

**ALCOTT  
WILLIAM  
ANDRUS**

THE YOUNG WOMAN'S  
GUIDE

William Alcott

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# William A. Alcott

## The Young Woman's Guide

### PREFACE

This work was begun, soon after the appearance of the Young Man's Guide—and was partially announced to the public. For reasons, however, which I have not room to give in this place, it was thought proper to defer its publication till the appearance of several other volumes in the same spirit, involving more particularly the relative duties.

I wish to have it distinctly understood, that I do not propose to give a complete manual of the social and moral duties of young women. Every one has his own way of looking at things, and I have mine. Some of the duties of young women have appeared to me to receive from other writers less attention than their comparative importance demands; and others—especially those which are connected with the great subject of "temperance in all things"—I have believed to be treated, in several respects, erroneously.

Permit me, however, to say, that while I have not intended to follow the path, or repeat the ideas of any other writer, I have not attempted to avoid either the one or the other. If I have presented here and there a thought which had already come before the public from my own pen, I can only say that I did not intend it, although I did not take special pains to avoid it. The sum is this. I have presented my thoughts, without so much reference to what has already been said by myself or others, as to what I have supposed to be the necessities of those for whom I write. I have gone straight forward, asking no questions; and I trust I shall be dealt with in a manner equally direct.

## CHAPTER I

### EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Defining terms. The word excellence here used as nearly synonym with holiness. What is meant by calling the work a Guide. The term Woman—why preferable, as a general term, to Lady. The class to whom this work is best adapted.

It has been said, and with no little truth, that a large proportion of the disputes in the world might have been avoided, had the disputants first settled the meaning of the terms they respectively used. In like manner might a large share of the misapprehension and error in the world be avoided, if those who attempt to teach, would first explain their terms.

This work is called "The Young Woman's Guide to EXCELLENCE," because it is believed that excellence, rather than happiness, should be the leading aim of every human being. I am not ignorant that happiness—present and future—is proposed as our "being's end and aim," not only by as distinguished a poet as Alexander Pope, but also by as distinguished a philosopher as William Paley. But these men did not learn in the school of Christ, that our "beings end and aim" is happiness, present or future. The Christian religion, no less than Christian philosophy and sound common sense, teaches that holiness or excellence should be the leading aim of mankind. Not that "the recompense of reward," to which the best men of the world have had regard in all their conduct, is to be wholly overlooked, but only that it should not be too prominent in the mind's eye, and too exclusively the soul's aim; since it would thus be but a more refined and more elevated selfishness. Real excellence brings happiness along with it. Like godliness—which, indeed, is the same thing—it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. And that happiness which is attainable without personal excellence or holiness, is either undeserved or spurious. The world, I know, very generally seek after it, whether deserved or undeserved; and whether willing or not to pay the price.

My object is to assist, if I can, in removing from our world the error of seeking happiness as a primary object. Let us but pursue excellence, and happiness will almost inevitably follow. I address this exhortation to Young Women, in particular, for reasons which will be seen when I come, in the next chapter, to speak of female responsibilities. Let every young woman aspire to high degrees of purity and excellence. Let her great aim be, to be personally holy—like God her Saviour. To this end and with this aim, let her be ready to set aside, if necessary, father and mother, and brother and sister—yes, and her own life also,—assured that if she does it with a sacred regard to God and duty, all will be well. Let her but follow Christ according to the gospel plan, if it lead her to prison and to death. But it will not thus lead her. For every self-denial or self-sacrifice it involves, she will secure, as a general rule, manifold more in this present life, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

This book is not called "The Young Woman's GUIDE," with the expectation that she will consider it her only or even her principal guide. The Bible should be the principal guide of every person, young or old, male or female. Parents, also, are invaluable as guides. I offer it only as the best guide which my reflections upon those subjects, connected with the welfare of young women, that come within the department of my study and observation, enable me to give. May it prove a guide indeed!

I have called it "The Young WOMAN'S Guide," because there are many who are accustomed to associate with the word lady; the idea of exemption from labor, and of entire devotion to something supposed to be above it—as fashionable company, or fashionable dress and equipage. And not a few can hardly hear the word mentioned without disgust. Miss Sedgwick has illustrated this part of my subject very happily in the first and fifteenth chapters of her "Means and Ends." She says she does not write exclusively for those who are termed young *ladies*; because she does not believe in any such fixed class, in the country. The term *lady*, she also says, is too indefinite for any valuable use. We

not only apply it to those who are, or would be, above labor, but in a great many other ways—as that "old lady," meaning, perhaps, some beggar at the door, &c.

In short, she does not like the use of the phrase, young lady, at all. Neither do I. Besides, I like best the good old fashioned term, YOUNG WOMAN. This exactly represents the class for whom I write, and that, too, without either explanation or qualification. It will be mistaken by no one, nor will it be likely to give or cause any offence.

Finally, I call the work "The YOUNG Woman's Guide," because I design it for those single persons of the female sex to whom the term young is usually applied; viz., those who are from twelve or fourteen to eighteen or twenty years of age—and to those, in general, who are single. I hope, nevertheless, that it will contain some thoughts which may be useful to those individuals who are in married life, as well as to those who are below the age of twelve years. Many of its suggestions and principles will, indeed, be applicable—so far as they are just or true—to all mankind.

## CHAPTER II

### FEMALE RESPONSIBILITIES

Comparison of the responsibilities of young men and young women. Saying of Dr. Rush. Its application to young women. Definition of the term education. Bad and good education. Opinions of Solomon. Influence of a young woman in a family—in a school. Anecdotes of female influence. West, Alexander, Cæsar, Franklin. Story of a domestic in Boston. The good she is doing. Special influence of young women in families—and as sisters. Female influence in the renovation of the world.

Much has been said, within a few years, of the duties, responsibilities, &c., of young men, especially the young men of our republic. A great deal that has been said, has, in my view, been appropriate and well-timed. My own attention has been frequently turned to the same class of individuals; nor do I regret it. My only regret is, that what I have said, has not been said to better purpose. Counsels and cautions to young men, standing on slippery places as they confessedly do, can hardly be too numerous, provided those who give them, use discretion, and remember their responsibility, not only to the tribunal of public opinion, but to a tribunal still higher.

The snares, the dangers, the difficulties, the influence, the responsibilities of young men—at least in the United States—can hardly be overrated. Would that they could be so trained and directed as fully to understand them, and govern themselves accordingly! Would that they could be made to exert that moral influence in the salvation of our race—politically no less than morally, nationally no less than individually—of which they are so capable.

Yet, after every concession of this kind, I am compelled to believe that the responsibilities and influence of young women—to say nothing at present of their dangers—are much more weighty than those of young men. I am decidedly of opinion, that the future holiness and happiness of the world in which we live, depend much more on the character of the rising generation of the female sex, than on the character of our young men.

It was said by Dr. Rush, long ago, that mothers and school-masters plant the seeds of nearly all the good and evil in our world.

Presuming that by school-masters he meant teachers of both sexes, will any one doubt the truth of his assertion? Will any one doubt the justness of a remark in the late "Western Review," that if this world is ever to become a better and a happier world, woman must be foremost, if not the principal agent in rendering it so?

But as mothers are never mothers till they have been daughters, is it not obvious that the right education of these last is as great a work as any to which human mind and human effort have ever been called? If woman moves the world, intellectually, morally, and even, in effect, politically—as no doubt she does—is it not of primary importance that she be taught, as well as teach herself, to move it right?

Can it be necessary to advert, in this place, to the well known and acknowledged fact, that almost every man of extensive influence, for good or for evil, whom the world has produced, became what he was through maternal influence? Cæsar, and Caligula, and Talleyrand, and Napoleon, became what they were in consequence of their mothers, no less than Alfred, and Doddridge, and Howard, and Washington. For let it not be forgotten that mothers and teachers, according to Dr. Rush—and, in fact, according to common observation, too—plant the seeds of the world of evil no less than of the world of good. How exceedingly important, then, that *they* should be well educated, "from whom," in the language of another writer, "our virtues are, and from whom our vices may be"—we would add *must* be—"derived;" at least in no small proportion!

But I am using the term education without explaining it. Let me, then, ere I proceed to say more on the subject of female responsibility, explain what I mean by education, especially female education.

Mere instruction in the sciences is, indeed, education; it is, however, but a very small part of it. To educate, is to train up. In this view, all are of course educated; and every thing which has an influence in developing mind or body, and in training up, either for good or for evil, is entitled, justly, to the name of education.

But if the above definition be just—if whatever concerns our development, or the formation of any part of our character, physical, intellectual, social or moral, is education—then it must follow that there are two kinds of education, bad and good. All persons, places and things, which affect us (and what does not affect us?) and influence us, for good or for evil, must educate us.

I am aware that this definition is not new: still, it is not generally received, or if received, not generally acted upon. There is still an almost universal clinging to the old, inadequate, incorrect idea, that the principal part of education consists in the cultivation of the intellect; and that, too, by set lessons; received, for the most part, at the schools. The true idea of education, therefore, must be continually enforced, till it becomes common property, and until mankind act as if they believed what they profess in regard to it.

When Solomon says, "Train up a child in the way he should go," he is talking of what I call *education*; and the kind of education which he is there recommending, is *good* education. I do not believe he had the schools in his mind—the infant school, the Sabbath school, the common school, the high school, or the university.

Far be it from me to attempt to detract from the value of our schools; on the contrary, I regard them as of inestimable worth, when duly attended to. What I insist on is, that they are not the *all in all* of education; and that, in fact, their influence in training up or forming good character, is so trifling—that is, comparatively—that they scarcely deserve to be thought of when speaking of education, as a whole, especially the education of daughters. And though one of the tribes of the nation to which Solomon belonged, over which he reigned, and for whom, in particular, he wrote, is said to have been school-masters by profession, and another priests, I can hardly conceive that when he was inspired to give the educational advice just alluded to, he ever turned so much as a thought to the little corner of Palestine allotted to Simeon, or to the Levites in their respective but more scattered stations.

Solomon was, in all probability, addressing himself chiefly to the fathers and mothers, and grand-fathers and grand-mothers, and other relatives of Israel; the class who, by their united influence, make the son and daughter, and grand-son and grand-daughter, what they are—a blessing or a curse to the world in which they are to live. For, according as children are brought up by these teachers, and by the influences which are shed upon them from day to day and from hour to hour, so are they well or ill educated.

If I have been successful in presenting the meaning of a term which is not only frequently used in this book, but almost every where else, it will follow, as a matter of course, that I do not attach too much importance to the education of daughters themselves, nor to their education as the teachers of others. For if to educate, is to form character, what young woman can be found, of any age or in any family, who is not a teacher?

Have young women often considered—daughters, especially—how much they influence younger brothers and sisters, if any such there are in the family where they dwell? Have they considered how much they sometimes influence the character—and how much more they might do it—not only of their school-mates and play-mates, but also of their more aged friends and companions—their parents, grand-parents, and others? [Footnote: On reading these paragraphs in manuscript, to one of our more eminent teachers, he observed that if he had been useful in the world, he owed his usefulness to the exertions of a maiden lady who resided in his father's family, while his character was forming.]

I could tell them—were this the place for it—many a true story of reading daughters who have been the means of awakening, in their aged parents, or grand-parents, or other friends, a taste for reading, which they might otherwise have gone down to the grave without acquiring. I could tell them of many a father and mother, and grand-father and grand-mother, grown grey in vice—hardened even by intemperance as well as other vices—who have been reformed by the prattle, or the reproof, or the prayers of a good daughter. Is not such a daughter a teacher?

But I am most anxious to convince young women of their responsibilities in regard to the rising generation, especially their own brothers and companions. I am anxious, if I can, to convince all who read this volume, that God has, by his providence, committed to their charge, in no small degree, the bodies, and minds, and the souls of those with whom, in this world, they are associated. That according to their own conduct, good or ill, will be, in no small measure, the health, and knowledge, and excellence of their friends and companions. That according to their efforts—attended, either by the blessing of God, or the tokens of his displeasure—will be the condition of millions, for time and for eternity.

But is it so? Are daughters, as daughters merely—to say nothing, as yet, of maternal influence—are daughters thus influential? Is it true that the destiny of millions is thus committed to their keeping?

I have seen the conduct of a whole school—I speak now of the common or district school—graduated by the conduct of a single virtuous, and amiable, and intelligent young woman, not twelve years old, who attended it. I have seen a whole Sabbath school not a little affected by the prompt attention, decorous behaviour and pious example of some elder member of an older class, to whom the younger members of classes, male and female, looked up, as to a sort of monitor, or I know not what to call it—for the impression thus made, is better seen and felt than described. The bad behaviour of a young woman, in these circumstances, is, indeed, equally influential—nay, more so, inasmuch as the current of human nature sets more readily downward than upward. Still, a good example is influential—greatly so: would that it were generally known how much so!

Suppose now that by your good behaviour and pious example in the Sabbath school, you are the means of turning the attention of one younger companion, male or female, to serious things, and of bringing down upon that young person the blessing of Almighty God. Suppose that individual should live to teach or to preach, or in some other form to bless the world, by bringing numbers to the knowledge, and love, and inculcation of the very truth which has saved his own soul—and these last, in their turn, should become apostles or missionaries to others, and so on. Is there any end, at least till the world comes to an end, of the good influence which a good Sabbath school pupil *may* thus exert?

But this is something more than a supposed case. Is it not, in effect, just what is actually taking place around us in the world continually? Not, indeed, that a long train of good influences has been frequently set agoing in the Sabbath school—for Sabbath schools are but of recent origin. But people have always been led along to virtue or vice, to piety or impiety, to bless the world or to prove a curse to it, by one another. A word or a look from a relative, or friend, or acquaintance, in the school or somewhere else, has often given a turn to the whole character. A word, it is said, may move a continent. Something less than a word—a look or a smile of approbation—may move more than a continent. It may move not merely a West,<sup>1</sup> but an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Napoleon, a Washington and a Howard—men who, in their turn, moved a world!

I have spoken of the influence which a young woman may have on millions through the medium of the Sabbath school. But if she may influence in this way, the millions of those who are to come after her, how much more may she do in forming character for the great future, in the family! Her

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<sup>1</sup> A mother's kiss, in token of her approbation of some little pencil sketch, is believed by Benjamin West to have given the turn to his character—the character of a who said, and justly, that he painted for eternity. "That mother's kiss," he observes, "made me a painter."

presence in the Sabbath school is only once a week—an hour or two a day, once in seven days; whereas, her influence in the family is going on perpetually.

The clothes of Alexander the Great, are said to have been made, to a very great extent, by his sisters; and those of Augustus Cæsar were made for many years, by his. And can we doubt that these young females were influential, in a great many respects, in the education of these conquerors? What could the latter have done, but for the assistance and influence of mothers and sisters? And can we have any Alexanders and Cæsars, at the present day, to carry on the moral and intellectual conquests which are so necessary in the world, without the aid and co-operation of mothers and sisters?

Sisters little know—it is almost impossible for them ever to know—how much they do to bring about results,—to educate their brothers and friends, for the work which they perform, whether good or evil. The sisters of Franklin little knew what they were doing for "young Benny," as they called him, while they assisted their mother in taking care of his clothes, in preparing his food, and in ministering to his other physical wants—yes, and to the wants of his mind, too. Who can say that Benjamin Franklin would ever have been what Benjamin Franklin was, without their aid, joined to the efforts of their mother?

Many a young female, having caught, in some degree, the spirit of doing good, has sighed for opportunities. "What can I do?" she has seemed to say, "here at home. If I could be a missionary at Ceylon, or South Africa, or the Sandwich Islands, or even if I could be a teacher, I could, perhaps, do something. But as it is, I must remain a mere cypher in the world. I would do good, but I have no opportunities."

She who says this, is undoubtedly sincere. She is, however, greatly mistaken. Her opportunities for doing good—for exerting an influence to bless her race—"are neither few nor small." There is, indeed, a difference, a very great difference, in human conditions and circumstances; and yet I am persuaded, no female is so secluded as not to be able to fulfil, towards her race, a most important mission.

I know of an excellent female who is often heard lamenting her want of opportunity for usefulness. She has the spirit of doing good as she supposes, and as I fully believe. And yet she is miserable—she makes herself so—by repining continually at her want of ability to perform the good works which her heart meditates. She would rejoice to devote her self to the elevation of her race. She would gladly go to India, or the South Seas, if her age and uncultivated intellect did not exclude her from being a candidate. Now, without saying a word in disparagement of foreign missions—for the success of which I would gladly contribute largely, not only by prayers, but by pecuniary contributions—truth compels me to say of this female, that I am by no means sure she could do more for humanity, or more, in fact, for the cause of Christ, by a foreign mission, than she is now doing by a domestic one.

A *domestic* mission hers indeed is, in the fullest sense of the term. She is an ordinary domestic—and no more—in the family to which she belongs. But what is the condition of that family? The head of it is the distinguished teacher of a private female seminary. Here he has prepared hundreds of young women—so far, I mean, as the mere instruction of what he calls a "family school," is concerned—for usefulness as teachers, as sisters, as ministers to the aged, and as mothers to the young. Suppose he has instructed, in his comparatively excellent way, two hundred females. Suppose again one half of the females he has instructed and counselled and lived among, should, in their turn, each form as much character as he has already done—and he is yet but a middle aged man; and suppose half the disciples of each of these pupils in their turn should do the same, and thus on, till the year of our Lord 2000, only, which is, as we have reason to believe, but a little way towards the end of the world. Suppose one hundred only of each two hundred, should live to have influence, seventy-five of them as the mothers of families of the usual size, and twenty-five only, as teachers. There will then be five generations in one hundred and sixty years; and the number of children which will come under the influence of this line or succession of mothers and teachers, will be no less than ninety millions; or a number equal to six times the present population of the United States.

Now what I have here supposed, is by no means beyond the pale of possibility. Two hundred pupils is not a large number for one teacher to instruct during his whole life. Nor is twenty-five a large proportion of two hundred to become teachers. Nor is seventy-five a large number in two hundred to live to have families; nor two children in each family, upon an average, a very large number to come to maturity and have families in their turn. Besides, I have reckoned but four generations in one hundred and sixty years, exclusive of that now educating. So that I have kept my estimates within due bounds in every respect.

Do you ask what the domestic of whom I have spoken has to do with all this? I answer, much—very much indeed. Has she not rendered to the teacher in whose employ she has been, that kind of services, without which he could not have followed his occupation? And if ninety millions, or even one tenth that number of citizens should, in the course of the next two centuries, reap the benefit of his labors, and become lights in the world, is it too much to say that she has been an important aid in accomplishing the work? Nay, is it even too much to affirm that unless the part which she has acted had been performed by her or somebody else, the school could not have gone on, and two hundred young women could not have received the teacher's instructions?

Why, then, is not this humble domestic to whom I allude, a benefactor to her race—if a benefaction it is, to raise up and qualify for usefulness two hundred females—as well as he who has the whole credit of it? I will not, indeed, say that any thing like as much credit is due to her as to him; but I may say, and with truth, that she was an important auxiliary in producing the results that have been mentioned.

But if a humble domestic, one who imagines herself so obscure as to be of little service to a world which perhaps estimates her services almost as low as she does herself—if such an individual may, besides the general influence of her character upon a family, be an indispensable aid in the work of sending forth to the world a host of female missionaries, equal, in the progress of less than two centuries, at the dawn of the millennium, to ninety millions, what may not be done by a sister in *a well ordered family*—one who is not only well educated and governed herself, but who educates and governs others well?

It may indeed be said, that a domestic, in the family of a distinguished teacher, may indirectly influence, by her labors in the way I have mentioned, a far greater number of her race than most sisters are able to do. It may, indeed, be so. There is, however, another consideration. It is chiefly the externals of education which can receive attention, even in our best private schools. Little can be done, at the best, to form character—deep, permanent, and abiding character. Blessings indeed—great blessings—such schools are; but in proportion as their numbers are increased beyond those of our larger families, in the same proportion is the influence which might be exerted by the teacher, scattered and weakened; whereas, if the number be small, the influence of those who teach by example and by precept, is concentrated, and rendered efficient. There is no certainty that the feebler influence which is exerted on ninety millions, might not do more good by being concentrated on one tenth or one twentieth that number. In other words, if the same amount of pains were taken by mothers and sisters, and the same amount of labor bestowed for the purpose, there is no certainty that the world might not as soon be rendered what it should be through the medium of family education alone, as with the aid of other influences. Christianity, when brought to bear upon the family by the united exertions of father, mother, brothers and sisters, will probably have an influence on the regeneration of the world, of which no human mind—uninspired at least—has ever yet conceived.

Would that our young females—sisters especially—had but an imperfect conception of the power they possess to labor in the cause of human improvement! Would that they had but an imperfect idea of female responsibility!

My remarks are applicable to all young women; but they are particularly so to elder sisters. To them is given in special charge, the happiness and the destiny of all younger brothers and sisters, be they ever so numerous. As the desires of Abel were to be expressed to Cain, and the latter was

appointed to rule over the former, so is the elder daughter appointed to rule over those whom God has, in the same manner, committed to her trust. Happy is she who has right views of her weighty responsibilities; but thrice happy is she who not only understands her duty, but does it!

But if the moral character, much more than the physical and intellectual well being of the family, is given in charge to elder sisters, and even to all sisters, it is scarcely possible for them to form a correct idea of the weight of their influence, in this respect at least, till they are past the age when that influence is most necessary, most persuasive, and most effectual.

I have seldom found a young man who had strayed long and widely from the path of virtue, who had enjoyed the society and influence of a wise, and virtuous, and attentive sister. On the contrary, I have almost uniformly found such individuals to have been in families where there were no sisters, or where the sisters were not what they ought to have been; or to have been kept at schools where there were none but our sex.

I beseech every young female reader to make herself acquainted, as far as she possibly can, with the nature of her influence, and the consequent responsibilities which devolve upon her. Let her understand that the day has gone by in which physical force was supposed to rule the world. Moral influence is now the order of the day; and they whose moral influence is most weighty and powerful, are they who most effectually bear rule. But as it is reserved for woman, when sensible, enlightened, virtuous and pious, to exercise the most weighty moral influence, consequently it is her province most effectually to bear rule. Kings, and emperors, and presidents, parliaments, and congresses, and assemblies, and courts, and legislators, and judges, may labor in vain to influence or to reform mankind, so long as female influence is not what it should be. But let females be rightly educated, and let them do what a good education will enable them to do, and vice will ere long hang her head, and virtue and piety—which alone exalt a nation, or the individuals that compose it—will resume their sway. Then will the wilderness and the solitary place be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.

## CHAPTER III

### SELF-EDUCATION

Views of Agesilaus, king of Sparta—of Solomon, king of Israel. Mistake corrected. What the wisest and best parents cannot do. What, therefore, remains to the daughter. Necessity of self-education. The work of self-education the work of life—a never-ending progress upward to the throne of God.

Woman, then, now so often miseducated, must be trained in the way she should go. But let us consider a little more in detail what this education or training of woman should be, and what it should accomplish.

When Agesilaus, king of Sparta, was asked what things he thought most proper for boys to learn, he replied—"Those which they ought to practise when they come to be men." Nor does this essentially differ from the direction of Solomon, which has been quoted.

If females do, in effect, rule the world, they ought, as I have before said, to be trained to sway the sceptre of moral rule in the right manner. If they now stand in the same position, as regards the world and the world's happiness, with that which boys were supposed to occupy in the days of Agesilaus, and if this thing was correct in his opinion, then it follows that a proper answer to the question, What things are most proper for girls to learn? would be—Those which they ought to practise when they come to be women.

But it will not be forgotten that the definition I have given of the term education includes much more than merely direct efforts to teach. Whatever affects the health or the progress of body, mind or soul, even though it were that in which the individual is mostly passive, as in sleep, is a part of our education.

There is one point in which the views of Agesilaus concerning education, if not incorrect, are at least defective. He appears to countenance an idea, still very prevalent, that children and youth are not only in a state of preparation for the future, but a state of preparation, *merely*.

They are to be taught what they ought to practise when they come to be men, according to Agesilaus; but according to the views of one who was wiser than he, they are to be trained in the way they should go. The latter view comes nearer the truth of the case than the former. It requires, or at least permits us, to train up the child to-day for the enjoyments of to-day, as well as for those of to-morrow—a point which the maxim of Agesilaus does not seem to include.

Young people are taught, almost universally—by example, if not by precept—to consider merit, if not virtue and happiness, as belonging exclusively to maturity. They are not enough assured that youth, though a state of preparation and trial, is also a state of reward; and that neither usefulness nor happiness is confined to place, age or circumstances.

I wish to see the day arrive when the young—young women, especially—will not look forward so much to a distant day and to distant circumstances, for a theatre of action, and for the rewards of action, as they are accustomed to do; for they thus deprive themselves of a vast amount of happiness which is due them in the *present*, without in the least enhancing the value or the pleasures of the future.

I wish to see them so educated that they will not only be what they should be, when they come to adult age, but also what they should be now. They have or should have a character to acquire *now*; a reputation to secure and maintain *now*; and a sphere of personal usefulness and happiness to occupy *now*.

It is true, indeed, that childhood and youth are more specially seasons of preparation, and less specially seasons of reward, than maturer and later life; but it is also equally true, that every stage of life, not excepting its very evening, is little more than a preparation for a still higher state, where

reward will predominate in a degree which will make all previous preparation seem to dwindle almost to nothing.

Existence, in short, is a state of progress, having, at every step, so far as we know, its trials and rewards—the rewards always, however, predominating, and the trials diminishing, in proportion as personal holiness renders the latter unnecessary.

It will happen, unavoidably, that many young women to whom this little volume may come, will have been trained up, to the time of casting their eyes on these pages, in the old fashioned belief to which I have alluded—viz., that they can neither *do* nor *be* much in the world, except to submit passively to certain processes which have received the name of education, till their arrival at a certain size or age. The fault, reader—if such should be the case—is not chargeable, solely, on your parents. They followed a custom which they found; they did not make it. But however this may be, it is clear that your great object should now be, to see what you can do for yourself.

Now, then, here you are, twelve, fourteen, perhaps sixteen years of age. Your parents have brought you up according to the existing customs, *for the future*. They have not sought to make you feel your present responsibilities, your present power to do good, your present capacity for communicating and securing happiness, so much as to make you believe there are responsibilities, and powers, and capacities, and rewards, to be yours when you come to be large enough and old enough to appreciate or receive them.

But whatever your parents may have left undone in regard to the formation of your character, it is yours to do. Need I urge the necessity of the case? The present is an exceedingly important period of your life; and what is to be done, must be done quickly. But what your parents have hitherto left undone, they will be likely to continue to leave undone. Unless you apply yourself, therefore—and that immediately—to the finishing of a work, that, owing to the circumstances in which they have been and still are placed, and the views they have entertained, they have left unfinished, your education is not likely to be, by any means, so perfect as it should be. You must take it up, therefore, where they have left it; and do, for yourself, what they have not done for you. In other words, you must engage, at once, in the great work of self-education.

It may, indeed, be the case, that you are the child of parents who have done their best, and who have done it intelligently. Blessed is the young woman who has such parents, but thrice blessed are the parents themselves, if, in the performance of their work, they have the co-operation of the daughter. There must be self-education even where there are the best of parents. In fact, the work of parental training and that of self-education, should go on together; they cannot well be separated. Parental effort will produce but half its legitimate results, when not seconded by the efforts of infancy and childhood, and especially of youth. The reasons for this are so obvious that they hardly need to be repeated. No young woman can be constantly in the company of her mother; no mother can constantly watch over her daughter. In the best families there are hours of each day, when the child of every age, especially of youthful age and capacity, must be left to herself or to the influence of others. What, then, is to become of her? Is she to yield to that current of the world which every where sets downward?

You will say, perhaps, that she has good habit on her side, together with the counsels of good and kind parents. If so, I say again, she is highly favored. But what if it happen to be otherwise? What if the parents happen not to be wise and discriminating, or seem unable to find time, in the bustle of a busy world, to do that which they know it were desirable to do? What then?

I repeat the sentiment, then: if you have the best of parents, you are liable, at your age, to be thrown, day after day, into new and untried circumstances—such as it were next to impossible for parents to foresee. New feelings will arise unknown to yourself, and undiscoverable by them. New passions will make their appearance—new temptations will solicit—new trials will be allotted you, In spite of the best parental efforts at education, there will still remain to you a great work of *self*-effort.

To assist you in it, is the leading object of this little volume. It is not a substitute for parental counsels. It is not a substitute for your own reflections. If it prove not an aid to parents, in their task, and if it encourage not the reflection and the self-efforts of the young, it will not accomplish its object.

In the preceding chapter I have endeavored to give a general idea of education, as I understand and use the term. In this I have shown that no small part of the great work of education devolves, in the best circumstances—and much more in circumstances which are unfavorable—upon the daughter. I have shown that her whole life is a state of preparation, indeed—but also, in some measure, a state of reward.

You perceive your own character and happiness, for time and for eternity, to be placed, in no small degree and measure, in your own hands—the efforts of parents, friends and teachers to the contrary notwithstanding. You perceive the formation of that character, by the combined efforts of your parents and others and yourself, to constitute the work of your education. You perceive yourself capable—at least I hope you do—of everlasting progress; of approaching the great source of Light, and Truth, and Knowledge, and Excellence, forever and ever, though without the possibility of attaining it. You perceive that, though allied on the one side to the dust you tread on, you are allied on the other side to heaven; that though connected by ties of consanguinity to the worm you are also connected, or may be, with angels and archangels, and cherubim and seraphim, in the glorious work of unceasing progress upward toward the throne of God. Will you not, then, hail with joy, every effort of every being who would assist your spirit in its upward flight?

To educate yourself—to make progress—to ascend toward the Eternal Throne,—you must know yourself—the laws within and without you—your relations, by means of those laws, to other things and other beings—your powers, your capacities, your prerogatives. You must, moreover, know how to govern yourself in accordance with your knowledge.

## CHAPTER IV

# LOVE OF IMPROVEMENT

Female capabilities. Doing every thing in the best possible manner. Unending progress. Every person and every occupation susceptible of improvement, indefinitely. Doing well what is before us. Anecdote illustrative of this principle. Personal duties. Two great classes of persons described. Hopes of reaching the ears of the selfish.

I have already said that you are capable of never-ending progress in knowledge and excellence, and that it is alike your interest and your duty to aspire to that perfection for which God has given you capabilities. The object of the present chapter is to kindle within you a desire to make progress in every thing you do—to go on, as the Scripture expresses it, to perfection.

"Whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well," is an old but true maxim. More than even this might be affirmed. Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing in the best possible manner. No matter how well you have done the same thing heretofore; no matter how much more perfectly you already do it than your neighbors. You are not to make the past of your own experience, or the present of your neighbor's, the measure of your conduct. The question is—How well can I perform this particular act now?

Perhaps no person who reads these paragraphs, will doubt the truth of the general principle I have laid down. Thus far, it may be said, all seems to be correct. We are, indeed, bound to do every thing we do, to the glory of God; and he can hardly be glorified in the doing of a thing in a manner which is short of the best in our power.

Yet, when we come to apply the principle, and say in what particulars we should strive to make progress and do better, from day to day, and from hour to hour, (if the thing is to be performed so often,) many an individual will be found, I fear, to stand back; and among those who thus shrink from the just application of admitted principle, will be found not a few who, till now, supposed they had within them a strong desire for perpetual improvement.

It is, my young friends, no *trifling* matter to have burning within a hearty desire for eternal progress. It is no small thing to do whatever our hands find to do, which it is fit that an intelligent being—one who belongs to the family of Christ—*should* do, in such a manner that it will contribute to the glory of God, and the good of mankind.

And yet less than this, as Christians or even as rational and immortal beings, we cannot do. I know, indeed, that many who profess to be the disciples of Christ, actually do less than this. I know there are hundreds and thousands who are called by his worthy name, and who seem to be almost above the liability to do that which could be regarded as positively wrong, who, nevertheless, are very far from striving to do everything which their hands find to do *with all their might*—or, in other words, as well as they possibly can. But it is to be hoped that the standard of Christian character will ere long be much higher than it is now.

It is of far less consequence *what* we do in the world, my young friends, than how well we do it. There is hardly a useful occupation among us, in which a person may not be eminently serviceable to himself and to mankind. There is hardly one in which we may not constantly improve ourselves. There is hardly one which will not afford us the means and opportunities of improving others. There is hardly an occupation which may not itself be essentially improved.

I do not mean to say there is no choice in occupations, either as regards pleasantness or usefulness. Nor do I mean to say, that neither parents themselves nor their children, are ever to consult their own natural preferences—their own likes and dislikes. All I aim at is, to convince the young—especially the young woman—that the old couplet,

"Honor and shame from no condition rise;  
Act well your part, there all the honor lies"—

is not so very far from the truth, as many suppose; and that happiness, and even usefulness and excellence, are as little dependent on place and condition, as honor and shame.

A mercantile man with whom I was once acquainted, gave me, in few words, a very important lesson. He said he made it the rule of his life to do, in the best possible manner, whatever at any time seemed, as a subject of duty, to devolve upon him. No matter about his own likes or dislikes—what appeared to be in the course of the dispensations of Providence allotted him for the day, he performed with all his heart. If he should conclude to pursue his present business for life, as the means of procuring a livelihood, this would be the very best course of preparation: if otherwise, it was the best under the circumstances; and especially was it the best state of mental and moral discipline with which he could be furnished.

To neglect the business before us because we are unhappy in it, or at least not so happy as we fancy we might be in some other employment, is to oppose the plans of Providence; nay, even to defeat our own purpose. It is to disqualify ourselves, as fast as we can, for faithfulness, and consequently for usefulness, in the employment we desire, should we ever attain to it. The wisest course is, to do what our hands find before them to do, provided it is lawful to do it at all, with all our might.

The best possible preparation a young woman can have for a sphere of action more congenial to her present feelings, is the one she now occupies. She has, at least, duties to herself to perform. Let these, as they recur, be performed in the best possible manner; and let the utmost effort always be made to perform every thing a little better than ever she performed it before—if it be but the washing of a few cups, or the making of a bed. What her personal duties are, generally, need not now be said: first, because many of them are obvious secondly, because they will be treated of in their respective places. But it should ever be borne in mind, that there is nothing ever so trifling, which is worth doing at all, that may not be done better and better at every repetition of the act; and that there is no occupation which may not, in itself, be improved indefinitely.

Rising in the morning, devotion, personal ablutions, dressing, breakfasting, exercise, employments, recreations, dining, conversation, reading, reflection—all these, and a thousand other things which every one, as a general rule, attends to—may be performed in a manner to correspond more and more with the Scripture direction which has been illustrated.

There are, in respect to what I am now mentioning, two classes of persons in the world—of females as well as males; and they differ from each other as widely, almost, as the world of happiness from the world of misery. One of these classes lives to *receive*; is selfish—supremely so. The other lives to *communicate*, more or less—to do good—to make the world around it better. The last class is benevolent.

A person of either class is not necessarily indolent or inactive; but the end and aim of the labors of one, are *herself*; while the other labors for God and mankind. The one procures honey from every flower—formed by other hands—but not a flower does she ever raise by the labor of her own hands, if she can possibly avoid it.

The one lives only to enjoy; the other, to be the continual cause of joy, like her Creator. The latter has a source of happiness within; the former depends for her happiness on others. Leave her alone, or amid a frowning or even an indifferent world, and she is miserable.

Would that I could reach the ears of that numerous class who are dependent on the world around them for their happiness—who never originated any good, and are becoming more and more useless everyday! Would that I could make them believe that true happiness is not to be found externally, unless it first exist in their own bosoms! Would that I could convince them that the royal road to happiness—if there be one—is that which has been alluded to in the preceding paragraphs; in making

all persons and things around us better—in transmuting, as it were, under the influence of the gospel, all coarser things around us to "apples of gold in pictures of silver."

I long exceedingly to see our young women filled with the desire of improvement—physical, social, intellectual and moral. I long to see their souls glowing with the desire to go about doing good, like their Lord and Master. Not, indeed, *literally*, as I shall have occasion to say in another place. But I long to have their hearts expand to overflowing with love to the world for whom Christ died; and I wish to have some of the tears of their compassion fall on those over whom God has given them an amazing, and often an unlimited influence.

Could I hope to reach a dozen minds, and warm a dozen hearts, which had otherwise remained congealed, or at most received passively the little stream of happiness which a naked, external world affords them, without any corresponding efforts to form a world of their own—could I be the means of enkindling in them that love for everlasting progress towards perfection, which is so essential to the world's true happiness and their own—could I thus aid in setting in motion an under-current which should, in due time, restore to us Eden, in all its primitive, unfallen beauty and excellence,—how should I be repaid for these labors!

I will dare to hope for the best. If I have the sacred fire burning in my own bosom, I will hope to be the means of enkindling it in the bosom of a few readers. If my own soul glows with love to a fallen world, I will dare to hope that a few, at least, of those whose souls are more particularly made for love and sympathy, will be led to the same source of blessedness.

## CHAPTER V

# SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Vast extent of the science of self-knowledge. Spurious self knowledge. Knowledge of our physical frame—its laws and relations. Examples of the need of this knowledge. Instruments of obtaining it. The use of lectures. Study of our peculiarities. Study of mental philosophy. The Bible. How the Bible should be studied.

Self-knowledge is of the utmost importance to every human being. To no person, however, is it more important than to the young woman.

It is the more necessary to urge the importance of self-knowledge, from the fact that it is a species of knowledge which every one claims, and which she would deem it almost a reflection upon her character to be supposed not to possess; while it is that very knowledge of which almost every one, of both sexes, is exceedingly ignorant.

Such an one "understands himself," is deemed quite a compliment among our sex nor is it wholly disregarded by the other. But by this expression is too often meant no more than a knowledge of the petty acts and shifts, and I might say tricks, by means of which men and women contrive to pass current in the fashionable world. How much this kind of self-acquaintance is worth, is too obvious to need illustration.

I have represented a just self-knowledge as of very great importance; but it is a science of vast extent, as well as of vast importance. A thorough knowledge of one's self includes, first, a knowledge of man in general, in his whole character—compounded as it is—and in all his relations to surrounding beings and things; and, secondly, a knowledge of the peculiarities produced by particular circumstances, condition, mode of life, education and habits.

She who merely understands all the little arts to which I have alluded, which enable us to pass current with a fashionable and grossly wicked world, will find her self-knowledge exceedingly small, when she comes to compare it with the standard of self-acquaintance set up by such writers as Mason, Burgh, Watts, &c.; and, above all, when she comes to compare it with the standard of the Bible. How little, nay, how contemptible will all mere worldly arts and shifts appear—things which at most belong to the department of manners—when she comes to understand her three-fold nature, as exhibited by the natural and revealed laws of Jehovah!

The Subjects of Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene alone—and they teach us little more than the laws and relations of the mere body or shell of the human being—are almost sufficient for the study of a long life; and yet no individual can ever thoroughly understand herself without them: it is impossible. Anatomy shows us the *structure* of this body, which the Psalmist, long ago, taught us was fearfully and wonderfully made. Physiology teaches us the *laws* by which the living machine operates—is kept in play for seventy, eighty, or a hundred years; and Hygiene teaches us the *relations* of the living, moving human body to surrounding beings and objects. This, indeed, is a knowledge which few young women possess; and yet it is a knowledge which no young woman, who would do her utmost in the work of self-education, can dispense with.

She wishes, perhaps, to improve her voice by conversation, reading and singing. But is she qualified to do this in the best possible manner, while she is wholly ignorant of the structure of the lungs, the wind-pipe, and the fauces, as they are called—parts so intimately concerned in the production of voice and speech?

She wishes, perhaps, to develop and invigorate her muscular system in the highest possible degree; but how can she do this, while she knows almost nothing of the nature or power of the muscular fibre?

She wishes to develop and cultivate her intellectual powers; to acquire "firmness of nerve and energy of thought." But how can she do it, if she is ignorant of the situation and functions of the cerebral and nervous system—that wonderful organ of the intellect?

She would train her eye in the best possible manner; but how can she do so, if she is ignorant of the nature and powers of that wonderful little organ? She would educate, properly, all her senses; but how can she do it, without a knowledge of their structure, functions and relations?

Perhaps she would study the philosophy of dress, and of eating and drinking. How can she do so, till she understands, intimately, the relation of the human system to air, heat, the various kinds of food, drink, &c.?

She would know, still further, the relation of body to mind, and of mind to body—of body and mind to spirit, and of spirit to body and mind. She would study the particular effect of one passion, or faculty, or affection, upon the body, or upon particular functions of the bodily system—and the more remote or more immediate effects of diseases of a bodily organ on mind and spirit. She must know all this, and a thousand times, yea, ten thousand times as much, before she is qualified to go far in the work of self-knowledge.

But she must go beyond even all this, and study her own peculiarities. It is not sufficient to understand the general laws and relations of the human economy; she must understand herself in her own individual character—physically, intellectually and morally. She must understand the peculiarities of her physical frame, of her mental structure, and of her spiritual condition—her relation to other spirits, particularly to the Father of spirits.

How amazing and how extensive—I repeat it—the science of self-knowledge! To be perfect in it we need the life of a Methuselah! But something may be done, even in the short period of seventy years. And if it be but little that we can do in a life time, this consideration only enhances the value of that little.

Something, I have said, may be done in the short period of seventy years. But I might say more. Something may be done in a single day. And years are made up of days. A little done, every day, amounts to much in a whole year.

Let not the individual despair who can get but one new idea respecting herself, in a day. If she can sit down at quiet evening and say, I know something respecting myself which I did not know last night at this time, let her be assured the day is not lost. One idea a day is three hundred and sixty-five a year; and three hundred and sixty-five a year, amount, in seventy years, to twenty-five thousand five hundred and fifty. There *are* those who can hardly be said, at seventy years of age, to have twenty-five thousand five hundred and fifty ideas in their heads.

It is a matter of joy to every friend of self-knowledge, that so many means have been, of late years, devised to facilitate the study of this science. The lectures which have been given to both sexes on the structure, laws and relations of their bodily constitution, and the books which have been written, have made a considerable change in the state of the public sentiment respecting this species of knowledge. For it is not they alone who have heard or read, that have reaped the benefit of hearing and reading on this subject. Many a parent or teacher, aware that such instructions and books were abroad, has been encouraged to the performance of that which she might not have dared to do, had nothing been said or done to encourage her.

Every young woman should, therefore, study these subjects for herself. Such books as those of Miss Sedgwick—her "Poor Rich Man, and Rich Poor Man," and her "Means and Ends"—will prepare the way, or will at least enkindle the desire, for the kind of knowledge of which I am speaking. She will then desire to read the works of the Combes, and perhaps, ere long, some of the other popular books of our day, which treat of Physiology and Hygiene. May I not venture to hope, that at an early stage of her progress, some of the chapters of *this* book will be found serviceable, as well as several other works I have prepared, especially the little volume called the "House I Live In?"

She who, having a hearty desire for improvement in self-knowledge, on an extended scale, lets her years pass without looking into any of the volumes or treatises to which I have referred, can hardly be said to act up to the dignity of a Christian of the nineteenth century.

But it is not the physical department of her nature alone, that she who has the desire for self-knowledge and self-progress, should study. Such works as those of Mason on Self-Knowledge, Burgh on the Dignity of Human Nature, Watts on the Mind, Opie on Detraction and Scandal, Wayland on Moral Science, Skinner on the Religion of the Bible, &c. &c., should not only be perused, but carefully studied. It is to little purpose, that is, comparatively, that our physical nature is attentively and assiduously studied and cultivated, if it lead not to the more intimate and more earnest study of the immortal spirit.

In this better department—the spiritual—permit me, *once* more, to direct your attention to the Bible. It should be studied chiefly without note or comment. Your own good sense, brought to bear upon its simple, unstudied, unscholastic pages, accompanied by that light from on high which is ever vouchsafed to the simple, humble inquirer and learner, will be of more value to you than all the notes, and commentaries, and dictionaries in the world, without it. It is a book which is most admirably adapted to the progress of all grades of mind—those which are but little developed, no less than those which are more highly cultivated. Other books speak to the intellect—to the head; this speaks to the heart. Other books often plead for human nature; this presents it just as it is—its perversity and deformity on the one side; its susceptibilities to improvement, its capability of excellency, on the other. Though it reveals to us our humble origin—the brotherhood of worms—on the one side, it unveils to us our relation to angels and archangels, on the other. Nay, more; it not only shows us our relation to the celestial hosts, and to Him who presides in their midst, but it points out to the penitent and the humble, the road which, through divine grace, will conduct them thither.

I have spoken of the study of the Bible without note or comment. Notes and comments, indeed, after you have made diligent use of all your own faculties and powers, and sought thereon the blessing of God's Spirit, have their use. I am exceedingly fond of them: and I would not wholly deny to you what I am so fond of myself. The danger is, of leaning upon them too much. Scott, and Clarke, and Henry, and Jenks, and Calmet, and Barnes, and Bush, may help to show me the true way of finding out and interpreting the Scripture for myself; but if I go farther, and either indolently or superstitiously suffer them to interpret it for me, it were almost better that I had not sought their aid. But the Bible, with or without notes, is—I repeat it—the great volume of self-knowledge which I urge you to study, and which, in comparison with all the books written by man, and even the great volume of nature herself, is alone able to make you wise to salvation.

It seems to me to have been too seldom observed, and still more seldom insisted on, how apt the love and study of the Bible are to awaken the dormant intellectual faculties, and to enkindle, even in the aged, a desire for general improvement. On this point, Mr. Foster, in his essay on Popular Ignorance, has some very striking remarks. In alluding to that great moral change which it is one object of the Bible to produce, and to the consequences which often immediately follow, he thus remarks:

"It is exceedingly striking to observe how the contracted, rigid soul seems to soften, and grow warm, and expand, and quiver with life. With the new energy infused, it painfully struggles to work itself into freedom from the wretched contortion in which it has been so long fixed, as by the impressed spell of infernal magic."

This change in the moral and religious man, has been often observed; and Mr. Foster, therefore, tells us nothing very new, however striking it may be. But now for the secondary effect which is produced on the intellect, and, indeed, on the whole character:

"It (the soul) has been seen filled with a painful and indignant emotion at its own ignorance; actuated with a restless desire to be informed; acquiring an unwonted applicableness of its faculties to thought; attaining a perception combined of intelligence and moral sensibility, to which numerous

things are becoming discernible and affecting, that were as non-existent before. We have known instances in which the change—the intellectual change—has been so conspicuous, within a brief space of time, that even an infidel observer must have forfeited all claim to a man of sense, if he would not make the acknowledgment—This that you call divine grace, whatever it may really be, is the strangest awakener of faculties, after all."

I have made this quotation, chiefly to confirm the sentiment I have advanced, that the love of the Bible and the religion of the Bible, actuates the soul with "a restless desire to be informed," and stimulates its faculties to thought, and fills it with pain and indignation at its own ignorance. This is the state of mind and heart which I would gladly encourage in the reader. It is the truest and best foundation of all progress, not only in self-knowledge, but in every other sort of knowledge which is valuable. Give me but this trait of character in a young woman, and I will not despair of her, however low may be her present condition, or how degraded soever may have been her former life. Give me but a hearty desire, a hungering and thirsting for improvement—physical, moral, intellectual, social and religious—and I will dare to believe that the most debased and depressed soul *may* be restored, at least in some good measure, to that likeness to Jehovah in which it was originally created.

One thing more, however, should be remembered. Not a few who really have within them the desire of improvement, and who mean to make the Bible and its doctrines their standard, fail of accomplishing much after all. The reason is, they measure themselves, continually, by their neighbors. If they are no more ignorant or no more vicious than their neighbors—Misses S. and L., perhaps—or on the other hand, if they are as wise and as virtuous as Miss R.—they seem to rest satisfied. Or at any rate, if, they make as much progress in the great path of self-knowledge, or do as much good in the world as the latter, they are anxious for no more, and settle down in inaction.

Now every such individual ought to know that the habit of measuring herself by others, in this way, will hang like a millstone about her neck; and if it do not drown her in the depths of ignorance and imbecility, will at least make her forever a child, in comparison with what she should be. It will keep her grovelling on the earth's surface, when she ought to be exploring the highest heavens. It will keep her a near neighbor to the sisterhood of worms on which she treads, when she ought to be soaring towards those lofty heights which Gabriel once traversed—nay, which he even now traverses—fast by the throne of the Eternal.

Let her not stop, then, to demean, and embarrass, and fetter herself by comparisons of herself with any thing finite. She has no right to do this. The perfection which the word of God requires, is the standard or measure by which she should compare herself. She may, indeed, sometimes compare herself with herself—her present self with her past self—provided it be done with due humility; but let her beware of measuring herself by others. Such a course is as perilous as it is ignoble and unprofitable.

## CHAPTER VI

# CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Is there any conscientiousness in the world? How far conscientiousness should extend. Tendency and power of habit Evils of doing incessantly what we know to be wrong. Why we do this. Errors of early education. False standard of right and wrong. Bad method of family discipline. Palsy of the moral sensibilities. Particular direction in regard to the education of the conscience. Results which may be expected.

There is such a want of conscientiousness among mankind, even among those who are professedly good people, that one might almost be pardoned for concluding that there is either no conscience in the world, or that the heavenly monitor is at least no where fully obeyed. For is there not too much foundation for such a conclusion?

While truth compels us to admit that Christianity has already done much to awaken the consciences of men, we shall gain nothing by shutting our eyes to the vast influence it has yet to exert, before mankind will become what they ought to be.

Most people are conscientious in *some* things. They may have been so trained, for instance, that they are quite tender in regard to the feelings of others, and even those of animals. There are many who, with Cowper, "would not enter on their list of friends the man who needlessly sets foot upon a worm," who are yet very far from possessing much real conscientiousness. Their feeling is better entitled to the name of *sympathy*.

I grant that many of these persons possess something more than mere tenderness or sympathy. Not a few of them are truly conscientious in what may be called the larger concerns of life—especially in external religion. They not only feel the force of conscience, but they obey her voice in some things. They would not fail to attend to all the outward rites of religion in the most faithful manner, on any account whatever; and if a failure should occur, would find their consciences reproaching them in the severest manner, for their departures from a known standard of duty.

These persons regard, with a considerable degree of conscientiousness, the law of the land and the law of public opinion, or at least the law of fashion. In respect to any thing which would subject them to the severity of public remark, or which would even be regarded by the coarse, public eye, as glaringly inconsistent with their religious character, they are never wanting in sensibility. Their consciences reproach them, when they have done or said any thing which may cause them to be ill spoken of.

Thus far, it cannot be denied that there is a great deal of conscientiousness in the world. But beyond limits something like these, it is much more rare than many suppose. To say that it does not exist beyond such narrow limits, would be unjust; but it must be admitted that, taking the world at large, its existence is so rare, as hardly to entitle it to the name of a living, moving, breathing principle of action.

I do not suppose that young women are less conscientious than young men; nor that the young of either sex are less conscientious than their seniors. It would be a novel if not unheard of thing, to find the youth without conscience, merging, in due time, into the conscientious octogenarian. The contrary is the more common course.

And yet how few are the young women who make it a matter of conscience to perform every thing they do—the smaller no less than the larger matters of life—in such a way as to meet the approbation of an internal monitor. Do they not generally bow to the tribunal of a fashionable world? Do they generally care sufficiently, in the every day actions, words, thoughts and feelings of their lives, what God's vicegerent in the soul says about their conduct?—or if they *do* care, is it because it is right or wrong in the sight of God—or of *man*?

A due regard to the authority of conscience would lead people, as it seems to me, to yield obedience to her dictates on every occasion. They who disregard her voice in one thing, are likely to do so in others. Who does not know the power of habit? Who will deny that the individual who habitually disregards the voice speaking within, on a particular subject will be likely, ere long, to extend the same habit of disregard to something else; and thus on to the end of the chapter, if any end there be to it?

No one, it is believed, will doubt that I have rightly described the tendency of habit in large matters. He who would allow himself to steal from day to day, unmindful of the voice within which bids him beware, would not only, ere long, if unmolested, come to a point at which conscience would cease to reproach him, but would be likely to venture upon other kinds of wrong. I have seen those who would habitually steal small things, and yet would not tell a lie for the world. But I have known the habit of stealing continue till lying also gradually came to be a habit, and was scarcely thought of as offensive in the sight of God, or as positively wrong in the nature of things, any more than picking up a basket of pebbles. From lying, the natural transition is to profanity—and so on, till conscience, chased up and down like the last lonely deer of a forest, at length exhausted, faints and dies.

Few, I say, will deny the tendency and power of habit, in regard to the larger matters of life. But is it sufficiently known that every act which can possibly be regarded as fraudulent in the smallest degree, has the same tendency?

There are a thousand things that people do, which cannot be set down as absolutely criminal, in the view of human law, or human courts, and which are not forbidden in any particular chapter or verse of the divine law, which, notwithstanding, are forbidden by the spirit of both.

Human law, no less than divine law, requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Is the law obeyed when we make the smallest approach to taking that advantage of a neighbor, which we would not like to have taken of us in similar circumstances?

Those who admit and seem to understand the power of habit in larger matters, are yet prone to forget the tendency of an habitual disregard of right and wrong in small matters. They are by no means ignorant, that large rivers are made up of springs, and rills, and brooks; but they do not seem to consider that the larger stream of conscientiousness must also be fed by its thousand tributaries, or it will never flow; or once flowing, will be likely soon to cease. In other words, to be conscientious—truly so—in the larger and more important concerns of life, we must be habitually, and I had almost said religiously so, in smaller matters—in our most common and every day concerns.

Would that nothing worse were true, than that people of all ranks and professions, and of all ages and conditions, habitually, and with less and less compunction or regret, do that which they know they ought not to do, and leave undone that which they very well know ought to be done. For they even seem to justify themselves in it.

"I know the right, and I approve it too;  
I know the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue"—

is the language of many an individual—even of some from whom we could hope better things; and not a few charge it upon the frailty of fallen nature—as that nature now is—independent of, and in spite of their own efforts! Strange infatuation!

One way of solving this great riddle in human life and conduct—this incessant doing by mankind of that which they know they ought not to do, and neglecting to do that which they know ought to be done—may be found in the fact that so few are trained to regard, in every thing, the sacred rights of conscience. They are referred to other and more questionable standards of authority.

If you do so and so, you will never be a lady, says a mother who wishes to dissuade her young daughter from doing something to which she is inclined. If you behave so, every body will laugh at you, says another. If you do not obey me, I shall punish you, says a third. If you don't do that, I shall

tell mother, says a young brother or sister. If you do not do it, father will give you no sugar toys, when he comes home, the child is again told. If you don't mind me, the bears will come and eat you up, says the petulant nurse or maid-servant. Thus, in one way or another, and at one time or another, every motive—love, fear, selfishness, pleasure, &c.—is appealed to in the education of the young, except that which should be *chiefly* appealed to—viz., self-approbation, or the approbation of conscience.

This is not all. There is with many of these people no settled rule as to which sort of actions are to be the subjects of praise or of blame. A thing which must not be done to-day, on penalty of the loss of the forthcoming sugar toys, is connived at, perhaps with a kiss, to-morrow. All in the child's mind is confusion; she knows not what to do, were she as docile and as obedient as an angel of light. There is a long series of actions, words, thoughts and feelings, connected with right and wrong, of which nothing is ever said, except to forbid them, by stern and absolute authority. That one is good, and another bad, except according to the whim or fancy of the parent or teacher, the child never suspects.

Of this last class are almost all the actions of every-day life. The child alluded to is scolded, at times, for default in matters which pertain to rising, dressing, saying prayers, eating, drinking, playing, speaking, running, teasing, or soiling its clothes or books, and a thousand things too familiar to every one to render it necessary to repeat.

Perhaps she eats too much, or eats greedily; or she inclines to be slovenly, or indolent, or fretful. Now all these things are in general merely forbidden or *rated*, or at most, shown to be contrary to the will of the parents. They are seldom or never shown to be right or wrong, in their own nature; nor is the child assured, upon the authority of the parent, that there is a natural right or wrong to them. Thus, what is not implanted, does not, of course, grow. All the little actions and concerns of life, or almost all—and these, by their number and frequent recurrence, make up almost the whole of a child's existence—are, as it were, left wholly without the domain of conscience; and the young woman grows up to maturity without a distinct conviction that conscience has any thing to do with them.

And "what is bred in the bone," according to a vulgar maxim, "stays long in the flesh." As is the child, so is the adult. It is one of the most difficult things in the world to make a person conscientious in all things, who has not been trained to be so. Hence the great difficulty in the way of making every-day Christians. Our religion is thought by some to have nothing to do with these ever-recurring small matters. And when we are told that we should do every thing to the honor and glory of God, although we may assent to the proposition, it is hard to put it in practice. There is a sort of moral palsy prevailing in the community—and that, too, very extensively.

No fatal error of early education could have seized more firmly, or palsied more effectually the moral sensibilities of the whole community, than this. And therefore it is certain that this is at least one principal reason why there is so little conscience in the world, and why it is so often a starveling wherever it is found to exist.

I have heard an eminent teacher contend with much earnestness, that there is a great multitude of the smaller actions of human life which are destitute of character—wholly so. They are, he says, neither right nor wrong. But if so, then is there no responsibility attached to them; and, consequently, no conscientiousness required in connection with their due performance. But what, in that case, is to become of the injunction of a distinguished apostle, when he says, **WHATEVER** you do, do all to the glory of God? If every thing we do should be done to the glory of God, and not thus to do it, is to disobey a righteous precept, then there is a right and wrong in every thing. Now which shall we believe—the human teacher or the divine?

This origin of a common error, I have deemed it necessary for every young woman to understand, that she may know how to apply the correction, and where to begin. She should love and respect her parents, even if they belong to the class which has been described. She should consider the present imperfect state of human nature, and be thankful for the thousand benefits she has received at their hands, and the various means of improvement within her reach.

If she has drank deeply of the desire for improvement, and if she wishes to know and to reform herself as fast as possible, let her begin by cultivating, to the highest possible degree, a sense of right and wrong, and an implicit and unwavering obedience to the right.

Before closing this chapter, however, I wish to present a few illustrations of my meaning, when I say that every thing should be done in a conscientious manner. Perhaps, indeed, I am already sufficiently understood; but lest I should not be by all, I subjoin the following.

Suppose a young woman is in the habit of lying in bed late in the morning. In view of her varied responsibilities and of the vast importance of rising early, and with a strong desire for continual improvement, she sets herself to change the habit.

Now to aid her in her task—for it is no light one—let her endeavor to consider the whole matter. God gives us sleep, she will perhaps say to herself, for the restoration of our bodies and minds; and all the time really necessary for this is well employed. But I have found that I feel better, and actually enjoy myself better, for the whole day following, when, by accident or by any other means, I have slept an hour less than I am accustomed to do. I usually sleep nine hours or more, whereas I am quite sure eight are sufficient for every reasonable purpose.

Moreover, if I sleep an hour too much, that hour is wasted. Have I a right to waste it? It is God's gift; is it not slighting his gift, to spend it in sleep? Is it not a sin? And to do so day after day and year after year, is it not to make myself exceedingly guilty in his sight? One hour, daily saved for the purpose of reading or study, after a person has really slept enough, is equal, in sixteen years, to the addition of a full year to one's life. Can it be that I waste, in sleep, in fifteen or sixteen years, a whole year of time?

I must do so no longer. It injures my complexion; it injures my health; it is an indolent practice: but above all, it is a sin against God.

I am resolved to redeem my time. And to aid me in this work, I am determined, if I fail in any instance, to remember this decision, and the grounds on which it was made.

She carries out her decision. She finds herself waking too late, occasionally, it is true. However, she not only hurries out of bed the instant she wakes, but recalls her former view of the sinfulness of her conduct. She is no sooner dressed, than she asks pardon for her transgression, and prays that she may transgress no more. This course she continues; and thus her convictions of the sinfulness of her former indolent habit and waste of time are deepened. At length, by her persevering efforts and the assistance of God, she gains the victory, and a new and better habit is completely established.

Just so should it be with any other bad habit. Every young woman should consider it as a sin against God, and should begin the work of reformation as a duty, not only to herself and to others, but also and more especially to God. If it be nothing but the error of eating too much—which, by the way, is not so small an error as many seem to suppose—let her try to regard it in its true light, as a transgression against the laws of God. Let it be so regarded, not merely once or twice, but habitually. In this way it will soon become—as in the case of early rising—a matter of conscience.

The close of the day, however, is a specially important season for cultivating the habit of conscientiousness. Sleep is the image of death, as some have said; and if so, we may consider ourselves at bed-time, as standing on the borders of the grave, where all things should look serious.

The "cool of the day" is peculiarly adapted to reflection. Let every one, at this time, recall the circumstances of the day, and consider wherein things have been wrong. It was a sacred rule among the Pythagoreans, every evening, to run thrice over, in their minds, the events of the day; and shall Christians do less than heathen?

The Pythagoreans did more than cultivate a habit of recalling their errors; they asked themselves what good they had done. So should we. We should remember that it is not only sinful to do wrong, but that it is also sinful to *omit to do right*. The young woman who fears she has said something in regard to a fellow being in a certain place, or in certain company, which she ought not to have said, as it may do that person injury, should remember, that not to have said something, when a favorable

opportunity offered, which might have done a companion or neighbor good, was also equally wrong. And above all, she should remember, that both the *commission* and the *omission* were sins against that God who gave her a tongue to do good with, and not to do harm; and not only to do good with, but to do the greatest possible amount of good.

In short, it should be the constant practice of every one who has the love of eternal improvement strongly implanted in her bosom, to consider every action performed, during the day, as sinful, when it has not been done in the best possible manner, whether it may have been one thing or another. As I have stated repeatedly elsewhere, there is nothing worth doing at all, which should not be done to the honor and glory of God; and she who would attain to the highest measure of perfection, should regard nothing as done in this manner, which is not done exactly as God her Saviour would have it done.

It is desirable not only to avoid benumbing or searing over the conscience, but that we should cultivate it to the highest possible tenderness. True, these tender consciences are rather *troublesome*; but is it not better that they should torture us a little now, than a great deal hereafter?

I have said that some good people—that is, those who are comparatively good—fall short in this matter. A young woman is a teacher, perhaps, in a Sabbath school. She knows, full well, the importance of attending promptly at the appointed hour; and she makes it a point thus to attend. At last she fails, on a single occasion—not from necessity, but from negligence, or at least from want of due care—and her conscience at once reproaches her for her conduct. But, ere long, the offence is repeated. The reproaches of her conscience, though still felt, have become less keen. The offence is repeated, again and again, till conscience is almost seared over—and the omission of what had at first given great pain, almost ceases to be troublesome. And thus the conscience, having been blunted in one respect, is more liable to be so in others. Alas for the individual, who is thus, from day to day, growing worse, and yet from day to day becoming less sensible of it!

But there is a worse case than I have yet mentioned. A young woman has risen rather late on Sunday morning; and having risen late, other things are liable to be late. The hour for church is at length near; the bell is even ringing. Something in the way of dress, not very necessary except to comply with fashion, and yet on the whole desirable, remains to be done during the remaining five minutes; but what is more important still, the habit of secret prayer for five minutes before going to church, is uncomplished. One of these, the closet or the dress, must be neglected for want of time. Does any one doubt which it will be? Does any one doubt that the dress will receive the desired attention, and that the closet will be neglected?

But does any one suppose that conscientiousness can live and flourish where it is not only not cultivated, but habitually violated, in regard to the most sacred matters? Secret prayer is one of the most sacred duties; and they who habitually neglect or violate it, for the sake of doing that which is of secondary importance—knowing it to be so—are not only taking the sure course to eradicate all conscientiousness from their bosoms, but are most manifestly preferring the world to God, and the love and service of the world, to the love and service of its glorious Creator and Redeemer.

Let me say, in concluding this chapter, that if the conscience is cultivated from day to day, it will, in time, acquire a degree of tenderness and accuracy to which most of the world are entire strangers. There is, however, one thing more, Conscience will not only become more tender and faithful, but her *domain* will be much enlarged by the study of the Bible; and in many cases in which this heavenly monitor was once silent, she will now utter her warning voice. Conscience is not unalterable, as some suppose she is susceptible of elevation as long as we live; and happy is the individual who elevates her to her rightful throne. Happy is the individual who sees things most nearly as God sees them, and whose conscience condemns her in every thing which is contrary to the divine will.

## CHAPTER VII

### SELF-GOVERNMENT

What self-government includes. Cheerfulness a duty. Discretion. Modesty. Diffidence. Courage. Vigilance. Thoughts and feelings. The affections. The temper. The appetites and passions.

This is so broad a subject that I shall present my thoughts concerning it under several different heads. It includes, in my estimation, the government of the THOUGHTS, the IMAGINATION, the TEMPER, the AFFECTIONS, and the APPETITES. The young woman who truly governs herself, will be at once *cheerful, discreet, modest, diffident, vigilant, courageous, active, temperate* and *happy*.

Cheerfulness.—Is cheerfulness within our power? some may be inclined to ask. I certainly regard it so. That there are moments of our lives—nay, even considerable seasons—when cheerfulness is not required, may, indeed, be true. Our friends sicken and die, and we mourn for them. This is a law of our nature. Even our Saviour was, at times, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; though of all individuals in the universe cheerfulness was his right. But he bore more than his own sorrows; and in so far as his example is, in this respect, binding upon us, it is only when we bear the sorrows of others. Those should, indeed, often be borne; and in proportion as they are borne—in proportion as we are wounded for the transgressions, and bruised for the iniquities of others—it may not be possible for us to be continually cheerful.

As for our own sorrows—the sufferings, the pangs, the bereavements of our own existence—we should never cease to regard them, in some measure, at least, as the chastisements of an Almighty Father. Smitten friends, according to the sentiment of a distinguished poet, are messengers of mercy to us—are sent on errands full of love.

"For us they sicken, and for us they die."

We should be at least resigned, even under such chastisements, when we remember they are inflicted by a Father's hand.

But setting aside occasions of this kind, is there not a demand on our whole nature, for general cheerfulness? It is not only the "sunshine of the soul," but that of the body. The truly cheerful are not only happier in their minds and spirits, but also in their very bodies. The brain and nervous system play their part in the great drama of physical life better; the heart, and stomach, and lungs, work better. Indeed, all is better throughout.

Is not that a duty which is productive of so much happiness? But can that be a duty which it is not in our power to perform? It were surely an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God, did he require us, in his providence or in his word—by his natural or his revealed law—to do that of which we are incapable.

I consider cheerfulness, then, as a matter of duty; and, of course, as in a great measure in our power. It makes us happier ourselves; it enables us to reflect more happiness on others. I consider it especially as a duty of the young, who have it in their power to communicate happiness thereby in such large measure. Let them—let young women especially—strive to cultivate it. It is in its nature a perennial plant; and if it is not such at the present time, it is because it has degenerated in a degenerate world. Let it be restored to its pristine beauty; and let the world thereby—in connection with other means tending to the same end—be restored to what it was before the loss of Eden.

Discretion.—This is a virtue with which, it is supposed by some, the young have little if any thing to do. I cannot assent to such an opinion. I believe that the young are to be trained in the way they should go; and as discretion is prominently a virtue of middle and later life, I deem it desirable that we should see at least the germs of it in the young.

Above all, do I like to see the young woman discreet. Discretion not only heightens the pleasures of her existence, but adds greatly to her reputation in the just estimation of the wise. Coupled with modesty, of which I am to speak presently, it more than doubles her charms.

Let discretion then be studied. Let it be studied, too, for its immediate as well as remote benefits. It will, indeed, bear fruit more abundantly in later life; but it will not be without its value in youth. It is a plant which it were worth while to cultivate, if human existence were more frail, and life more uncertain of continuance than it now is.

MODESTY.—Of all the qualities appropriate to young women, I know of none which is more universally esteemed than modesty. And what has been, by common consent, so highly esteemed, I cannot find it in my heart to under-value. Indeed, I do not think it has ever been over-valued, or that it can be.

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