

The Blessing of Cheerfulness



James Russell Miller

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By

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LIFE," ETC.

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"O do not tarry,
But bravely carry
Such message as you hear;
Hast to cheer the fainting and to lessen strife.

Preface

We are set in this world to be happy. We should not falter in our great task of happiness, nor move ever among our fellows with shadows on our face when we ought to have sunlight.

We have a mission to others — to add to their cheer. This we cannot do unless we have first learned the lesson of cheerfulness ourselves. We cannot teach what we do not know. We cannot give what we do not have.

In this little book a lesson is set for you, my reader. It may seem a hard lesson to learn; nevertheless, it is one you want to learn, and one you can learn, if you will surrender your life wholly to the great Teacher.

J. R. M.

Philadelphia.

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Jesus Christ.



Some murmur when their sky is clear,
And wholly bright in view.
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.

R. C. Trench.



Every life is meant
To help all lives; each man should live
For all men's betterment.

Alice Cary.

The Blessing Of Cheerfulness.

There are many ways in which we may bless others. A ministry of helpfulness is a perpetual benediction. Of course, one who feeds the hungry, visits and relieves the sick, the poor, and the orphan, and comforts sorrow, is a blessing to the world. One who uses his money to do good is a blessing. One who speaks wholesome words which enter other lives, and influence, guide, strengthen, inspire, or enrich them, blesses the race.

But can one be a blessing merely by being cheerful? Yes; moral beauty of any kind exerts a silent influence for good. It is like a sweet flower by the wayside, which has a benediction for every one who passes by. A legend tells how one day in Galilee the useful corn spurned the lilies because they fed no one's hunger. "One cannot earn a living just by being sweet," said the proud cereal. The lilies said nothing in reply, only seemed the sweeter. Then the Master came that way; and while his disciples rested at his feet, and the rustling corn invited them to eat, he said, "Children, the life is more than meat. Consider the lilies, how beautiful they grow." It certainly seemed worth while then just to be sweet, for it pleased the Master.

We measure values by the standard of utility, but we cannot always take the full measure of utility. Physical relief or comfort is not the only help one may give another. There is utility which acts on the spirit, and makes one stronger, braver, more hopeful. Can we say that such usefulness means less than when one gives a loaf of bread to one who is hungry, or a cup of water to one who is thirsty?

Every one carries an atmosphere about him. It may be healthful and invigorating, or it may be unwholesome and depressing. It may make a little spot of the world a sweeter, better, safer place to live in; or it may make it harder for those to live worthily and beautifully who dwell within its circle.

We are responsible for this atmosphere. Our influence may be involuntary in its final effect. We cannot wholly change it from evil to good on any particular day by a mere volition. It is something that belongs to our personality. It is an emanation from our character; and our character is the growth of all our years,

what has been built up in us by all the lessons, experiences, impressions, and influences of life, from childhood. Hence it is that the atmosphere that hangs about us any day is, in a large degree, involuntary.

At the same time we are responsible for it. We are responsible for our character — our own hands have made it what it is. If a man has trained himself to be discontented and unhappy, so that wherever he goes he makes others about him less happy, he may not blame heredity, or original sin, or environment, for his unfortunate disposition. No doubt natural tendency or early influences may make it harder for a man to be sweet-spirited and sunny-tempered; but because it is hard to be good, because there is much to overcome, one need not give up the endeavor as useless and unavailing.

Cheerfulness, therefore, is a duty. Perhaps we have not thought of it in this way. We regard it as a pleasant disposition. We consider the person happily endowed who is naturally cheerful. But we do not usually put cheerfulness among duties, as we do truthfulness, honesty, patience, kindness.

We speak much of the duty of making others happy. No day should pass, we say, on which we do not put a little cheer into some discouraged heart, make the path a little smoother for someone's tired feet, or help some fainting robin unto its nest again. This is right. We cannot put too great emphasis upon the duty of giving happiness and cheer to others. But it is no less a duty that we should be happy and cheerful ourselves.

It was the great Teacher himself who said, "Be of good cheer." He said it in substance many times. He counseled his followers against anxiety. He showed his friends an example of cheerfulness. Some people have the impression that Jesus was a sad man. He was indeed a man of sorrows, but his face was always radiant with the light of an inner joy. He never cast a shadow on any other life. Artists, in their pictures of the infancy, represent the Christ-child as shedding forth a soft, quiet light, which brightens the humble surroundings. Always from the Christ, wherever He moved, light streamed. His life was full of cheer. No one ever felt depressed from coming into his presence. On the contrary, every one who looked into his face and heard his words was made happier for the time.

Then his teachings were all towards the same spirit. It is supposed by some that religion makes people solemn, takes the sunshine out of their life, the joy out of their heart, the song out of their mouth, but the reverse of this is the truth. No other one in the world has such secrets of joy as has the Christian. Christ teaches his followers to rejoice. He bids them rejoice even in sorrow and trial.

It would have been of no avail, however, merely to command them to be of good cheer, if he had not put sources of joy within their reach. He did not remove sorrow and pain out of their lives; rather, he said, "In the world ye have tribulation." Nor does this religion benumb and deaden human sensibilities, so that Christ's friends do not feel grief and trial as the world's people do. On the other hand, it makes the heart more tender, so that it suffers even more keenly from the sorrows of life than does the heart unsoftened by divine love. The secret of joy which Christ gives we learn from his own words — the last words spoken in the upper room, as he led his disciples out toward Gethsemane: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

It is in the last of these great words that we have the secret of the good cheer which he commands. "I have overcome the world." He met the world in all its terrific power, and was victorious over it at every point. Thus he became able to be our refuge in all the world's strife. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace."

The all-victorious Christ is like a great rock in a weary land, to whose shelter we may flee in every time of sorrow or trial, finding quiet refuge and peace in Him. There is a word in an old prophet which tells all the story. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock — a rock of ages." We have hints of the meaning of these words in some rare human friendships. Here and there is a man who seems like a fragment of the rock of ages to those who trust in him. When other friendships fail, he still stands constant and true, You are always sure of him. You turn to him in your weakness and danger, and you find strength and refuge in him. His love balms like summer warmth the sting of tears, the ache of sorrow, the shy, cold hurts winch sting and smart, the frets and cares which underrun the dull day and the dreaded morrow." In his presence dark things seem light, and however heavy your burden, you feel you can go on bearing it after seeing him. In the atmosphere of his love your heart's wounds receive healing.

The secret of such a human friendship lies in the calm, secure strength of the life. It is like a rock in its firmness, its security, its immovableness. This quality has been gotten through conflicts and sorrows in which the spirit has been victorious. This friend has met the world, and has overcome it; has been tried, and has not failed.

In such a rare human friendship we have a hint of what Christ means when he says to his disciples: “In me ye may have peace.” He has overcome all the world’s evil, and stands in the midst of the world’s broad desert plains, where storms sweep and heat oppresses. We can all flee to him and find refuge. All hurts are indeed soothed in him. When he comes, night turns to day, heaviest burdens seem light, hardest tasks become easy. In the world we have tribulations; but he has overcome the world, and in him we have peace. Thus he gives us reason for his counsel: “Be of good cheer.”

It is the privilege of every friend of Christ to be of good cheer, no matter what the circumstances of his life may be. Privilege makes duty. We ought always to be cheerful. We ought to carry music in our heart and the light of joy in our face wherever we go, in whatsoever experiences we find ourselves.

The fact is, however, that not all Christians are cheerful at all times, in all circumstances. Some are scarcely ever cheerful — are indeed habitually uncheerful. Others are cheerful at times, when the sun shines, while all things go well with them; but the light fades out of their faces when clouds gather and storms arise. If cheerfulness is a Christian duty, we ought to learn it. How, then, can we learn to be of good cheer even in times of sorrow and trouble?

For one thing, we must remember that cheerfulness has to be learned. It does not come naturally. The cheerfulness which comes naturally is not that which our Master bids us to have. “We are to be of good cheer in tribulation, and this certainly is not a natural experience. Nor does Christian cheerfulness come as a direct gift from God when we become Christians. All the fine things in Christian nurture and Christian culture have to be learned. Even Jesus himself”learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” When he was an old man, St. Paul wrote in a letter to Rome of his friends that he had learned in whatsoever state he was therein to be content. It is a comfort to us to think that Paul was not always thus contented, that He had to learn the lesson, and that it had taken him a long while to learn it.

We all have to learn the lessons of beautiful living. Life is a school, and God is continually setting new lessons for us. George MacDonald says: “Till a man has learned to be happy without the sunshine, and therein becomes capable of enjoying it perfectly, it is well that the shine and the shadow should be mingled, as God only knows how to mingle them.” When we find ourselves facing some unpleasant duty or in the presence of a new trial or sorrow, we should not forget that it is another lesson set for us. If it is hard, that shows it is a lesson we have

not yet perfectly learned. We must not be discouraged if cheerfulness is not easy for us. We have to learn it, and it may take us a good while.

If we would learn the lesson, we must abide in Christ. "In me ye may have peace," he says. We can never get the peace in any other way. If we are truly experiencing the friendship of Christ, we shall find the inner joy increasing just as the outer lights grow dim. Here, again, human friendship helps us to understand the divine. You walk with a friend for years in close, familiar relations, finding every day some new revealing of beauty. But as yet you have had only joy and prosperity. One day sorrow enters your life. In the new experience you find qualities in your friend's love which you had never perceived before. It took suffering in you to bring out the rich things of sympathy, tenderness, and comfort which were all the while in reserve in his life.

The same is true of the divine love. We never can know its best things until we enter the shadows of sorrow. Our great Teacher said, "Blessed are they that mourn." This seems indeed a strange beatitude. But to those who have learned its meaning it is no longer strange. There are blessings, rich, deep, and satisfying, which we never can know until we mourn. You would never see the stars if the sun continued to shine through all the twenty-four hours. It would be a loss, too, to any one if he were to pass through all the years of his human life and never once behold night's sky with its brilliant orbs. We can then say, "Blessed is the hour when the sun goes down and it grows dark; for then we see the glory of heaven's stars." Mary G. Slocum writes: —

"Across my day the shadows creeping
Brought the unwelcome night;
The distant hills, the last gleams keeping
Of dear, familiar light,
Slowly became a darkened wall around, and soon
The world, with all its loved and wonted sights, was gone.

Ah, light that made such sweet revealing,
That showed this world so bright,
You gave no hint you were concealing
The greater wealth of night!
For now, above and far beyond the hills, appear
Ten thousand worlds I did not dream before were here.

O day, for which I made such grieving –
 Though now more dear the night –
May life not be like you, deceiving
 And blinding to my sight?
As once the light hid all except this world from me,
Is life obscuring by its glare eternity?"

This is a parable. The glare of human joy hides from our sight ten thousand blessings which we cannot see until it grows dark about us. And it would be a dire loss to live through all our days and never see these blessings. There are hundreds of Bible words which seem pale and without meaning in the time of earthly gladness, but which come out bright and shining like stars when the darkness comes on. You had no need for divine comfort when you had no sorrow; and a great part of the Bible was as yet an unopened book to you, for a large portion of it consists of comfort for those in trouble. But when the sorrow came, the words flashed out like stars at night, unseen by day. Thus we learn the meaning of the beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." We lose some joys, but we find others that were hidden in the light of those we lost. Where earth's tapers burned with only flickering light, heaven's lamps now shine. Where the human face shone in its gentle grace, the face of Christ now looks upon us in its divine yearning. Where we leaned upon a human arm, often trembling, at last broken, we find now, instead, the everlasting arm. "Thus when we abide in Christ the light of his love is revealed as human joys pale. The deeper the earthly darkness, the richer are the divine comforts which are given to us, enabling us to be of good cheer whatever the tribulation.

It will help us in learning the lesson of cheerfulness if we persistently train ourselves to see the good things, the bright things, in our common life. There are some people who seem to have eyes only for the unpleasant things. They find every bit of roughness and hardness in their daily path. They see at once, and see it magnified, every disagreeable thing that comes into their life. They remember all the unhappy experiences they have ever had. They keep on their heart's walls the pictures of all their vanished joys and faded hopes. They write with a diamond on their window panes the records of all the trials, adversities, and misfortunes they have ever suffered. But, on the other hand, they forget all their blessings. They hang up no pictures of the joys they did not lose, which have filled their life on so many bright days. They have no memory for the beautiful things, the things of gladness.

There are few habits more common, even among Christians, than this of remembering the unpleasant things and forgetting the pleasant things; and there is no other habit which is more inimical to joy. He who would always be of good cheer must break this habit — if it has fastened itself in his life — and must learn, must train himself, to see the beautiful things and to be blind to the disagreeable things. The truth is, there are, in the ordinary life, a thousand pleasant things — favors, joys, comforts, things to cheer — to one unpleasant thing, one real cause for unhappiness. It is a shame, therefore, to let the one bit of roughness, trial, or suffering spoil all the gladness of the thousand blessings, the one discordant note mar all the music of the grand symphony. We should learn to look at life, not to find misery and discomfort in it, but to find cheer and beauty.

Two people in the same house, looking out at the same windows, on the same things, will see things in such very different ways that one shall be made unhappy and wretched, while the other is made to rejoice and sing. There is a suggestive story of a Christian woman who moved into a new flat, which was not conspicuous for its cheerful surroundings or its pleasant outlook. The average woman would have found there a very commonplace shelter from the snow of winter and the heat and rains of summer. But this woman was happy in her home. One day a friend called and was asked by this cheerful housewife to note the pleasant outlook she had from her window. “Yes,” said the visitor, “I see a remarkably fine lot of chimneys and back buildings.” “Chimneys and back buildings!” exclaimed the hostess. “Why, I never saw them before. I looked over all that you see, and saw those magnificent trees which form such a picturesque line on the horizon. I thought only of the trees and the glorious sunsets I see from this window.”

This woman had learned one of the secrets of being of good cheer. She had trained herself to see out of her windows trees and sunsets instead of dingy roofs, black chimney tops, and unsightly back buildings. This habit made all the world beautiful for her. She always saw loveliness whenever she looked out. She was blind to the unpleasant sights which some people can find everywhere, even in a garden of flowers or a gallery of paintings.

He who has learned to see the beauty even in things unsightly, the good in things evil, the encouragement in things discouraging, the comfort in things painful, has found one of the truest and most potent secrets of cheerfulness. Such a habit always finds something bright in the dreariest condition.

"There are nettles everywhere,
But smooth green grasses are more common still;
The blue of heaven is larger than the cloud."

Another secret of cheerfulness is found in the way we relate ourselves to the people about us. There are many persons who are made miserable by what others do or do not do. Their neighbors' faults worry them a great deal — far more than their own. The things they hear about others vex them. The peculiarities of their friends and their shortcomings cause them great annoyance. The way other people treat them — their bad manners, their lack of respect, their want of refinement, the slights and discourtesies they detect in their bearing, their thoughtless ways — these disagreeable things in their neighbors give them much distress.

Of course we cannot be indifferent to what we see in the lives about us. A sensitive spirit is affected by whatever passes before it. In a home the life of each child continually gives either comfort or pain to a parent's heart. Those in whom we are interested in our community or among our acquaintances add either to our pleasure or our sorrow by the way they live. A sympathetic heart carries the burdens and griefs of many lives, There is a way in which all this makes misery, and there is a way in which it may be made to add to life's cheerfulness. If we look upon others critically, censoriously, to mark their faults, to judge them, to think and say severe things of them, we only make ourselves wretched, while we do them no good, only harm instead. But if we look at others through Christ-eyes, then even the things in them which cause us pain and sorrow become new chances of joy and blessing for us.

Charles Kingsley said: "Each man can learn something from his neighbor; at least he can learn this — to have patience with his neighbor, to live and let live." No doubt this is one of the lessons. People are meant to be means of grace to us. We are to be helped by our contacts with them. From some we are to learn, through the beautiful things in them, their excellences of character. From these we get inspiration. Others help us through our sympathies. They appeal to our thought and care. They need help. We must carry burdens for them. They have sorrows, and it becomes ours to give them comfort. They are in need or distress, and we must deny ourselves for them. The blessing that may come to us through these is incalculable. Every human sorrow or infirmity that makes its appeal to us is a new chance for us to do a beautiful thing, to grow in Christlikeness. Every

new burden of care rolled upon us, demanding self-denial, sacrifice, or service, carries in it a new blessing for us, if only we will accept it.

In the case of others, it is unbeauty, fault, and sin that we see; but here, too, lies the possibility of help for us in our contact with them, if we relate ourselves to them as we may. They furnish us an opportunity for the exercise of the loftiest feelings of sympathy and forbearance, and for the noblest efforts to lift up and save.

Christ knew the secret of finding joy in all the lives about him. Of course he found joy in the beautiful things he saw in others. This is a secret we sometimes miss. There are those who are made envious by the excellences they see in others, the fine things in their life and character, the noble things they do. It would seem indeed that one of the qualities most rarely found among men is this of rejoicing in the lovely things and the attainments and successes of others. Jesus found pleasure in every beautiful thing he saw in men's lives.

Then he found joy for his own heart also in those who were in distress and trouble. We never can sound the depths of the meaning of the words which tell us, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Grief, suffering, and sin stirred his profoundest compassion. Yet even these experiences of pain were turned to sources of joy as He sought to help and bless those who were thus distressed.

People sometimes wonder how a physician can possibly be a cheerful man. He is continually in the presence of pain and suffering. Those who come to him, or who summon him to their bedside, are all in some way in distress. Seeing misery all the while, how can he ever wear a smile, or bear to his home anything but gloom on his face? The secret lies in the way the physician looks upon all this pain and misery. He is present as a healer, to give relief, to alleviate pain; and this saves him from the suffering which mere pity would produce in him. It puts joy into his heart to be able to give help. Thus it was that Christ looked upon the people about him. They all had their sicknesses, their sorrows, their infirmities, and their sins; but he was in the world to be Healer, Comforter, Saviour, and found joy in doing so.

If we will relate ourselves to those around us in this Christ-way, as a friend, helper, healer, savior, we shall escape all the wretchedness that many persons suffer in their contacts with the lives of others. Then our thought over one's faults or sins will be, "How can I lead this man out of his mistakes and wrong doings? How can I do him any good, and help him to overcome his faults?"

We must learn to look through love's eyes at every neighbor. This will give us true compassion, and will make us eager, not to blame and condemn, but to help every one who needs help of whatever kind.

Nothing else in all life is such a maker of joy and cheer as the privilege of doing good. Kossuth once said: "If I had to choose my place among the forces of nature, do you know what I would choose to be? I would be the dew that falls silently and invisibly over the face of nature, trampled underfoot and unconsidered, but perpetually blessing and refreshing all forms of life." It is in such losing of self that one finds truest, purest, and deepest happiness. One writes: —

"If I can live
To make some pale face brighter, and to give
A second lustre to some tear-dimmed eye,
Or e'en impart
One throb of comfort to an aching heart,
Or cheer some way-worn soul in passing by —

If I can lend
A strong hand to the fallen, or defend
The right against a single envious strain,
My life though bare,
Perhaps, of much that seemeth dear and fair
To us of earth, will not have been in vain.

The purest joy —
Most near to heaven — far from earth's alloy,
Is bidding cloud give way to sun and shine;
And 'twill be well
If on that day of days the angels tell
Of me, 'She did her best for one of thine.'"

Those are hints of the way in which the lesson of cheerfulness can be learned. It is a lesson we should learn, whatever the cost. He who carries about with him a cheerful spirit is a blessing wherever he goes. We have no right to go among men with our complaints and our murmurings. It is part of the debt of love we

owe to our fellowmen to bring them always the best we have; not gloom and shadow and disheartenment, but cheer, hope, and joy. We are commanded to be lights in the world, to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven. There is no light in discontent, complaining, and gloom; and we are not realizing God's thought for our life when we let shadows hang about us. We should hide our pain, our sorrow, our trouble in our own heart, accepting God's sweet comfort, and letting the light of the divine grace shine in our face. Then we should let our grief become inspiration to all loving service. Thus do we get the victory over our loss and sorrow, and shed the blessing of cheer on all about us. Writes one: —

"Bury the dead thou lovest,
Deep, deep within thy heart;
So shall they live and love thee
Till life and thou shalt part.

So for their risen spirits
Thy breast a heaven shall be;
Like angels, pure and shining.
They go through life with thee.

Bury the life thou livest
Deep in another's heart;
So shalt thou live beloved
When cold and dead thou art."

The blessing of cheerfulness is manifold. It blesses the man himself. It is a fountain of life in his heart. It makes him strong for all duty and struggle. Life is not half so hard for the cheerful man as it is for the man who is depressed and unhappy. Burdens are light when one can sing under them. Battles are easily won when the heart is glad. Nothing else so weakens the life's energy as discouragement. It hides the stars in the sky, and blots the blue of the heavens with blackness. It drives hope out of the heart. Its gloom creeps into the soul, and darkens the eyes. The discouraged man sees nothing worth living for in all this glorious world. The natural drift of this unhappy feeling is toward despondency and despair. We have no enemy more to be dreaded than discouragement.

But cheerfulness is a good angel to the man who keeps it in his heart. It helps

him to be more than conqueror in the struggle of life. He who is always of good cheer is master of circumstances and conditions. Nothing can defeat him. Cheerfulness is courage. It also makes the life wholesome. It is the best medicine a man can take. Says the wise man: —

"A merry heart is a good medicine:
But a broken spirit drieth up the bones."

A man without cheerfulness is a sick man. The sadness of his spirit lays a withering blight on all the beauty of his life. He becomes prematurely old. His strength decays. "A broken spirit drieth up the bones." But cheerfulness is medicine. It promotes health. Physicians say that a cheerful spirit in a patient is a large factor in the cure of sickness. One who admits to himself and others that he is sick is indeed sick; but one who declines to make such admission, and cheerfully goes on as if he were well, conquers many an ailment which, if he had succumbed to it, might have proved serious. Cheerfulness is a prime secret of health. It keeps one well. It keeps one young; it is one of the secrets of eternal youth.

It is a fancy of Swedenborg, with a good philosophy in it, that in heaven the oldest angels are the youngest. All life there is toward youth. One reason must be that all life there is cheerful and joyous. If the people in heaven still fretted, and complained, and got discouraged, and went about with heavy hearts and long faces, cheerless and despondent, as so many heaven-bound pilgrims do here, they would get very old by the time they had been a few millenniums in heaven. But being always of good cheer, they keep always young, growing ever toward youth. Even here on the earth, too, the same secret holds true, that abounding cheerfulness keeps one young in spite of advancing years. Thus cheerfulness carries its reward and blessing in itself. It is its own benediction. It weaves its own garment of beauty. It builds its own home of glory.

Cheerfulness also blesses others. There are people, who, no doubt, are good, — God loves them, for he is very patient and longsuffering, — but who make life harder for every one who lives close to them. They are as depressing, when they are among their friends, as a funeral procession as it winds its way through the streets. They are always saying discouraging things. If you inquire after their health, you will never get a hearty answer, assuring you without qualification that they are well; you must always listen to mere or less bemoaning of ills or unhealthy symptoms. Any subject of conversation you may start will afford them

an opportunity to show their general gloominess. There is a lack of glad wholesomeness in all their intercourse with others. Wherever they go they carry an epidemic of disheartenment, for the influence of one such life upon others is simply incalculable. After being for a few moments in the company of such a person, you suffer for hours from an indefinable sense of depression, perhaps wondering what is wrong with you. It is harder for you to live after staying even a little while in such an enervating atmosphere.

How different it is when one is habitually cheerful! Wherever such a person goes he carries gladness. He makes it easier for others to live. He puts encouragement into the heart of every one he meets. AVhen you ask after his health, he answers you in a happy, cheerful way that quickens your own pulses. He does not burden you with a list of complaints. He does not consider it necessary to tell you at breakfast how poorly he rested, how many hours he heard the clock strike during the night, or any of the details of his miserable condition this morning. He prefers only to speak of cheerful things, not staining the brightness of the morning for you with the recital of any of his own discomforts.

The cheerful man carries with him perpetually, in his presence and personality, an influence that acts upon others as summer warmth on the fields and forests. It wakes up and calls out the best that is in them. It makes them stronger, braver, and happier. Such a man makes a little spot of this world a lighter, brighter, warmer place for other people to live in. To meet him in the morning is to get inspiration which makes all the day's struggles and tasks easier. His hearty hand-shake puts a thrill of new vigor into your veins. After talking with him for a few minutes you feel an exhilaration of spirits, a quickening of energy, a renewal of zest and interest in living, and are ready for any duty or service.

The blessing of one such cheerful life in a home is immeasurable. It touches all the household with its calming, quieting influence. It allays the storms of perturbed feeling that are sure to sweep down from the mountains of worldly care and conflict even upon the sheltered waters of home.

Besides the silent influence of cheerfulness, a man with such a spirit becomes an active force of good cheer wherever he goes. When he meets a discouraged neighbor, he does not fall in with the weak bemoanings, nor pityingly sympathize with the disheartenment. Sympathy is good, but it must do more than listen patiently to the recital of trouble; it must seek to put a little new strength into the sad and weary heart. Your truest and best friend may not take your

burden away, but he makes you better able to bear it. This the cheerful man seeks always to do. He listens to human complainings, but tries to kindle new hope or courage in those who are bowed down. He goes into the home of sorrow, not merely to weep with those who weep, but to whisper some secret of comfort, which will make the mourners stronger to endure their grief. He meets other men who are bowing under heavy loads, and does not consider that he has done his whole duty to them when he has commiserated them on their hard condition, but seeks in some way to be helpful to them, to put a little fresh courage into their hearts.

The ministry of such cheerfulness along the years leaves blessing at every step. Its value in the lives of men is simply incalculable. It is well worth while to live such a life. Its crown of glory in the world to come will be very bright.

There is need always for such ministry. This world is full of disheartenment. For the majority of people life is not easy. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is not too sombre a prophecy to be spoken as we go out into life. All about us, any common day, there are sobbings of grief, groanings of overburdened hearts, cries of pain and anguish, from those who are in dark Gethsemanes. There is need always for human help.

It is not possible, ordinarily, to change the hard conditions of those who are in life's stress; but it is possible to give them brotherly sympathy and encouragement. The cup was not taken away from Jesus, but an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. No other ministry which human love can render is so angel-like as that of him who gives cheer. Those who have learned this lesson are indeed ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them who shall inherit salvation.

There is a beautiful legend which tells how, long centuries ago, in a sombre forest, some moss began to grow. The sunshine warmed it, and it spread until it formed a soft, rich carpet of bright hue. One day Jesus, coming out of the wilderness, passed through this old forest, with feet torn and bleeding from the rough way by which he had come. His path led over this carpet of moss; and as his bruised and weary feet walked on it they were soothed, refreshed, and rested by its gentle softness. Grateful for the comfort which he had received, Jesus, from his loving heart, uttered words which made the moss holy for all time: "Thou shalt be blessed for ever, o'er every plant that grows." Then forth from the green bosom of the moss there sprang a perfect rose. This is only a legend; but in its tender beauty we can get a sweet lesson — that Christ honors always and everywhere the gentle thoughtfulness which makes the way easier for any tired

one. We are in this world to bless others. If we can spread a carpet of moss for any bruised and weary feet, we are sure of the benediction of Christ. Such sweet ministry we can render every day. Evermore Jesus is passing in the persons of his little ones. The paths are rough, and feet bleed as they walk over them. He who lives to give cheer and hope and strength will receive the Master's blessing.

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Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. –Jude 1:24-25

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