

*moral* end in view. Hence it came that I was beyond measure astonished and delighted one evening by the arrival of a piano—not that one, for it got more worn than I liked, and I was able afterwards to exchange it for a better. I found it an invaluable aid in the endeavour to work out my growing desire of getting the people about me into a better condition. First I asked some of the children to come and listen while I played. Everybody knows how fond the least educated children are of music; and I feel assured of its elevating power. Whatever the street organs may be to poets and mathematicians, they are certainly a godsend to the children of our courts and alleys. The music takes possession of them at once, and sets them moving to it with rhythmical grace. I should have been very sorry to make it a condition with those I invited that they should sit still: to take from them their personal share in it, would have been to destroy half the charm of the thing. A far higher development is needful before music can be enjoyed in silence and motionless. The only condition I made was that they should come with clean hands and faces, and with tidy hair. Considerable indignation was at first manifested on the part of those parents whose children I refused to admit because they had neglected the condition. This necessity, however, did not often occur, and the anger passed away, while the condition gathered weight. After a while, guided by what some of the children let fall, I began to invite the mothers to join them; and at length it came to be understood that, every Saturday evening, whoever chose to make herself tidy would be welcome to an hour or two of my music. Some of the husbands next began to come, but there were never so many of them present. I may just add that although the manners of some of my audience would be very shocking to cultivated people, and I understand perfectly how they must be so, I am very rarely annoyed on such occasions.

"I must now glance at another point in my history—one on which I cannot dwell. Never since my father's death had I attended public worship. Nothing had drawn me thither; and I hardly know what induced me one evening to step into a chapel of which I knew nothing. There was not even Sunday to account for it. I believe, however, it had to do with this—that all day I had been feeling tired. I think people are often ready to suppose that their bodily condition is the cause of their spiritual discomfort, when it may be only the occasion upon which some inward lack reveals itself. That the spiritual nature should be incapable of meeting and sustaining the body in its troubles is of itself sufficient to show

that it is not in a satisfactory condition. For a long time the struggle for mere existence had almost absorbed my energies; but things had been easier for some time—a reaction had at length come. It was not that I could lay anything definite to my own charge; I only felt empty all through; I felt that something was not right with me, that something was required of me which I was not rendering. I could not, however, have told you what it was. Possibly the feeling had been for some time growing; but that day, so far as I can tell, I was first aware of it; and I presume it was the dim cause of my turning at the sound of a few singing voices, and entering that chapel. I found about a dozen people present. Something in the air of the place, meagre and waste as it looked, yet induced me to remain. An address followed from a pale-faced, weak-looking man of middle age, who had no gift of person, voice, or utterance to recommend what he said. But there dwelt a more powerful enforcement in him than any of those—that of earnestness. I went again and again; and slowly, I cannot well explain how, the sense of life and its majesty grew upon me. Mr. Walton will, I trust, understand me when I say, that to one hungering for bread, it is of little consequence in what sort of platter it is handed him. This was a Dissenting chapel—of what order, it was long before I knew—and my predilection was for the Church services, those to which my father had accustomed me; but my comparison of the two to the prejudice of either, I should still (although a communicant of the Church of England) regard with absolute indifference.

"It will be sufficient for my present purpose to allude to the one practical thought which was the main fruit I gathered from this good man—the fruit by which I know that he was good.\* It was this—that if all the labour of God, as my teacher said, was to bring sons into glory, lifting them out of the abyss of evil bondage up to the rock of His pure freedom, the only worthy end of life must be to work in the same direction—to be a fellow-worker with God. Might I not then do something such, in my small way, and lose no jot of my labour? I thought. The urging, the hope grew in me. But I was not left to feel blindly after some new and unknown method of labour. My teacher taught me that the way for *me* to help others, was not to tell them their duty, but myself to learn of Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. As I learned of Him, I should be able to help them. I have never had any theory but just to be their friend—to do for

\* Something like this is the interpretation of the word: "By their fruits ye shall know them," given by Mr. Maurice—an interpretation which opens much.—G. M. D.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)