

THE
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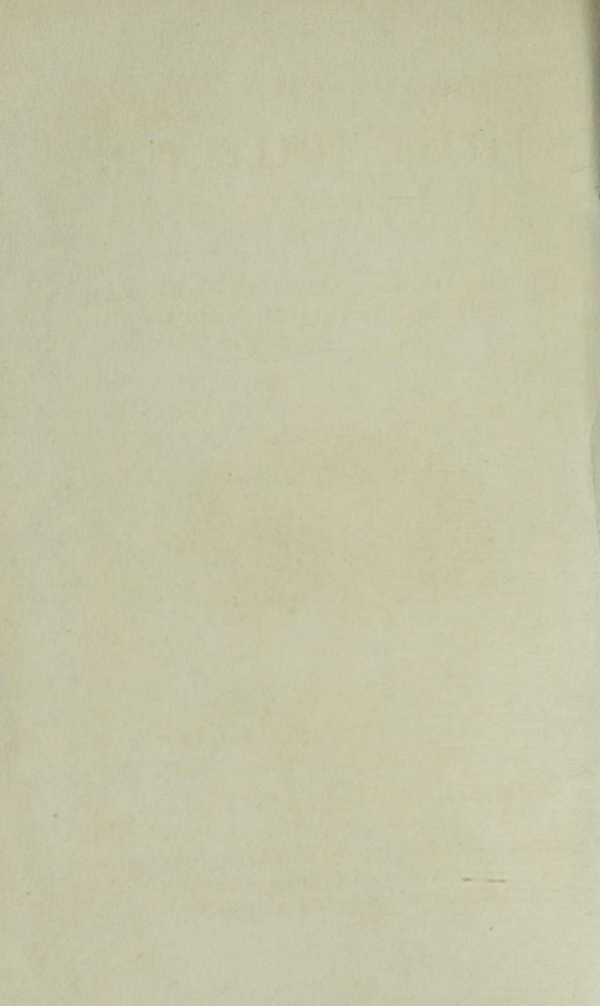
OR,

“I WISH TO BE USEFUL IN SOME WAY.”



LONDON :
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;
SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER
ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

[325.]



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See p. 14.

"I WISH, mamma, as a great indulgence," said little Martha, "that you would allow me to be in the parlour when you have your party to-night."

“Will you promise to behave well, my love?”

“Yes, mamma, that I will; and I will hand the bread and butter, and do any thing that you like.”

Martha was not a noisy child, and in company she always conducted herself well, and therefore her mother consented to her request.

The evening came, and she was very busy indeed, showing the ladies up stairs, taking their bonnets, and trying in every way she could to make herself useful. The minister on whom the family regularly attended, with several other gentlemen, were present; and Martha sat on a stool at her father's feet, and was content with what many young ones seem not to understand, “being seen and not heard.” She did not speak, except when spoken to; but she showed by her attention the interest she took in what was going on.

Various subjects were discussed, until at length the conversation turned upon different societies; and among the rest, “The Religious Tract Society,” and several anecdotes were related. One of the gentlemen observed, how very much struck

he had been in meditating on the conduct of the children, which was mentioned in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, who assisted in making cakes to present to the "queen of heaven," and he added, that he could not help thinking if those young persons in ancient times could be so handy, how much more might little girls and boys of the present age be active in helping forward the cause of God. "Besides," he continued, "if we contrast that ancient idolatrous worship with the true observance of the statutes of the Most High, its inferiority is so apparent that our lukewarmness is so much the more culpable." He said, he had mentioned his plans to his friends, but some of them were very properly scrupulous as to suffering their children to exert themselves, lest it should lead to forwardness or impropriety of conduct; but such fears he thought might soon be removed by laying down suitable rules, and having them complied with. Children should be early instructed in their great duty, and, as having received much, they should learn that much will be required of them in return.

Many other remarks were made, and Martha listened with eagerness, and she began to ask herself, if *she* ought to be idle. As soon as the company had all left, she ran to her mamma, and said, "I think that *I* could do something for the cause of God; I wish you would let me become a collector for the 'Religious Tract Society.'"

"I am sure I have no objection, my dear," replied her mother, "if you really think you could properly mind this work, and persevere in it; I should not like to see you begin, and then growing tired leave off, because that has such a trifling appearance."

"Oh no, mamma: if I once begin, I shall certainly keep on; and, besides, I think I should like it."

"Very good," returned the lady: "we will have some talk on the subject again, when I am more at liberty."

Now Mrs. W—— was fearful that her little girl might form plans rashly, which, upon reflection, she would wish to abandon; and so before Martha went any further, she thought it best to let her consider. And Martha *did* consider; and long after

she had laid herself on her bed for repose, her eyes were wakeful, and she resolved upon doing this thing, and that, and many others, that she might but "be useful in some way."

On the next morning, her mother plainly laid before her the difficulties she would most likely meet, and the many sour looks and disagreeable taunts she might have to fear; but she was a persevering child: none of these things discouraged her, and she said, that after what she had heard on the night before, she could no longer be idle.

Now Martha lived in a very retired village; I do not know that it might be called a very pretty one; there are many such in this island. Houses and cottages scattered here and there; and a "green," as it was called, in the middle of them. On the green the day-school house stood; and the boys used to play there at cricket and trap-ball. The grass was always kept close and fine, for the geese which belonged to the cottagers fed there. There was a pond also, which, in the winter, when frozen over, afforded plenty of amusement. Some said they loved the place for it was so simple; but what gave it its greatest

beauty was, that there the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was preached in all its simplicity and beauty. And it was not only preached, but its power was felt, and its practical influence exhibited. In many of the thatched hovels lived Christians in word and in deed; and though there were many there, who were poor as to the things of this life, yet several had riches laid up in heaven, "where moth and rust cannot corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." In this village more than once the quickening and renewing influences of the Spirit of God had been felt. Not that all were converted to the knowledge of the truth: ah, no! for here, as in other parts, darkness contended with the light; and the sons of wickedness and strife still tried to check the progress of the "glorious gospel of the blessed God."

In a large old fashioned house in which, as tradition relates, one of our most distinguished poets once lived, and thought, and wrote, resided Mr. and Mrs. W—— and their family. All around them they found ample room for the exercise of their benevolence and care. There was a Sun-

day school, and aunt Sophia, a sister of Mr. W——, regularly taught the scholars,



and sometimes she took her niece to assist her, that betimes she might be brought up in the good path.

Martha's parents were always careful that her engagements might be of an instructive character; and it happened that in a town a few miles distant a public meeting of an Auxiliary Tract Society was

to be held, and they promised her that she should go. This was just the thing; and Martha was really delighted, and counted much upon the approaching pleasure. I can assure you when the horse was harnessed and the chaise ready, no one had to wait for *her*. The great room in which the assembly met, was nearly full at an early hour; it was a very interesting occasion, and several persons addressed the meeting. A juvenile association was to be formed, and one of the gentlemen said, that after the general business was concluded, he should wait to receive such annual subscriptions as were due; and to take down the names of any persons, and especially any young persons, who would become stated collectors. Among those who went was Martha, with her mamma; and as the lady presented her daughter, she said, "Here is my child, sir: she seems very anxious to become of use to you, if you will accept her services." Martha hung down her head, and she was half afraid, as she was so young, that she should be refused. Not so; the gentleman, taking her by the hand, assured her kindly that he would put her on his list,

and hoped she would be very diligent in her endeavours; and he gave her some good advice as to how she was to proceed.

When Martha returned home, she began to make her preparations. She had learned to mark letters at school, and so got a small piece of brown holland, and on it she marked in crimson silk, "Tract Society," and in this bag her money was to be put when she could get any.

The next morning, having a holiday, she went forth; and as I think my little readers may like to know how she got on, I will tell them.

It was a fine sunny day, and all nature looked pleasant, and Martha more than usually happy. She took her bag with her because she thought some might like to give her a donation. She was a very great favourite with an elderly lady, who lived in a beautiful house near; and so she thought she would go first to her. She ran up the flight of steps, but was hardly tall enough to reach the knocker, but she made herself heard. The servant came, and she was shown into the parlour where her aged friend was sitting. "What now, my little maid," said the lady, as she

entered the room, "what has brought you here so early?" "I am come, ma'am," replied Martha, respectfully, "to make a request." "A request, my love, and what is it?" asked Mrs. H——, smiling. "I am come to ask you to be a subscriber to the '*Religious Tract Society*,' for which I am going to be a collector."

"I do subscribe a guinea a year." "Ah, but ma'am, I think you will give me something too."

"So I will, my dear; and you shall have two-pence a week." Martha sincerely thanked her kind and generous friend, and she in return for thanks, thought it her duty to give her a few hints, which might act as the counsels of aged wisdom. She directed the little girl to begin and end all her doings in the spirit of prayer. She recommended her to study for her example the conduct and character of Jesus, who left his throne in heaven to dwell with men upon the earth; his meekness she proposed for a pattern, his unwearied diligence, his pity and forbearance; "And I pray God," said she, "that you may have his temper, and glorify him exceedingly." She then affectionately

kissed her, and implored the blessing of God to rest upon her. Just as Martha was preparing to leave, Mr. H—— appeared, and he, in *his* turn, wished to know the object of her early call; it was explained to him, and he dropped five shillings into her collecting bag, and bade her be faithful, and serve the Lord in truth and in sincerity. The little collector was quite delighted with her success, and she fancied she should meet with the same every where; but she found out her mistake very soon.

The next person she called on was a dressmaker. The young woman told her she hoped she would not be offended, but she really could not afford it; she could hardly get work enough to clothe herself decently, and have wholesome food to eat; and Martha, as she thought this might be the case, very properly did not press the subject. In this she was very right; for indeed the poor dressmaker could hardly “make both ends meet,” as she called it, and it would not have been consistent in her to have wronged her neighbours for the sake of subscribing to any society; for “we should always be JUST

before we are *generous*." When Martha left this house, she began to feel rather disheartened, and was half inclined to give it all up; but this was very silly, and so she thought when she had wiped away her tears. She then went to a poor woman who had been once a servant of her mamma's, and she mentioned her errand. "Sally," said she, "do you think you could afford to give me something?"

"Oh yes," replied the woman, "a penny a week I will, if you will accept *that*. I love to see young folks striving to do good," and she patted her face kindly. "I nursed you, Miss, when but a babe, and many a prayer have I sent to Heaven on your behalf, that you might be spared to be a useful and pious woman; and I hope, for I think this is a sign of it, that my prayers will be answered." "But I do not wish to take so much as a penny a week if you cannot afford it," replied Martha. "O yes, Miss, I can spare it; thank God, my husband has plenty of work; I should not have it to give, if it were not given to me first; people should 'spare to spend, and spend to spare;' and I dare say I can save it

out of something else." Martha bid her good morning, and went on.

The next place was at an aunt's, where there were two or three of her cousins; but they told her they never wished her to come to them for money, for if she did, she would not have it. It was in vain that she related some of the anecdotes about tracts. Some of them spoke very rudely to her, and I am sorry to say she was half inclined to give a rude reply; but just at the time her dear mamma's cautions came into her head, and her warning as to the treatment she should meet with; and she remembered, too, what Mrs. H—— had said about the example of our Lord, that "when he was reviled, he reviled not again," and she quietly withdrew.

Afterwards she called at a lady's residence; and four sprightly girls, with whom she often played in her leisure hours, joyfully gave their names as halfpenny subscribers; their mamma, who had been a member of the society for some years, also gave a donation of half-a-crown.

When Martha looked at the church clock, by which she passed, she found that

it was quite time to hasten home. She thought, as she went home, of the different characters she had met with, and the different dispositions they had manifested, and their kindness or unkindness to her. To be sure, she considered it rather hard that any one should use unkind language to her, when she was not asking for *herself*; and especially relatives too. Perhaps, if it had been for herself she had been asking, she would not so meekly have borne this treatment. But, notwithstanding the jeers and scoffs of some, she felt inclined to proceed. She trusted she had not been too forward; she hoped she had acted properly, and not in a vain manner; and she thanked God from her heart for the success with which she had met. She recollected that it was for the cause of her Saviour that she was pleading, and this encouraged her to go on. It was for that Saviour who had died to redeem man, and who thought no exertions or sufferings too great to save poor lost sinners. She was bound to worship and obey him, and though it was not much that she could do, she yet felt anxious to "be useful in some way."

When Martha arrived at home, she told her mother everything. "And it is just as you told me," said she; "I have found pleasures and pains, but I mean to go on." Her mother replied, with great kindness, "Go on then, my child, simply, prayerfully, and humbly; never be rashly forward in any thing unbecoming one of your years, but never be lukewarm or indifferent; you have now put your hand to the gospel plough in a humble way, and woe be to you if you look back. Pray the Lord to make you stedfast, and while you are seeking that the ignorant around you may have the bread of heaven, be careful that you reject it not yourself; while you are striving that others may drink of the water of life, O drink yourself, or it will be of no avail to you. We are too apt in trying to mend others to forget ourselves, but we shall find at the day of judgment that whilst we shall be called to account if we neglect our neighbours, yet that with regard to *ourselves* the one great question will be, 'Hast thou believed on the Son of God?' Our own souls, the establishment of our souls in piety, should be *our chief concern*, and

then the souls of those around us. It is pleasing to hear the desire for mercy from the lips of our friends, but unless we pray ourselves, our anxiety will be of no advantage. Far be it from me, my darling, to lay any stumbling blocks in your way, for I wish you to be 'always zealously affected in a good cause.' I would that from morning till night you were intent on those things which concern the soul. But I more fervently beseech you to seek the Saviour's mercy for yourself. I trust that whilst you are seeking for subscribers, and subscribing too, that an earnest desire may be produced in your heart, by the operation of the Spirit of God, to pray, 'Lord, save or I perish.' Do not be puffed up with pride; for however fair our works may appear before our fellow creatures, God, 'who seeth not as man seeth,' may discover much amiss. Even should we do all we can, we are but unprofitable servants, and have need continually to pray, 'Lord, pardon the iniquity of my holy things.' " These were serious hints, and Martha treasured them up in her memory, and in her walks she often thought of them.

As every thing is to be done in its proper place, and we are not to let one duty interfere with another, the little girl went to school in the afternoon, and sat down to her books and work.

At a following time there were several other persons she called upon, and she met as before with comforts and crosses. Seven young ladies in the school in which she was instructed, cheerfully promised their aid, and thus she set a good example to her schoolfellows. Also a grocer who lived near, sent her a note, stating that though she had not applied to him, yet that he should be very happy to become one of her subscribers, if she would allow him, and hoped she would also accept of a small donation to begin with. Of course, Martha was pleased with the kind offer, and accepted the accompanying shilling, which was put into her bag. This was the only gentleman of whom she was to collect; because her father thought it better for her not to collect of them; and as there were so many of her own sex who were ready to contribute, her mamma allowed her only to ask *them*. Thus did Mrs. W—— watch her daughter. She

disliked any thing in children like pertness or conceit; but she saw no reason why even little girls might not be "useful in some way," and was not so scrupulous as to forbid that innocent gratification to her child, which, if properly regulated, could never do her any harm, particularly in a quiet and retired neighbourhood like theirs.

Besides, if prosecuted in a right spirit, how pleasant it is to be even "a hewer of wood or a drawer of water," for an institution by which the cause of God is promoted. And how delightful to be the means of reclaiming one wanderer, of turning one sinner from the error of his ways! Whose heart does not bound at the thought, and who is not willing to give any thing, or to do any thing, in such a cause? It is true God does not stand in need of us; but while he condescends to use us as feeble instruments, let us blush at the thought of being backward or sluggish in the least degree.

Blessed Redeemer! thou who, when on earth, didst go about doing good, we read of thee, as sitting by the side of the well, tired and weary; the law of thy heart was

love, and the words of tenderness often fell from thy compassionate lips. The tears of thy long-suffering dropped over the hardness of man's heart; and thine arm was stretched out, not to punish and destroy, but to relieve and save. O endue us, the creatures of thy bounty, with more of thy spirit. Let us enjoy thy presence in our labours for the glory of thy name; the consciousness of thine approving smile, and the inward witness of thy love. Thou canst remove the thorns that hinder us in our arduous way, thou canst incline our neighbours to bestow of their abundance; and we hope we can appeal to thee, that we wish to be sincere. Bless all the little children of this happy country, and kindly do them good; teach them to adore thee, and make them active in thy service; "guide them with thy counsel, and afterwards receive them to glory."

As, my reader, I have given you a specimen how Martha proceeded, I shall not trouble you further about her first applications; but when the quarter-day came, she set out to collect the pence that were due, and, I am happy to say, she came

home with her bag nearly full : to be sure there were a great many halfpence, but they all added to the amount ; and when she counted it, she found a tolerable sum. This money she faithfully delivered into the hands of the treasurer for the Auxiliary, by whom it would be sent to the Parent Society in London. Had this money been given her for her own private use, she could not have been more delighted. “ O mamma,” exclaimed she, as she displayed her treasure to her rejoicing parent, “ if every tract that is given should prove a blessing, what a good thing it will be ! ” “ Let us both,” replied Mrs. W——, “ seek earnestly for the promised influence from on high, and then only can we hope for real and permanent success.”

On the next quarter-day, Martha took each of her subscribers their proportion of tracts ; and she was very active in sorting and dividing them aright. She hardly knew enough of figures and divisions of money to be mistress of *this* part of her duty ; but her father, who admired her zeal, assisted her, and it was all done very correctly. Every quarter afterwards, she was to take each of her friends a

bundle of these little books, and this was very pleasant to *her* and the subscribers also. As she contributed herself from her own store, of course there were some that fell to her share; and these, after she had carefully secured with strong paper, she gave or lent to the poor villagers, who were unable to subscribe.

One day, aunt Sophia thought she would please her niece, and so she brought a present from London for her—a Christmas present, and what do you think it was? She had received many things from this kind relative before; dolls and dolls' cradles, skipping-ropes, and battledores; but this present was a neat box for people to drop money in, to aid the Tract Society which Martha loved so much. It was covered with blue paper, and there were several pictures round it, and a hole at the top big enough to put a five shilling piece in, and the word "Tracts" was printed in great letters near it. "And there, my dear," said aunt Sophia, "get as much as you can in it." Martha was greatly rejoiced; she turned it round and round, and read the passages of Scripture; and at length she put

her hand in her pocket, and took out a penny, and in she popped it. "There," exclaimed she, laughing and shaking it, "there is something in it, however." Aunt Sophia then dropped in a shilling, mamma and papa a shilling, brother John a penny, and sister Anne a penny. And now there was no small stir, and the little girl began to bustle about, to find a convenient and conspicuous place for it; and after a great deal of talk, it was agreed, that the box should be put in the middle of a mantel-shelf. There were to be certain regulations concerning this box: when aunt Sophia forgot any errand on which she went, she agreed to forfeit a penny; if papa overslept himself in the morning, the same; if Martha was not down stairs before the bell rang for family worship, the same; if John did not know his Latin lessons ready for his master when called upon, a half-penny; and if sister Anne pouted, a half-penny. And I am sorry, and yet I am glad to say, the box often received fresh additions. I am sorry, because the forfeits were the fruits of negligence; and I am glad, because they were devoted to so good a

purpose. Once a year, the money was to be sent to the Depository in London.

Now the box did not always remain quiet on the shelf, for very often there were visitors staying with the family; and Martha would sometimes ask for a trifle; and these friends used to say that they could never refuse her.

I hope little Martha will not become weary in well doing, but, if her health be spared, that she will be increasingly diligent. May she do every thing from a sense of the constraining love of Christ, and with a single eye to his honour; and whatever she attempts, whether to teach or learn, may it be adorned with the grace of humility. May she feel the grace of Christ in her own mind and conduct, and being faithful unto death, then receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." May she be enabled to set a good example of propriety of conduct; may her soul be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and at last, having served her God below, and trusted in Him alone for salvation, may she join the heavenly worshippers, who never cease singing the praises of Jehovah.

CONCLUSION.

And now, my beloved young readers, I cannot lay down my pen without saying a word to YOU; and permit me to ask, what *you* are doing in this good work?

I, perhaps you answer, cannot do anything for God: I am too young, or too poor, or too something else—do you know what I mean?—perhaps *too idle!* You may be older than Martha was, and I think after what you have read of *her*, you must be almost ashamed that indolence should be found in you. She will never regret, when she comes to die, her poor services in the cause of religion; for at the best we must call them *poor* services, for we are unprofitable servants; but if she has a right feeling at last, she will mourn that she has done so little, and rejoice that Christ has done so much. There is no telling how useful children may be, until they try. Some people would rather give to young persons, than to those who are older; and if they go on in an orderly manner, they are quite as likely to be successful as their superiors

in age. There are some who are above becoming collectors, and think such an employment too mean for them, as they fancy it would probably lower their supposed dignity. Ah, this will never do. He who knoweth all the thoughts and intents of the heart, and who will cast down every high imagination—He who, “though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor”—He who requires truth in the heart—even He who knoweth all our motives, will despise such pride. But it may be that *you* wish to be active, but your parents or friends object. As the younger, it becomes you to submit yourselves to your elders; but, perhaps, if you state your reasons for your wishes in a proper and respectful way, these objections may be removed, in time: if, however, they are not, and there really may be justifiable reasons, though not stated to you, why you had better be silent in such matters, show your piety by your obedience, and the more earnestly pray that God would bless the labours of others.

But still, if you cannot collect, or anything of that kind, perhaps you have

weekly money allowed you, and so are able to give; and, surely, you will not deny yourself this gratification. Ah, let it be said of you, at least, that you have done what you could. Can you idly waste money in cakes and sweetmeats while you know that many around you are “perishing for lack of knowledge”—are dying and sinking into misery from ignorance of the only Saviour? How many are there still, who, notwithstanding all the efforts of the wise and good, reject the counsel of God, against themselves? And how many are there, also, whose ears have never yet been gladdened by the news of salvation?

But not only do we look abroad, and see the need of religious instruction there, but at home also, in our own country, the calls upon us are urgent. How many at our very doors are rioting in iniquity! while the song of the drunkard, and the oath of the profane, compel us to ask, “When will the wickedness of the wicked come to an end?” No, my dear young readers, you cannot have grown hard-hearted yet, and you are anxious that all around should love the ways of piety, as

you have been taught to do. You have sat, perhaps, on your mother's knees, and the words of truth were heard by you before you could clearly speak a parent's name. You have sat by them, and learned to lisp the praises of Jesus' love; and with all these favours heaped upon you, you cannot be unmindful of others. Ah! no! Methinks I see you ready to contribute; and while a smile glows upon your rosy cheeks, you are saying, Let the ignorant be taught;

“ Let the Indian, let the Negro,
Let the rude barbarian see,
That Divine and glorious conquest
Once obtained on Calvary.”

Like little Martha, perhaps, you wish “to be useful in some way;” and I pray God your early efforts may be crowned with his Divine blessing. It is not much we can any of us do; but you know the mighty ocean is composed of drops, and it becomes us all to be busy while it is called to-day, because the night will soon come, in which no man can work. Jesus Christ is the only hope for a ruined sinner. He only can save the soul; but we must have faith in him, without which

it will be impossible to please him. May he enable us to covet earnestly the best gifts! and may he be our “sun and shield,” and as “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Store, my beloved little ones, store your minds with valuable and instructive anecdotes; and sometimes, by relating these, you may foster in the breasts of your companions a benevolent intention, of which you may reap the benefit. Should you become collectors, let me press upon you, that you be careful to cultivate *real humility*. A proud look is one of the things which God abhors: he loveth the meek, but “the proud he knoweth afar off.” A collector for any religious society, puffed up with pride and vain-glory, is a disgrace to the Christian profession. There is no true religion in the heart, if there be no humility.

O meditate much on the conduct of the meek and lowly Jesus. He “condescended to men of low estate.” “He was holy, harmless, and undefiled,” and his followers should seek to be like him; but especially the young, they over whom the cares and perplexities of this life have as yet no power—they who have every com-

fort provided for them, and the promises of the Scriptures for their encouragement—they, of all others, should be patterns of humility; ever remembering, that “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall!”

Again, beware of presumption and forwardness. Any thing like public life or public business, if you are not very guarded, is apt to take away that modest simplicity of youth, by which they should ever be marked. A spirit of submission and modesty should be the ornament of every child.

Again: beware of temper. If your friends to whom you may apply, for reasons they may not choose to explain, should decline giving any thing, it is not for you to judge their conduct. You will, most likely, meet with many refusals. These you must take patiently, and be cautious that you give no reason to the “enemy to speak reproachfully.”

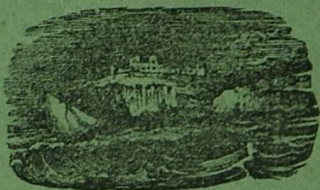
Once more, be persevering. What you begin that is right, with that keep on. Aim at regularity in your proceedings. When the time comes round for you to meet your friends with your requests,

“be instant in season;” let not lukewarmness creep upon you, and do not, like many before you, “soon grow weary in well-doing.” Be punctual in all your engagements; let your movements be like those of a good watch—*always in time*; and neglect no justifiable means to further this blessed cause.

Lastly, *be scrupulously honest* in all your dealings; keep your accounts clear. In the sight of the righteous Judge, I charge you to keep a good conscience.

And, after all, pray much for a blessing on yourself and others. All means will be entirely useless without Divine aid. If God withhold *this*, we sow the seed in vain, and “spend our strength for nought;” but whilst we have this promise, “ask, and it shall be given you,” Matt. vii. 7, and the apostle James has told us, “ye have not, because ye ask not,” James iv. 5, we may be satisfied that we shall be heard.

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AGAINST LYING.

No real advantage can proceed
From doing what is wrong ;
For if at first it should succeed,
'Twill not continue long.

When Ananias thought to hide
The money he had got,
He and his wife Sapphira died
For their deceitful plot.

Then let us all avoid, and fear
To say what is not true ;
As God can always see and hear,
And he can punish too.