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NEWCOMB'S  
YOUNG LADY'S GUIDE  
(to the)



Harmonious Development of  
Christian Character

BOSTON.  
J. B. DOW, PUBLISHER.

THE

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YOUNG LADY'S GUIDE

TO THE

HARMONIOUS DEVELOPEMENT

OF

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

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BY HARVEY NEWCOMB.  
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REVISED AND ENLARGED.



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## CHAPTER XIII.

### CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY.

“She hath done what she could.” — MARK XIV. 8.

No one, who possesses the spirit of our Master, can be indifferent towards the great benevolent enterprises of the present day. It is important, then, that we should know what we *can do* towards moving them forward ; for obligation is coextensive with ability. Christ commended the woman who poured the ointment on his head, for doing “*what she could.*” If you do more than any within the circle of your acquaintance, and yet leave undone any thing that you can do, you do not discharge your obligations. You have entered into the service of the Lord, and he requires you to *do what you can.* It, then, becomes a matter of serious inquiry, “*What can I do?*” It is an interesting fact, that the great moral enterprises of the present day, both for the conversion of the world, and for meliorating the temporal condition of the poor, are, in a great measure, sustained by the energy of *female influence.* This influence is felt in every department of society, and must be, wherever the principles of the gospel prevail, so as to elevate

your sex to the station which properly belongs to them. Yet, where correct principles prevail, it will be done in an unostentatious, noiseless manner, without assuming to act in a sphere which "nature itself teaches" does not belong to woman. I will endeavor to point out some of the principal channels through which female influence may, with propriety, be exerted, for the promotion of benevolent objects.

I. *You may make your influence felt in the Bible Society.* The object of this society is to furnish the Holy Scriptures to the destitute. The spirit of Christ is a spirit of the most expansive benevolence. If you possess this spirit, and value the sacred treasure contained in God's word as you ought, you will feel a thrilling interest in this cause; your heart will overflow with compassion for those poor souls who have not the word of life. What, then, must be your emotions, when you consider that many hundreds of millions of your fellow-beings, as good by nature as yourself, are destitute of the Bible? The population of the whole world is estimated at *seven hundred and thirty-seven millions*. Of these, *five hundred and nine millions* are heathen, and *one hundred and fifty-six millions* are Roman and Greek Catholics; nearly all of whom are destitute of the word of God. This leaves but *seventy-two millions* who are called Protestants; but a vast number of these, even in our own highly favored land, are living without the Bible. Can you say, with the Psalmist, "O how

love I thy law ! it is my meditation all the day ? ” How, then, must your heart bleed, in view of these facts ! “ But,” perhaps you reply, “ what can I do for these perishing millions ? ” I answer, *Do what you can*. This is all that God requires of you. Although what you can do will be but as a drop of water in the ocean, compared with what is to be done, yet it may be the means of saving many perishing souls. You can become a member of the Bible society ; you can contribute, at least, your mite ; you can act as a visitor and collector, both to ascertain and supply those families which are destitute of the word of life, and to obtain the means of supplying others ; and you can exert an influence upon others, to induce them to enlist in this heavenly enterprise.

II. *You can make your influence felt in the Tract Society*. The circulation of religious tracts has been abundantly owned and blessed of God’s Spirit. It seems to be almost the only means of reaching some particular classes of people, who never wait upon God in his house. It is a cheap method of preaching the gospel both to the rich and the poor. For a single cent, or even less, a sermon may be obtained, containing a portion of divine truth sufficient, with God’s blessing, to lead a soul to Christ. Engage actively in the various forms of this department of benevolent labor. The distribution of a tract to every family in a town once a month, when properly conducted, may be the means of doing great good. It furnishes an easy introduc-

tion into families where God is not acknowledged ; and the matter contained in the tract will assist you to introduce religious conversation. It will enable you to ascertain and relieve the wants of the poor, without seeming to be obtrusive. It will soften your own heart, and excite your compassion, in view of the objects of distress with which you meet. It also furnishes a convenient opportunity for collecting children into Sabbath schools. In distributing tracts, endeavor, as far as courtesy and propriety will admit, to engage those with whom you meet in direct personal conversation with regard to the concerns of their souls ; and, when you meet only with the female members of the family, and circumstances favor it, pray with them. By so doing, you may be the instrument of saving many precious souls. Your labor will also reflect back upon yourself, and warm your own heart. You will get a deeper sense of the dreadful condition of perishing sinners ; and this will be the means of exciting a spirit of prayer in their behalf. Those engaged in this work should meet every month, after finishing the distribution, report all cases of interest, and spend a season in prayer for the Divine blessing upon their labors. I would advise you to begin your distribution early in the month, and always finish it before the middle ; and be sure you make a written report to the superintendent, as soon as you have finished it.

III. *You can make your influence felt in the Mis-*

*missionary cause.* This is a cause which must be near the heart of every Christian. The spirit of missions is in unison with every feeling of the newborn soul. It is the spirit of universal benevolence; the same spirit which brought our Lord from the realms of glory to suffer and die for perishing sinners. His last command to his disciples, before ascending up again into heaven, was, that they should follow his example, in the exercise of this spirit, until the whole world should be brought to a knowledge of his salvation. But more than eighteen hundred years have passed away, and yet, at least two thirds of the inhabitants of this fallen world have never heard the gospel; and probably not more than one seventieth part of them have really embraced it. This is a mournful picture, and calculated to call forth every feeling of Christian sympathy, and awaken a burning zeal for the honor and glory of God. O, think how Jesus is dishonored by his own people, who thus disregard his last parting request! But here, again, you may inquire, "What can *I* do?" You can do much. Although you may not be permitted to go to the heathen yourself, yet you can help those that do go. Although your means may be limited, yet there are many ways in which you can do much for this cause with little means. By regulating all your expenses upon Christian principles, you may save much, even of a small income, for benevolent purposes. But you may also exert an influence upon others. In your intercourse

with other Christians, you may stir up a missionary spirit. To aid you in this, become acquainted with what has been done, and what is now doing, for the conversion of the heathen. Make yourself familiar with the arguments in favor of this cause. By this means, you may become a zealous and successful advocate of the claims of hundreds of millions of perishing heathen. As an opportunity occurs once a month for all to contribute to this cause, you know not what effect such efforts may have upon the amount contributed. There are other ways in which you can advance this cause; but, for further suggestions on the subject, I must refer you to an interesting little work, published by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, entitled "*Louisa Ralston*," which presents the subject of missions to the heathen in a most interesting light, and furnishes examples of various methods of promoting the cause.

IV. *You can make your influence felt in behalf of the Poor.* By frequenting the abodes of poverty and distress, you may administer to the wants of the afflicted, and call into active exercise the feelings of Christian sympathy in your own bosom. By this means, also, you will be prepared to enlist others in the same cause. In large towns, much is done for the poor by the aid of benevolent associations; and you may assist in this department. But perhaps there is no way in which you can do so much for them as by assisting them with your own hands in their afflictions, and aiding



them by your advice. Be careful, however, that you do not make them feel that you are conferring an obligation.

It is often objected against rendering assistance to the poor, that they are improvident, wanting in industry and economy; and that relieving their necessities has a tendency to make them indolent, and prevent them from helping themselves. This may be true to some extent; for intemperance has brought ruin and distress upon many families, and we cannot expect either industry, economy, or any other virtue in a drunkard. But there is much suffering even among the virtuous poor. Sickness and misfortune often bring distress upon deserving people.

The only way we can realize the sufferings of the poor is to suppose ourselves in their situation. Let a wealthy gentleman and lady, with five or six small children, be suddenly deprived of all their property, and compelled to obtain a support for their family by daily labor, in the lowest employments. Would they think they could live comfortably upon perhaps no more than seventy-five cents a day, as the proceeds of the husband's labor? Yet such is the situation of thousands of families, even in this land of plenty. I have met with families of small children, in the severity of winter, destitute of clothing sufficient to cover them, and without shoes. And, upon inquiry into their circumstances and means of support, I could not see how the parents could make any better

provision. Again, even supposing that the wretchedness of the poor is brought upon them by their own vices, is it agreeable to the spirit of Christ to refuse to relieve their distresses? Has not sin brought upon us all our wretchedness? If the Lord Jesus had reasoned and acted upon this principle, would a single soul have been saved? But he has commanded us to be merciful, *even as our Father which is in heaven is merciful*. And how is he merciful? "He is kind unto the *unthankful* and to the *evil*." Again, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And are we to suppose that the poor in our day are any worse than they were when Christ was upon earth? Yet he greatly honored the poor, in appearing himself in a condition of extreme poverty. At his birth, his parents could provide him no better bed than a manger; and while wearing out his life in the service of a lost world, he had no place to lay his head! Yet, poor as he was, he set us an example of giving. At the last supper, when he told Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly," his disciples supposed he had sent him to give something to the poor. From this we may safely infer that he was in the habit of frequently doing so. He also exhorted others to give to the poor; and similar exhortations are frequent in the apostolical writings.

A Christian is but the steward of God's property. By withholding it, when the kingdom of Christ, or the wants of the suffering poor, require it, and

spending it in extravagance, or hoarding it up for himself and family, beyond a competent provision for their necessities, he *robs God*. But, even on the principle upon which the world acts, shall we neglect the sufferings of a deserving woman, because her husband is intemperate and vicious? Or should we suffer the children to grow up without instruction, in ignorance and vice, because their parents are vicious? Be, then, the devoted friend of the poor; and seek to relieve distress wherever you find it, or whatever may be its cause.

It may be necessary, however, to use some caution against indiscriminate giving; so as not thereby to encourage idleness and dissipation. As a general principle, it is not best to give to *beggars*; as, by so doing, we encourage a practice that is demoralizing in the extreme. The more deserving poor are retiring, and unwilling to make known their wants. It is better to seek out such, as the objects of your charity, than to give indiscriminately to those that ask for it. Still, it may be well to follow those who seek your charity to their places of residence, and ascertain their circumstances, lest there might be suffering which you could relieve. But there is not much confidence to be placed in those whose sensibilities have been blunted by the habit of begging, and we are very liable to be imposed upon by them. The best way in which you can help such persons is to furnish them with employment; and this will test their

honesty. If they are deserving of aid, they will be willing to labor for it.

V. *You may make your influence felt in the cause of Temperance.* A false delicacy prevails among many ladies in relation to this subject. They seem to think that, as intemperance is not a common vice of their own sex, they have no concern with it. But this is a great mistake. No portion of society suffer so much from the consequences of intemperance as females. On them it spends its fury. My heart sickens when I contemplate the condition of the drunkard's wife. I turn from the picture with horror and disgust. But is there no danger that females themselves may become partakers of this monstrous vice? Nay, every town, village, and hamlet, furnishes appalling evidence that they are not proof against this besotting vice. But, independent of this, it is scarcely possible to dry up the secret elements of this wasting pestilence without the aid of *female influence*. If the curtain were lifted from the domestic history of the past generation, it would doubtless appear that many of the intemperate appetites which have exerted such a terrific influence upon society were formed in the nursery. But, besides the formation of early habits, females exert a controlling influence over the public sentiment of the social circle. Here is the sphere of your influence. If young ladies would with one consent set their faces against the use of all intoxicating liquors, their influence could not fail to be felt throughout society. Make yourself

acquainted with the subject, and lose no suitable opportunity of advocating the cause, or of doing whatever is right and proper for a lady to do in advancing it.

VI. *You may make your influence felt in every circle in which you move, by directing conversation towards profitable subjects.* Here the honor of your Master is concerned. There is a lamentable tendency, even among professors of religion, when they meet for social intercourse, to spend their time in light and trifling conversation. The consequence is, they bring leanness upon their own souls; and, if any impenitent sinners witness their conduct, it helps to rivet upon them their carnal security. Christ has declared that *every idle word* shall be brought into judgment. The ability to converse is a talent put into our hands to cultivate for his glory; and we shall be called to account for the manner in which we improve it. To be able to converse well upon important subjects is an attainment worthy of great effort. And to give a right direction to the conversation of any circle in which we move, requires some skill, along with a spiritual and prayerful frame of mind. It is well, before going into company, to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, that our social intercourse may be profitable both to ourselves and others.

VII. *You may make your influence felt in bringing people within the sound of the gospel.* There are multitudes, even in this land of gospel light, who live like the heathen. They do not appreciate