one that is easier for Christian living, that every man abide in the work where he is and in that work see to it that he grows stronger and better. No slave ever lived whose time was so completely his master's but that he could find time to draw near to God and be in earnest. There were men in the days of the persecutors who were put in the galleys of the Mediterranean and were chained to their seats. Over them stood the master who beat them that they might row harder. Sometimes these men pulled so long, so incessantly that scarce any cruelty can be named that was more exhausting than that of the galley slave. Theirs was a horrible life. They were cursed, they were struck, they were driven to their tasks. But boat after boat among those galleys had its Christian men who must not open their lips to mention Christ's name in a master's hearing lest they die, but who lived kindly in their hearts, forgivingly to their persecutors, whispering under their breath to their fellow sufferers words of comfort and of cheer.

The Possibility of Our Time

And all because they found time between blows and in the midst of blows to think of God and ask God's help and grace.

Sometimes I think of this matter in this way: It is possible to take a large box and fill it with cannon balls. They will be six or eight inches in diameter. The box may be packed until not another ball can be put into it. No reshaping of the cannon balls can give space for even one more ball. The box is full, absolutely full of cannon balls. Then when this has been done, we can go to the box and pour pail after pail, pail after pail of water into this box. The box was full, and still there was room for the water. There the water is, flowing in and around and covering all. It has displaced nothing. There was room for it. So in our human life, crowded full as it may be with work and care and study, there is always room, always time for this inflowing and indwelling of a spiritual fulness which may supplant nothing but may give environment and tone to everything.

God never meant, and no man should ever allow to himself, that there is not time enough in his existence to be holy. Every man has more time than he uses wisely. No Samuel ever went away from home to school who had so much to do in studying

Possibilities

and in working that he could not live near God. No Joshua had so many worries as a military commander that he could not go alone and talk with God. It was when cares of state were multitudinous beyond numbering, when every minute of Abraham Lincoln's days and nights was demanded by the anxieties of the war and its terrible reverses, that he made time to pray. Cæsar would not suffer any campaign, however exacting, to deprive him of minutes when he would write within his tent his Commentaries. Stonewall Jackson could not be so absorbed in leading troops that were poor and weak but that he thought often of his Maker and of the little churches and Sunday schools of his Maker's kingdom. Somehow George Williams found time to distribute his day, and others with him found time to distribute their days, so that every noon they gathered in a London warehouse and spoke to one another of human needs, and the Young Men's Christian Association started. Carey was a man with family, needing every penny he could get for his family's support, but he found time, while cobbling away over worn and ragged shoes, to think of the heathen, to learn their needs, to fill his heart with love for an untaught world, and then to go to

The Possibility of Our Time

church on Sunday and arouse the world to the recognition of his views.

Time! The trouble is not that we do not have time enough to live near God and help the world. It is amazing how much time we have! Every employee has it. How much time he has for mischievous things! How many minutes to give to matters of secondary importance! Evening after evening goes to waste or to something worse than waste. Mechanics have abundance of time, so has even the worker in the sweat-shop. I knew a life which went to work every morning at six o'clock, and worked every day from the fourteenth year until the twenty-first until seven in the evening, and then at nine o'clock went to a store, opened it, hunted through it, closed it again, and at half past nine returned the key to the employer. Not one cent of wages did this apprentice receive during those seven years. A few times did one and another give him a dime or a quarter. What should he do with those gifts? Use them for the late theater, or what people would call a relaxation, an amusement? He guarded his spare hours, he got sleep and strength in them, and he got books for them and good companionship for them, and church services for them, and Sunday

Possibilities

school work for them, and when he was twenty-one and was free from his apprenticeship, from what we might to-day call his "slavery," he was ready for life, because he had rightly used an inch of time. He had not money, but he had energy and learning and a well cultivated Christian character.

Time! Yes, everybody has it. The rich have it and the poor have it. Let us cease forever saying that we have not time for God's will, God's worship, God's work. There is a terrible danger that we prate over our busy lives, that we coddle ourselves, and get others, our families perhaps, to coddle us with sympathy because we are so busy. Say that we are busy, very, very busy with study, with work, with thought, let no one relax his intention to find time to dwell in the secret place of the Most High. We can pray over our studies; we can carry God's glory into our business; we can think in dependence upon God's wisdom; and then we can cast care upon him. The best thing the busiest man can do is to go to the place of devotion. The man who labors six days out of seven, from seven in the morning until six in the evening, would better be in a church on Sunday than anywhere else. When Christ's day was the busiest he went up in the evening into the mountain for a

The Possibility of Our Time

quiet season of prayer. There and thus he got his refreshment of heart for the next day's labor. Clubs, social organizations, labor unions, lecture courses are good, but they must never keep a man from finding time to commune with God and extend the helping hand to some particular souls. Amusements, recreations, relaxations serve their mission only when they help us to find larger time for life's truest work.

An inch of time ! It is worth millions. That inch used every day by Sir John Lubbock outside of banking hours made him an authority in pre-historic studies. That inch used by Dr. Rush as he was driving about from house to house visiting his patients made him an author. That inch used by Elihu Burritt, the blacksmith, made him a linguist, able to talk in twenty languages. An inch of time ! If you use it aright you can always find time for speaking to God every morning before you speak to any one else, always time for reading God's word before you read the word of any one else, always time to study the Bible, always time to be at church, always time to think about the poor and needy, always time to go to the man who is wounded and help him.

An inch of time ! Yes, the dying thief had but one inch of time, and he used it to an eternal

Possibilities

blessedness. We, too, may use it to our Saviour's delight and comfort, and to our own ceaseless and blessed good.

THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW AND BLESSED LIFE.

“He which persecuted now preacheth.”

THE best thing in this world is a good man. The greatest thing in this world is a great good man. The most blessed thing in this world is a blessed good man.

In Daniel Webster's day there was an old man named John Colby who had lived wickedly. The whole neighborhood knew him, and it was everybody's opinion that his wickedness was so inwrought into all the elements of his being that his wickedness and himself were inseparable, that they would lie down in the grave together. Year followed year and no change appeared in the man, save that his wickedness seemed to become more and more his very being. The idea that he would ever be different in character from what he was did not even suggest itself to the minds of those who knew him. He was one of the men who are said to be beyond the possibility of goodness. But contrary to what everybody expected, there came a change to John

Possibilities

Colby. One day God's will laid hold of him. He realized as he never had before what God wished of him, and what a miserable failure he had made of himself up to that hour. He was glad to believe that God would forgive him if he would repent of his wickedness, and that God would help him in the effort to be a good man. Then and there he renounced his wickedness, renounced what people had said was his very character, and putting aside his old-time self with its wrong and harm he put on a new self of purity and helpfulness. The change that appeared in John Colby surprised every one. But it lasted, it grew greater in its power and extent over him, it made a strong, worthy man of him. So it was that Daniel Webster used to say that "if any one wished to know what the gospel could do for a man let him look at John Colby."

The first thing that a human being should recognize about himself is that his character is his distinguishing feature. It is not the amount of money, the amount of power, the amount of brains that a man has that is his distinguishing feature, but his character. Whatever fellow men may temporarily say or do to the contrary, this is a fact: that what separates him from others and gives him his individuality is his goodness or lack of goodness, according

The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life

to its degree. Money, power and brains have their place, and they do exert an influence in temporarily deciding a man's position and recognition. But the standard of the ages, by which any one and every one is tried, is character; and in God's sight, which is the eternal and determining sight, men *are* what they are in their wishes and purposes.

It is not then too much to say that the supreme ambition of a person's life should be to secure a worthy character. Everything else, however important, is merely subsidiary. Beauty of person, brilliancy of achievement, acuteness of intellect, sway of authority are secondary, while goodness is primary.

Sometimes people realize this from childhood. Wise parents so inculcate it that the idea of it gets into girls and boys in their very youth, and they grow up to seek first the things which are known to be approved by the highest authority on character, God Himself. But sometimes people do not realize this until they have grown out of what is called the formative period of life and they are already men and women with set tendencies of thought and feeling. If the tendencies are toward the selfish and the wrong, if these men and women have become misers, or drunkards, or hypocrites, or cynics,

Possibilities

a most important question arises, whether it is possible for people with character already made to have their character re-made. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" was asked in Job's day, and the answer then given was, "Not one." Was that answer warranted then? Is it warranted now? Must a man look upon himself hopelessly who at twenty, forty, sixty years sees himself a wrong doer, and so say, "I can not be different?" Must the friends of those who are wrong doers say within their own hearts, "These people have crystallized their character and they can not be different from what they are?"

Next to our recognition of the fact that character is our distinguishing feature we need to bear in mind, that we have determining wills. It is those wills that indicate our character as nothing else does. Every time we make a choice we express our will. Choices evidence our character. When we know what we or others choose, we know what we and they are.

So long as we have determining wills, it will never do to compare us to a tree and say, as the tree that has grown into its present shape must always remain as it is, so men who have grown into present character must always remain as they are. We are

The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life

not trees. No, the tree can not turn itself around and look eastward when it has been looking westward. Nor can the upas tree that brought forth poison bring forth healthful food. The wild apple tree can not change itself into the sweet apple tree. But what trees can not do, men can do, because they are an order of creation possessing determining wills. Men can change their place as trees can not, and they can change the whole sap of their life so that the sap of inward sentiments shall be different from what it has been and the fruits of outward deeds shall be different too.

Warning after warning is given in Scripture as to the tendency with our wills to move in the grooves in which they have already moved many times. As years go on character does grow more and more fixed, because the will acts lazily and keeps in the old time track. Accordingly the Bible is always crying aloud to us to look well lest our wills get into habits of action that make us continually bad, and so the iron chains of habit hold us prisoners of the bad. But never will it allow that any man cannot, *if he will*, break from evil habit and begin a new and different life. It is a book of hope, because it is a book of possibility for character. It will not look on any man as hopeless for good. It calls to every kind of

Possibilities

case of wrong, however great the degree of wrong, and declares that the case is one that can be remedied. It scorns the idea that man is a tree, it rather addresses him as having power to make his life whatever he pleases to make it in character—and to make it such at the time it addresses him.

Its pages are filled with illustrations of what it means. There are two great classes of wrong doers, those whose wrong is of the spirit and those whose wrong is of the body, men who sin in the mind and men who sin in the flesh. Saul of Tarsus was one of the former. Outward life with him was decorous. He was untouched by drunkenness, theft, ribaldry, or anything that mere human law would condemn. But he was proud hearted, bitter, relentless against a foe, covetous of power and reputation. He was too wise to be indiscreet in wickedness, he was too jealous of his reputation to do a low, mean act. But he was a terrible man to have as an enemy. Whatever the thoughts and feelings God might send to him to make him pitiful, he schooled himself to resist them, and he had acquired one of those hard, resolute hearts against a foe which are more like adamant than like clay. For such a man to be humble, gentle, forgiving, comparing himself with others to his own disad-

The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life

vantage, laying aside his honors that he might bend low in the service, the menial service of others, is to go through a change than which nothing in character seems greater. But he did it. He stopped kicking against the pricks of God's stirrings in his heart. He gave himself a turn which was as though a mountain stood upon its summit, and he, the persecutor, became the lover and defender; he, the proud Pharisee, became the humble missionary; he, the self-satisfied, became in his own estimation as it were a very "chief of sinners"—and he lived, labored, suffered and died in the gentleness and forbearance of Christian devotion. That was the greatest change wrought in any man of his time; but it was wrought, and the possibility of the Gospel to lay hold of the most difficult case of its kind that could be mentioned flashed itself before the observation of all the Church.

Of the other kind of wrongdoers, those of the flesh, the people of Galatia were instances. Some of them were rough men. They had a bad reputation for their vices. They were drunken, fighting shepherds. They were unclean. Murders were common among them. They were ignorant. They practiced witchcraft. They bowed to idols. They had done these things all their lives. Their fathers

Possibilities

had done them before them. What could be made of these men? Anything different? Could they be made to be gentle, meek, temperate? This Paul came among them. He brought a message that God did not wish them to live as they had been living. He called upon them to arouse themselves. He set forth the beauties of goodness. He begged them to let God's Spirit fill and rule their hearts. He assured them that a new and Christ-like life was possible for them. He instanced the change that had come in his own character. And they broke from their past (and a terrible wrench it was and a hard one to sustain), but they broke from their past, and instead of being filled with drink they were filled with God's Spirit and instead of hating one another they bore one another's burdens. It was a new era to the men and women of Galatia when they ceased doing the works of the flesh and brought forth the fruit of the Spirit.

There is no denying that these changes involved great effort. It is not an easy thing for a life that has been traveling down hill all its days to turn and climb up hill. It is not easy for a man that has let any set of views control him to throw off those views and cause another set of views now to rule in their place. Is it not the old fable that the stag

The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life

and the horse had a fight and the horse appealed to man to help him, and man got on his back and once on his back the horse could not rid himself of his rider? But Paul and the Galatians did rid themselves of the wrongs that had ridden them. They became freemen, tremendous though the effort was for them to become such. And it matters not what the effort may be that is involved in a change of character, it can be made and made successfully. No man need be discouraged about himself. That which seems impossible can be done. Men have said that an ocean steamer can never be built that will carry passengers from America to Europe, men have said that water can never be made to rise higher than its source, but ocean steamers carry hundreds of thousands across the Atlantic, and water is sent hundreds of feet higher than its source. The laws of God in steam have been found and used, and so the impossible has become possible. And when the laws of God in His grace have been found and used, and the divine strength and help have been applied to the human heart, and God has been allowed to do His work, characters have been transformed and the men and women that seemed hopeless for the good have become trophies of grace.

What marvelous things have thus been done!

Possibilities

Every kind of man has been changed, and that too in every period of life. Here is John, already a grown man, but with a hot, fiery temper; and lo, that man of seemingly fixed habits of severity becomes, under the power of the Gospel, a marvelous expression of complacent love, so that his one chief feeling toward men is that of affection; and the message which he delights most to tell men is the message of love. He has become the exact opposite of what he was. I have known men who were self-opinionated, and who would not receive instruction from anyone turn right about and become like little children and ask for instruction in the ways of God. I have seen men whose hair was white lay aside the pride which had made them carry themselves as higher and better than their fellows, and become humble and helpful. The leopard has not changed his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin, but the leopard's heart has gone out of men and the heart of good has come in, and outward demeanor has become as different as though the skin of the Ethiopian had changed from black to white.

Some instances of such a change will be interesting for all time, first, because of the men themselves, and second, because we happen to know about them.

The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life

There was Augustine of Northern Africa, a well-educated boy whose mother was a praying woman. He avoided all her counsels and went his own gait in ways of thoughtlessness and of wrong. He touched all kinds of vice. He knew the finer and coarser vices alike. He was a wayward son, a recreant to every good influence. He disappointed all his friends. They saw a man who was capable of strong character giving way to evil associates and to evil practices. People lost interest in him. He seemed doomed to a wrong life. But his mother Monica never gave up hope. When he left Africa and came over to Southern Europe that he might the more freely follow the bent of his character and so plunge into vice, she followed. It seemed as though by this move he was cutting away the last tie that restrained him from wrong. In new surroundings he found the vice he sought. His was a headlong rush into evil. But God came to him in His power and checked the man as though he stopped Niagara when half way over its fall, and Augustine gave up every vice, became a dutiful son, a pure, benignant man, and confessing his sin renounced his sin and devoted his whole after career to the will of God.

Then there was John Newton. He spoke our English language. He grew up in acquaintance

with our English Bible. He knew the truth of life and knew it well. He had great advantages for being good. But he spurned every such advantage. He ridiculed goodness. He hardened his heart against God's Spirit, as Pharaoh hardened his heart when God sent him helps to believe in Him and obey Him, and he persisted in disobedience. He became a sailor. He took part in slave stealing. He drank and caroused. He misled others, delighting in making them the very children of hell. He was a sort of vagabond. The eyes of any man looking upon him would have seen in him a ruin—an irreparable ruin. There seemed to be nothing left in him that could be made over. There was no foundation possible for a new man in him, people said. But God's grace came to John Newton, drove the seventy devils out of him, cleansed him, revived him, filled him with new purposes and ambitions—and John Newton became a magnificent specimen of strong Christian manhood. Lewd songs gave way to praises of God, and oaths to the preaching of God's word—and John Newton became a blessing instead of a bane, to society and to the world.

Then there was Colonel Gardiner, a man who had all the advantages of wit and gallantry and who mingled with the highest social circles of his time.

The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life

He knew what brilliant surroundings were because he had had part in them. He knew the attractions of the gaming table, because he was a skilful and acceptable player of gambling games. He was an "elegant" sinner. His surroundings were those of gilded vice. He went with men and women that were well dressed, where jewels, riches and decorations were seen. Insidiously vice penetrated his whole system. It seemed to give him joy. He was called the "happy rake." His vice was all the more powerful because it was so successful. To many thoughtful minds such a man as Colonel Gardiner is the most heartless, hopeless person that can be found in a civilized community. But the man was reached. God stretched out his hand upon him and he shook him out of his vices and he put in him a sweet and blessed spirit, and Colonel Gardiner became a strong, earnest follower of Jesus Christ.

Where shall such thoughts as these cease? Every land, every community can illustrate the possibilities of God's saving grace. That grace can save a man from *every* sin, no matter what it is, no matter how long it has bound a man, no matter how terrible its power may be. It can save a man from *all* his sins. They may be many, interlaced and complex, seemingly associated for the simple purpose of

Possibilities

making a slave of the man. For nineteen hundred years history has been full of such instances. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Any man who will let God take him into his direction can be saved—saved for time, saved for eternity. As one gives himself up to a physician and lets the physician prescribe for him, so let a man give himself up to God and let God prescribe for him, and all will be well. Never has an instance failed. A man never surrendered to God's direction who was not made, and was not kept, a new creation. Jerry McAuley is a river thief in New York City and then a prison convict, one of the worst of the criminal classes of to-day, but he puts himself into God's keeping, and so long as he leaves himself there, he continues a good man. John B. Gough was a low down drunkard, fit only for the gutter, but when he really left himself to the guidance of God he became an ornament of society. Africaner is a heathen chief drinking out of the skulls of his dead enemies, the terror of his time and of his surroundings, but he said to God that God should henceforth control his life, and God made a gentle, strong, heroic man of him.

The possibility of a new and blessed life is not limited to earth. That possibility extends to heaven. Man may enter upon a career of goodness forever, if

The Possibility of a New and Blessed Life

he will. There awaits every one who puts himself to school to Jesus Christ as an obedient and faithful scholar, unlimited opportunity for acquiring every good quality. The virtues he may not secure fully in the present, he will secure in the future. Not only does a place of blessedness await him, but best of all, an inward condition of blessedness will be his in that place. He may be a good, strong, noble-minded, sweet-tempered, loving hearted man forever, and always with fresh delight in his service, in himself, and in his God.

Human life is crowded with possibilities, but the best and highest of them all is that we may be delivered out of all sin and guilt and made like unto God Himself in time and for eternity.