

## CHAPTER IV

1833.

Solicitudes for others —Wide and Lasting Results — The Christian in her Family — Letters to a Sister —Close of the Year.

When the Apostle Andrew had been pointed by John the Baptist to the Lamb of God, and recognized, in Jesus of Nazareth, the long-expected “Consolation of Israel,” his first impulse was to hasten to “his own brother Simeon” with the joyful intelligence, “We have found the Messiah: and he brought him to Jesus.” When Simon Peter was forewarned of his approaching fall by his compassionate Lord, with the assurance that He had prayed for him that his faith might not fail, a hint of his eventual recovery is accompanied by the command, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” When the Psalmist confessed his guilt, and implored pardon with such sincere **contrition**, the trust of his grateful soul in the mercy of God leaps forth in strong desires to make his fellow sinners partakers of the same grace, “Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.”

Susan Allibone was an apt student of the lessons taught in such passages. Lessons that taught real concern for the spiritual and eternal good of others and gave her the desire to bring them that have no hope and are without God, to taste and see how gracious the Lord is. No sooner was her own heart cheered with the hope of pardon and heaven, than she longed to impart that hope to all around her. None could hold a conversation with her, by word or letter, without being impressed with her fervent zeal and her love for souls. “The mind that was in Christ Jesus” was in her and constantly shone forth in speech and action.

Her missionary zeal was a steadily burning light, diffusing rays of holy influence, and enlivening many by its cheering glow. To win souls to Christ was pre-eminently her delight, and her heart warmed towards all, however humble their station, or separate from her own walk in life. God crowned her efforts with abundant success. In the comparative seclusion of her darkened room she not only cherished a missionary spirit, but did a missionary work. Many whose eyes will rest upon this page have been indebted to her, under God, for the hope that is in them, and for counsel, encouragement, warning and consolation, for which they can never be too grateful. Among those profited by her faithful teachings, some are now laboring in the ranks of the ministry at home, and some are devoted foreign missionaries recruited by her unquenchable zeal. Of those whom she was the instrument of leading to Jesus, some have preceded her to the better country to which she had directed their hopes. I hope the reader will notice the rare union of fidelity and plainness of speech, with tenderness, consideration and good judgment which mark her efforts. She was always ready to embrace a favorable moment for reminding the unrepentant of the claims of God, and of the great interests of the soul. She spoke the truth without concealment or reserve. And yet was she never obtrusive, or forgetful of others' feelings. There was so much good sense and appropriateness, as well as humility and benevolence in all her attempts, that none could take them ill. However disinclined any might be to the counsel, they could not but respect and love the gentle instructor. And whenever success was granted to any of her appeals, the whole glory was given to God. Vanity and self-esteem were never fed by the knowledge that her efforts had been blessed. With utter self-renunciation every trophy was humbly cast at the feet of Him who sitteth upon the throne.

While her expansive charity glowed for all sorts and conditions of men, and all souls were precious to her because Jesus had died for them, it will be readily anticipated that for those bound to her by family ties, and endeared by close conversation, this feeling was peculiarly vivid. In the sacred circle of home not only did her holy example shine with attractive luster, but for its dear occupants her prayers were unremitting, and her conversations and letters were richly blessed. To her family she was a treasure beyond price. In cherishing her with overflowing fondness they were not like those who "entertain angels *unawares*," for none felt the unearthly purity and sweetness of her character like those who saw her most frequently. She was a Christian daughter, sister, and kinswoman, acting the part for which the Lord designed her, and showing how beautifully divine grace can adorn and sanctify love. The same feeling which led Andrew to seek first his own brother Simon, directed her earliest efforts toward the salvation of those who were nearest and dearest to her heart.

She writes in her diary:

“April 19th, 1833.—I have now such cause for thankfulness that I ought never again to repine. One of my very dearest friends is very seriously impressed, and I doubt not will be, ere long, induced to accept the offers of salvation. I was very happy yesterday.”

The following letters are among the first of her efforts to make her pen the medium of spiritual counsel:

To her sister S.

“I think I shall not do wrong, my dear sister, in writing to you this morning, since it is my prayer that I may indeed be prevented from ‘speaking my own words,’ and that the Holy Spirit may influence my heart in alluding to that subject which I trust is most interesting to us both. I sometimes feel tempted to ask myself whether there is not some degree of presumption mingled with my attempts to benefit others in this way, and to shrink from the weighty responsibility I thus incur. The knowledge of the awful danger and sinfulness of speaking or writing on this subject in my own strength, induces me to pray very earnestly and very frequently that I may never be induced to do it; and I would not dare to commence a letter, or a conversation, on religious subjects, without a special petition that the Lord would be with me. And since I am conscious that it is only His Spirit that is able to implant in the heart the earnest desire I sometimes feel for the salvation of others, I am encouraged to believe that my efforts for their good, feeble as they are, come from Him, and will be blessed by Him, and to Him I would give all the glory. Oh! I wish that I could feel so deeply my own entire depravity, and be so impressed with a view of the infinite majesty and purity of the Lord of Hosts, that a thought of pride or self-complacency might never again come nigh me. I see the necessity and the beauty of humility, and I feel that it is a virtue that I do not possess. I pray for it, and I believe that it will be granted to me.

“All this time, I have been speaking of myself; but my object in writing to you this morning is to speak to you of the concerns of your own soul—a liberty that I feel myself constrained to take, not only by a sense of duty and the impulses of affection, but by the confidence you have placed in me, and for which I feel thankful to my Heavenly Father, and to you in having made me acquainted with your feelings and desires on this subject. I know not how far these desires have increased, or the exact nature of your feelings at this moment, for we have no verbal conversation on this theme. I have several times inquired of myself the cause of our mutual silence: mine has been caused, I think, but a knowledge of your reluctance to speak of it, a fear of darkening counsel by words without knowledge, and, I am afraid, a want of faith and the absorbing interest I ought to feel. I trust that all the weaknesses of my nature may be overcome by the mighty power of the grace of God, and that I may be enabled with boldness to speak of these things whenever I shall be made to feel it my duty. I do pray for you, and think about you a great deal, my dear sister; but I am often struck with my *comparative* indifference to your spiritual welfare, and then I feel very glad that God loves you so much better than I do; that He is ever watching over you for good; and that, if you will trust in Him, He will never leave nor forsake you. Follow on to know the Lord, and you *will* find Him. Do please be very attentive to the whisperings of the still small voice, and abandon every thing which may cause it to speak

reproachfully to your heart. My Heavenly Father knows that I do not speak this in a spirit of dictation , for I know that I have, in many things, grieved the Holy Spirit, and I know that I often do now; but He will forgive us the sin which doth so easily beset us. Let it be our constant prayer, 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me;' 'Quicken my after Thy loving kindness, so shall I keep the testimony of Thy mouth.' Oh, may we be enabled to realize the things of eternity, and to remember that after our short period of probation shall be ended here, we must be eternally happy or miserable. It is a very solemn thought, and I wish that it were ever with me."

To the same.

July 15th, 1833.

"I feel often as though it would be very sinful for me to repine if I were to suffer much more than I do, for I invariable experience the most unmerited kindness and attention. It is, and ever will be impossible for me to discharge the many debts of gratitude I owe. I can, however, and do most earnestly pray that my Heavenly Father will discharge them all. I may much longer continue to require the kindness that is ever so liberally extended, or I may need it but for a little while. It is a matter of little moment, if I be but endued with faith and patience to the end. When I compare, dear sister, the extend of life with the unlimited duration of eternity, I wonder that I can ever suffer my feelings to be engrossed, for one moment, but the trifles that I often suffer to occupy them. 'For what is you life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' I would that every moment of my time were spent in preparation for another and better world.

"My conscience has often reproached me for the inconsistent conduct you have witnessed. Do not let it influence your feelings, my dear sister, but rather let it warn you against the indulgence of self-dependence, for while we earnestly implore strength from above and depend on that *alone*, we shall most assuredly be 'kept from falling.' I know, from my own experience, that it is very discouraging to witness the imperfections of those who profess an earnest desire to be free from them; but it is not right to be influenced in this manner by the example of others, for it is not by them, but with them, we shall be judged. I do pray that I may be enabled to be more consistent, for, indeed, weak and unworthy as I am, I feel a sincere desire to crucify the flesh and the affections thereof.

"Dear sister, do strive to early impress upon the mind of my dear, dear W., the necessity of setting his affections upon things above. He may, perhaps, have to endure much suffering, and he will then be blessed with an unfailing source of consolation."

To the same.

Nov. 6th, 1833.

"Solitude is certainly very favorable to religious influences; the mind is freed, at least, from outward sources of excitement, and is at liberty to look inward. We can then, in some degree, ascertain the height and depth of our religious feelings.

"We need not be discouraged, my dear sister, while we are sensible of our deficiency, and deeply deplore it. He who causes us to 'hunger and thirst after righteousness,' will surely grant the desires His grace has implanted in our hearts. If we can only so far divest ourselves of self-righteousness, as to rely implicitly on the mercy of our Saviour, and believe that He will surely grant us all we need, it will be with us 'according to our faith.' We shall go on 'from strength to strength.' But we look so much as our own hearts, we feel how worthless and sinful they are, and think too often that we must wait until they are better before any thing can be done. If, instead of this, we would go to our Redeemer, and ask Him to 'cleanse the thought of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit,' to 'create in us new hearts, and to renew a right spirit within up,' He would give us strength and help. Is it not strange that we are not more deeply interested in this all important subject?

"When I feel dissatisfied with my progress in spiritual things, I am too apt to look forward to the future, hoping that I shall *grow* in grace. But I do not reflect as I ought, that in this world there may be no future for me, that in one hour I may be summoned, just as I am, into the presence of Him who 'is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' I think we ought never to rest satisfied with our spiritual condition, until we feel that we can, at any moment, calmly resign ourselves into the hands of our Maker. I think we ought always to '*know* that we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' We ought, indeed, to 'reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' I know it is only because we are so unwilling to believe, that we are so cold and dead in our affections, and that we are not always filled with 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding.'"

A subsequent entry, on of many like expressions, marks the depth and intensity of her sanctified love:

"I desire to have continual sorrow and heaviness in my heart for those of my family who are out of Christ, and to take no rest until they are converted. God grant that I may not be a stumbling-block in their way. Without Jesus, I can do nothing."

"Thursday, October, 1833.—My Saviour has promised that whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out; and at times, when I can feel the force of this promise, I am inspired with new hope and zeal; and though I know myself to be exceedingly sinful and inconsistent, I also feel that I have a Friend in heaven who will, with every temptation, make a way also to escape, and who is ever ready to pardon my transgressions. How strange that I do not love Him more!"

"Sunday.—Have suffered very much this day, but have been very happy. If I know myself, I feel willing to suffer much more than I do, to endure the most excruciating pain if I

be only endued with strength to support it with patience; and that this will be granted I do not fear, for though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

To her Sister.

"I rejoice, my beloved sister, that I can address to you the language of encouragement, that I can say, 'Be of good comfort, rise, He calleth thee;' and I know that you will arise and come to Jesus. You will not, you shall not, be 'the outcast of our consecrated family.' I have seldom been under the influence of so powerful feelings as were awakened by the perusal of your letter. Again and again I lifted up my heart in thankfulness to my Heavenly Father, and was not afraid to say to Him, 'I know Thou wilt bless my sister, and make her thine forever.' 'Wait on the Lord, be of good courage,' and every cloud will ere long be dissipated by the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness. Trust in Him, and you will have strength vouchsafed for the performance of every duty.

"I do not doubt that you engage with increasing interest in the duties of religion, that you take more and more delight in reading the Scriptures, in prayer, and in waiting upon the Lord in His holy temple: this will ever, I trust, be your experience. But you must not be discouraged if you are sometimes troubled with a cold heart, and wandering thoughts. Satan is very unwilling that we should enjoy communion with our Heavenly Father, and incessantly strives to interrupt it; but, my dear sister, if you would be a happy Christian, if you would enjoy that 'peace that passeth understanding,' you must never rest satisfied until 'every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' This is the rule I always keep before me. I have determined that I will never cease this spiritual warfare while this object is unattained —until my every thought, word and deed is consecrated to the service of God. Oh! how far distant am I from the 'mark,' towards which I trust we shall ever 'press with vigor on!' In Heaven, alone, we shall be permitted to rest. There will be no temptation there; there we shall see our Heavenly Father's face, and 'never, never sin.' Here we must watch, and pray, and labor; there we shall praise forever and forever. We know not, my dear sister, the circumstances which await us in this life; we may be subjected to many trials, but let us pray that 'in all time of our tribulation, in all time of our prosperity, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment,' our Saviour may be the strength of our hearts, the rock of our refuge. You must remember me in your daily petitions. Morning, noon and night I ask our Father who is in Heaven to bless and keep my darling sister."

*To a Cousin.*

December, 1833

"Oh, my dear cousin, how deep a debt of thankfulness shall we owe, if our 'present afflictions which may now seem to be 'grievous,' shall afterward yield 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness;' if the conviction that 'this world can never give the bliss for which we sigh,' induce us to seek for it where alone it can be found, where to seek it is to gain. I trust that we

have been so blessed, and that it will be the will of our Father in Heaven to perfect the work of grace in our hearts, and that in affliction we may be enabled to say:

'Tis my happiness below,

Not to live without the cross,

But the Saviour's power to know,

Sanctifying every loss;

and that if it should be His will to restore our health, and to give us prosperity, He will continue to 'lift up the light of His countenance upon us,' to preserve us in 'all time of our prosperity, in all time of tribulation.' He will do so, if we only believe. And here, too, we need His grace, for without it we cannot even trust Him. What state of mind can be more happy than an entire reliance upon the merits of our Redeemer, and entire forgetfulness of self, to know that 'our life is hid with Christ in God!' It is the most ardent wish of my soul to attain this happy state. I had rather it should be mind than all the treasures of earth, and I believe that it *will*, for it is my desire to 'press towards the mark,' to 'lay aside every weight,' and to 'run with patience the race set before me.' All that is necessary to enable me to do this is the 'look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,' What could we do if any other plan of salvation were marked out, if any merit of our own were to save us, if there were 'no balm in Gilead?' Dear cousin, let us trust this Saviour, and though we feel that we are so weak and sinful, and withal so self-righteous, let us remember that He has implanted every holy desire and affection in our hearts, and that in doing this, He gives us an earnest of what He will do for us. Let us pray to Him continually, and believe that He will give us 'day by day our daily bread,' and that this will be the bread of life. Oh! I wish that I could realize the love of this Saviour more; but I can truly say that I do 'hunger and thirst after righteousness,' and I know that I shall be filled. Not that I am any thing, ore can do anything, but because Christ died for all, and God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should have everlasting life. Do not let us despond, then; but if we feel that we have not attained what we wish, say with David, 'Why art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the help of my countenance and my God.' I think one of our besetting sins is ingratitude. We think it right to mourn that we are not what we ought to be, and so it is; but we forget what has been done for us. It ought to be the ever-dwelling sentiment in our hearts, 'Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not all His benefits,' While we remember to pray, we ought not to forget to praise.

"I wonder if thee has ever read Legh Richmond's life. I think I derived from it more pleasure, and I trust more profit, than from any biography I ever read."

To Miss E.N.

Philadelphia, May 10th, 1833.

"Thee is not mistaken in supposing that I do not entirely approve of a trifling style of writing, and my conscience often reproaches me not only on this score, but for a multitude of idle words and unprofitable imaginations that are ever ready to intrude upon my mind. Thee asks me to write for thy benefit. Would that I were more competent to advise! My own example and deficiency always occur to me, when I would advise others; but still, in spite of my infirmities, my mind is so deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of religion, and of the necessity of immediate attention to its interests, that I would not neglect an opportunity of urging it upon those I love. What a strange infatuation it is, that our energies should be dormant, and that we can sleep in the midst of danger! Could we be calm in the battlefield? And should we not be more alive to danger when we are exposed not only to foreign attacks, but when civil wars are waging around us? Could we obtain a perfect view of 'that fearful sight, a naked human heart,' with what alarm and dismay would we make the dread survey! I feel more entirely convinced, every day of my life, that 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' and it is when the grace of our Heavenly Father has implanted in our hearts a sense of our infirmity that nature or reason can never give, that we learn in some degree to appreciate the beauty of holiness. Thee says, dear E., that thee is sensible of the most entire indifference in regard to thy most important interests. I believe that thee has had very serious impressions and why is it that they do not produce a permanent effect? It is the strange perversity of human nature.

"I was reasoning once with Miss L., on the depravity of the heart, and she thought to confute me at once by asking me if I thought I would be condemned if I were to die; that I had done no harm, and that God would not certainly be so unjust as to consign me to eternal punishment. I told her that if I were to die that night, I *knew* that I could not go to Heaven. She said that if she believed herself in such a situation, she could not possibly rest or sleep. Her remark produced a very powerful impression, commonplace as it was. Dear E., do not waste thy time in speculation and murmuring that thee is no better; thee cannot amend thy own heart. I will extract a passage from an interesting book I borrowed a few weeks since, and that I mean to lend to thee:

"I cannot doubt that the inquirer may be, in a certain sense, truly sincere, while he hangs back in expectation of a kind of mental discipline, a routine which he does not understand, but which he has been taught to anticipate; and hence his common reply to the repeated solicitations of the Gospel is 'I am not prepared.' But he has conceived wrong notions of the scheme of redemption. He has adopted some ideas which obscure its light, or embarrass its simplicity with perplexities which ought to have no connection with it. How strange a position of affairs is this which is supposed to be his! The inquirer is waiting for the Redeemer, and the Redeemer waiting for him! How inconsistent with the design of the Bible! How derogatory to the character of the Saviour.'



“Again: ‘That the awakened sinner is not to remain idle is very certain. He is to renounce every habit or practice which he knows to be guilty. He is to weigh his actions by the standard of God’s holy law. He is to look carefully into his disposition and temper, and to turn from the snares to which they expose him. He is to abandon all that is at enmity with the will of his Maker. But the whole of this is contemporaneous with his approach to Christ; it is part of the very act of ‘arising and going to his Father.’... Alas! How slowly we receive the blessed truth that salvation is *free*! Oh, why should not the truth be received as it is? The physician of Gilead is not only able, but ready to administer a cure to all who sincerely apply to Him. And can it be necessary that they should be better, when they approach Him, if He can heal them as they are.’”

“Jan. 1, 1834.—Another year is gone and past. The lapse of time has never before so forcibly arrested my attention. The moment that is lost, is lost forever; and how many have passed unimproved, my Heavenly Father only knows. It is to His mercy alone that I can look for forgiveness. Why is it that my heart is so ungrateful for the mercies of the year that is past? How innumerable they are! This year has been the most important of my life. I trust that I can include among these blessings, the chiefest of all, a renewed heart. Surely its impulses and desires are changed. Its affections are transferred from earth to heaven, and it enjoys a degree of peace to which it has always before been a stranger, ‘the peace of God which passeth all understanding.’ And yet there is much in this heart of mine that cannot even endure the test of self-examination, and still less, a comparison with the standards the Scripture gives us; yet I *know* that this good work which God, in His infinite mercy, has begun and continued in me, will not be suffered to remain unfinished. I know that it is my Father’s good pleasure to give me the kingdom; and I have commenced this year with an humble prayer, that I may have grace to go on from strength to strength; that every false refuge be taken from me, whatever it may cost. ‘What I know not, teach Thou me,’ is the sincere prayer of my heart, and I feel an entire conviction that if there is now anything wrong in my heart —anything that keeps me from the enjoyment of perfect peace —as I doubt not there is, God, in His infinite mercy, will teach me this. And I believe this, not because I am now unworthy, ungrateful, ever erring, but because God has promised, ‘Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely,’ ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.’”