

A Girl's Questions

J.R. Miller:

Every girl has questions. Her brain teems with them â€” her heart too. She ought to have questions. If she had not, she would not be a living girl, at least she would be living to very small purpose. Questions are the keys which open doors within, which we find life's better things.

Girls are not all alike. It would not be true to say that to answer one girl's questions, would be to answer every girl's questions. But certainly to answer one girl's questions, will throw light upon the questions of many others. From a bright, interesting letter, bristling with interrogations â€” a little handful of earnest inquiries is gathered for this Chapter, in the belief that others may be helped by the answers that are given.

"There is one thing â€” we hear it talked about so much, and even preached about how girls fall below what is expected of them, and are such disappointments." The writer continues, "What really is expected of girls? It hardly seems fair for people to make out their own ideal, and then measure all girls by that one standard. Aren't circumstances to make any difference, and different natures, surroundings, and friends? There are so many things which ought to count. It does seem as though people sometimes uncharitably forget the Judge not."

That is a fair question, "What is expected of girls?" No doubt there is much thoughtless unreasonableness, in some of these expectations. Really nothing should be expected of girls, but that they be true and noble, living near Christ, and faithfully living out the religion of the cross. Of course it is very unfair to expect all girls, or even any two of them, to be precisely alike. It is said that no two faces in all the world's millions are alike in every feature. Much less can any two lives be exactly the same. Nothing hurts one, more than trying to be like somebody else. Let every girl be her sweetest and best self, growing into the beauty of her noble ideals. Let her please God with her life that is all.

"When a girl wakes up to the knowledge that she is disagreeable â€” a fact that other people have found out long ago â€” what shall she do?"

It surely is not a pleasant waking for any girl, thus to become conscious some sad day that she is disagreeable. It is apt to discourage her, and to make the disagreeableness even more marked and emphatic. But the question is, "What shall she do?"

People answer, "Make yourself attractive; be agreeable; be lovable." But it is not easy to follow such advice. One cannot, just in a moment, by a sudden resolve, work such a transformation in one's self. A girl who is not beautiful, cannot by a mental process make herself lovely. One who has an unhappy disposition, cannot by merely willing it, become sunny and cheerful. One whose manners are disagreeable, cannot some morning in her room lay off all that is offensive, unattractive, or unrefined in herself, and come out into the street with graceful and winning ways. Such transformations can be wrought only gradually.

The beautiful things are set in lessons for us, line upon line, and are to be learned, wrought into the character little by little. The unattractive girl can make herself attractive â€” but not by any mere resolve to be so. Magical transformations belong only to fairy stories, not to real life.

The only cure for any kind of disagreeableness, is Christ's love in the heart. Mr. Drummond tells of a plain young girl who grew into wonderful sweetness of disposition; and the secret was found at last in a little word of Scripture which was the real creed of her life, "Whom having not seen, you love." The love of Christ in her heart had transformed her. We know, too, how it transformed Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearing his words â€” love for him changed her into radiant beauty.

It is the lack of love, that ails all disagreeable people; they do not love â€” and they are not lovable. They are selfish or they are censorious,
or they are discontented and fretful,
or they are proud, haughty, and supercilious,
or they are exacting or soured,
or they are self-conscious and unwholesome in their life.

Love will cure it, however, whatever the disagreeableness is. Love will make the homely face, beautiful. People forget unattractive ways, if the heart and life be sweet with love.

One tells of a homely woman who became the best loved and the most honored woman in all the community,

simply by a life of love which wrought itself out in her in untiring service. In the same way, the only thing for the disagreeable girl to do, is to get her heart and life full of Christ's love.

"Then there are the blue times â€" I wish I knew how to keep out of the blues."

The dictionary defines "blues" as low spirits, melancholy, depression. The word is said to be a contraction for blue-devils, which is a suggestion of delirium, when evil spirits seem to have possession. This somewhat uncanny suggestion, ought to warn every girl against ever yielding to the blues. It is letting into her life an evil influence, an evil spirit, which can produce only wretchedness.

But how to keep from having the blues, or how to get clear of them, is the question. One way is to train one's self ever to look on the bright side, and never on the dark. The secret of this habit must be found in two things: faithful obedience to God, and simple trust in God. 'he peace of God in the heart, will always drive out the blues. There is an inspired word which says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you." Here we have the secret of peace â€" staying the mind upon God. The keeping us in peace belongs, then, to God. One who is thus kept, cannot be blue.

But suppose one has allowed the blues to come without resistance into the heart again and again, until now one seems to have no power to combat the miserable feeling â€" is there any cure? Yes, although it will take longer time to dislodge the demon, and the dislodging will be harder to accomplish. Jesus said there were certain demons which could be driven out only by special prayer and fasting. He meant they were very hard to cast out. When the blues have had their way in a life for a long time, it takes much prayer and sore struggle to drive the demons out. Still, no case is hopeless when we have Christ. The worst depression of spirits, can be transformed into the joy of the Lord in the heart. Jesus overcame all the world; and there is no evil so strong that he cannot subdue it, and put a virtue in its place.

"Then, how about the people you don't like? Miss R__, for example? I don't want to draw into my shell, and be cold and disagreeable to her, and yet I know she is lonely and homesick, and she asked me to befriend her if I could. But if you knew how she rubs me the wrong way, you would understand. What do you do with such people? Or perhaps it is, What do you do with yourself?"

The last question puts the emphasis where it will have to be kept, "What do you do with yourself?" When other people are disagreeable or hateful, when they antagonize us and irritate us, and rub us the wrong way â€" it is not likely that we can do much to change them, to make them sweet and agreeable, to incline them to be more kindly, respectful, congenial, or affectionate toward us. We shall have to school ourselves into greater patience, into firmer self-restraint, into sweeter humility, into gentler love â€" so that the disagreeableness and the unkindliness of others shall have no power to disturb the holy quiet of our soul.

The real quest in life is not to find easy circumstances in which to live â€" a new paradise where nothing uncongenial shall ever come near to us â€" but to have in ourselves the secret of sweetness and contentment, which nothing can disturb. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid." We are so to relate ourselves to others, that their evil shall have no power to hurt us. We may not be able to transform the people we do not like into loveliness; but instead of drawing into our shell, and being cold and disagreeable to them â€" our heart must go out to them in love, and we must be as Christ to them. That is the best way to cure them.

Besides, when we begin to treat them in this way, we shall find in them beauty and good which we had never suspected before. The way to bring out the best there is in others â€" is to expect the best, and to treat them always with love. Loving people hides their faults, and calls out in them whatever things are true, whatever things are lovely.

These are some of the questions of one girl. Her closing sentences are: "Don't forget the encouraging part. If people only knew how we long for it sometimes! A little praise occasionally would not make us vain, would not turn our head, and certainly would do us more good than harm. It would help us sometimes so much!"

This is very true. People need nothing so much as encouragement. An artist said his mother's kiss made him a painter. Wise cheer is always full of inspiration. The man who writes or speaks discouraging words, is a doer of evil. We have no right ever to be discouragers; we should live always to be encouragers.

In every girl's heart, visions of beauty throng â€" and every one of these visions is a glimpse of something she may become. Her mission is to get these holy visions wrought into her life and character.