



**Mrs. Harry Harper's  
Awakening**

**Isabella Alden**

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AWAKENING**



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**MRS. HARRY HARPER'S  
AWAKENING**



## Chapter 1

### Carried by a Good Current

Fair-faced blue-eyed, golden-haired beauty! A child-wife. There were times when you could not help feeling it to be almost pitiful, that, so early in her girlhood, she had assumed the cares and responsibilities of womanhood. Especially as her girlhood had been spent in a fashionable seminary, where she learned about as much of the responsibilities of life as a bright-winged bird, hovering over a summer garden, learns of the affairs of state. Two experiences in her life stood out with ever-vivid clearness and freshness. Indeed, both were so recent that they could hardly yet be said to be among her past experiences.

One was, when white-robed and flower-decked, and with just the requisite number of buttons to her white kids, and just the right tint of yellow to her rich laces, she had stood, with pink cheeks and shining eyes, and held her daintily perfumed sheets of tinted paper, delicately tied with a ribbon that matched her eyes, and, with sweetly modulated voice that could not be heard twenty feet away from the platform, and with a strong throbbing of her frightened heart, that it seemed to her could be heard all over the hall, read her essay entitled: "*The Procession of the Hours.*" During the reading a gorgeously attired butterfly looked in upon the scene, swam airily across the hall, and lighted for a moment on the bouquet of tube roses that decked the stand; and it was impossible to avoid the notion that it knew almost as much about the *Procession*, and took in as solemn a sense of its tremendous

possibilities, as did the trembling bit of flesh and blood beside it. Nevertheless there was an immeasurable distance between them; the butterfly sailed off into space, and was thought of no more; and the reader received presently her solemn-looking roll of yellow parchment, which told that she had completed the curriculum of study laid down by that old established and in tensely respectable institution; completed, indeed, the circle of the sciences. Then she stepped out into life, an immortal, never to be lost sight of; living still when the butterfly's wings shall have mingled with the dust of ages!

The other experience followed fast upon this, when, white-robed again, she stood, this time with a wreath of orange blossoms about her fair hair, and a veil of rarest lace, pinned by a diamond of almost priceless value, trailed along the central aisle of Westminster Church, while the organ swelled its melody until the very arches caught the sound and seemed to repeat them. This time her face was almost as pale as the satin dress she wore; for among the long *Procession of the Hours* had come to her the solemn one in which she was to speak the irrevocable "I do," which would make of those two "no more twain, but one flesh."

Thus had Mrs. Harry Harper been whirled through life; day-school, dancing-school, boarding-school, marriage vows, until she was stranded at last on the second floor of a fashionable hotel in a fashionable city, totally strange to her, and with absolutely nothing to do, not so much as to arrange the knick-knacks on her toilet-case. What in the name of common sense was this stranded young pearl to do with the *hours*?

Calls? Well she was a stranger; the husband was a recent importation from a large business house to this branch firm in this smaller city; only smaller though, by comparison with one so many degrees larger; for, in itself, it *thought* itself a large and important city. In time there would doubtless be many calls to return, for Harry Harper was not one to remain long unknown.

Shopping? Why bless your heart, she was a bride! Don't you remember how that genius of the last decade characterized American mothers as those beings who acted, when their daughters were about to marry, as though all dry goods stores were to be closed for at least six months and a half year of *Sabbath* were to celebrate the event. Assuredly, Mrs. Harry Harper, though she looked lovingly in at the pretty things in the windows as she passed, could not recall a single want, or, what is more extraordinary, even a single *wish* ungratified in that line. Books? Oh, yes; well, she had plenty of them, elegantly bound; standard works; but, truth to tell, she was weary of books. Had she not often eaten her lunch with a French reader spread open on her knee, and a French dictionary under her arm? Had she not slept many a night with a treatise on some bewildering science under her pillow? It made her sigh to think of books; sometime, perhaps, away in the future, when a silver thread was beginning to gleam in the gold of her hair, she might learn to like books again but not now. This is one of the interesting results of the cramming process in certain fashionable schools.

Was Mrs. Harry Harper a Christian? I find that I hesitate over the question; and yet, yes, after careful thought I believe I may say, she was. A blessed wave of Christian influence had swept even over the fashionable seminary, but a few months before she graduated (and if I had time, it would be interesting to go back and tell you of the apparently trivial line of incidents that led to this remarkable result); but she was just a babe in Christ: an unnourished babe at that. There had been those who rejoiced over her conversion, who kissed her with tears in their eyes, and told her they were glad; and they were; and then they had left her to stumble along as best she might. True, she was a *babe*; her feet were tottering; she might fall, and then it would be sad, and then, possibly, somebody would run to her and try to help her up; but in the meantime no one thought to so support the weak steps that

they would have no need to fall.

So Mrs. Harry Harper came to this strange city, without any very settled or intelligent understanding of what she ought to do, or how in the least to do it. Her husband was a Christian, it is true; had been for years; at least he had been a church-member; but if he had ever felt the importance of the profession, and the measure of his responsibility, he had long buried the feeling in a whirl of successful business; so that up to the time when our story opens, husband and wife had never exchanged a dozen sentences on the subject of personal religious experience. As regarded the hundred avenues of Christian work, fields white to the harvest on every hand, waiting for the laborers, Mrs. Harry was as ignorant as a humming-bird, and her husband was not very many degrees in advance of her.

So behold her, on this sunny spring morning, arrayed in the most exquisite of spring costumes, ready for a walk; yet as she gave careful attention to the many buttons on her gloves, there was a shade of irresolution, even weariness, on her "pretty face. She went out for a walk every morning, because Harry said she ought to exercise, and because it was less wearisome than to stay in the house. Yet she had nowhere to go, nothing to do, no interest in the people whom she met, or the sights that she saw. Her whole life had been spent in a larger and much more brilliant city. How was she going to get through with the weary hours that intervened between now and the time when Harry would rush in from his distant store? No fear of loneliness after that. They were sufficient to each other, these two.

The weary look deepened into one of positive discontent as she moved slowly along the busy street; everybody seemed to have a special destination in view, and be eager to get there. Everybody was in a hurry save herself. Especially was she impressed with the fact that an unusual number of women were abroad; interesting-looking women; many of them in traveling attire; many of them

with an all' of earnestness, or of definiteness, that in her listless mood, impressed her keenly.

Who were they, and where could they all be hurrying? Why were there so many more of them this morning than usual? She would like to know some of them; their faces interested her, rested her; yes, for she actually felt *tired!* There is really nothing that will tire one so utterly and hopelessly as idleness. Presently, as she studied the faces of the people who were all going in an opposite direction from herself, a new feature about them attracted her attention. They wore on the left shoulder, or fastened to their pins, or chains, somewhere about them, modest-looking bits of white ribbon, bearing the cabalistic letters: "W. P. B. F. M." What *could* those letters mean? She found herself utterly unfamiliar with them. It must be a convention of some sort. She shuddered at the thought! A convention of women! What a disagreeable sight must that be! Did they argue, she wondered? Did their faces grow red with passion? Did they call each other hard names, and fling bitter sarcasms at one another, as she had heard her father and brother tell of the political conventions belonging strictly to the male sex? But what could the letters represent? "Woman's Right's?" No. The "W" would do; but what about the rest? Perhaps it was a benevolent society, and they had a fair somewhere in the city. She would rather like to attend, if that were the case. Then she tried to fit the letters. "Woman's Fancy Bazaar"—*was* it W. F. B.? No, there were other letters, and this wasn't the order in which they came. She studied the next badge carefully. What *could* that stand for? And the B. was before the F. It couldn't mean *Fancy Bazaar*; she knew there was a great rage in this country for copying the French; but surely the fever would not have led them to want to say "Bazaar Fancy." She tried again: "Woman's Purchasing Bazaar for —" Well for what? Ignoring the fact that it would be a very awkward sentence thus far, what was she to do with the "M?" She amused herself by fitting all sorts of probable and improbable

words to it, trying to make a reasonable conclusion.

“I wonder where the meeting, or the fair, or whatever it is, is held?” she asked herself. “How they are crowding along! Why as many as a hundred ladies must have passed me! I believe I will turn and follow them. It must be a proper enough place to go, since so many ladies are hurrying that way. Nice-looking ladies, too; some of them are *noble-looking*.” Possessed with that silly idea, common to womankind, that to turn squarely around in the street and walk in the opposite direction, would draw the attention of the crowd, she turned instead into a stationery *store*, near at hand, and made a purchase of the first article on which her eye alighted, which proved to be a very small blank book. Then she boldly joined the W. P. B. F. M., bent on learning the attraction, whatever it was. Only a short walk around the corner, down another block, and the procession of women ahead of her filed into a great church. She hesitated. What if it were a matter belonging strictly to themselves? A secret society, such as the gentleman had—was it proper for her to follow? But then, such a company of them, and in the broad sunlight of a week day morning, and in a church; it must be proper enough to see what there was of interest.

“We are late,” said a sweet-voiced lady at her elbow; “I am sorry; I dislike to enter a meeting after it has opened.” This sounded friendly; Mrs. Harry could not do other than smile upon her, and admit that it was unpleasant.

“Walk right in: this way, ladies,” said the cheery voice of an usher. “You will not disturb the meeting; they are just attending to a little item of business.” Then Mrs. Harry found herself following his lead and entering the audience-room of the handsome church. There seemed to her to be more genuine cordiality in the invitation than she had received in a church since she left her own home. Instantly her eye was attracted by the display of flowers and vines on the platform. How perfectly aglow with beauty they were! The whole church was pervaded with a faint, delicate perfume like the

breath of a summer morning, and the ladies on the platform were as though they dwelt inside a bower of the Lord's own fashioning, Whose hand but his could have furnished the cool, green, graceful ferns, bending their feathery branches on every side? Whose hand but his could have fashioned the lilies in their glory, as they smiled on this young worshiper of beauty, and drew her instinctively down the aisle, instead of dropping into the first seat that offered? The bright-faced lady who had addressed her was just at hand, and smiled an appreciation of the beauty, and murmured as they took seats together: "'Consider the lilies.' Doesn't that platform make you think of it?" No, it hadn't. The young bride was all too unaccustomed to the Bible to have familiar verses spring to her heart to match the sight of her eyes. But she thought of it now, and supplied the rest of the verse, and took a new lesson in the power and care of the beauty-loving God.

## Chapter 2

### Did She Belong?

The choir were singing a strong, grand hymn; new to her, as indeed most hymns were; but the tune carried her back to a certain evening in the seminary chapel, when, with beating heart and tear-wet eyes, she bowed her head in prayer, and felt, for the first time, the presence of One to whom she said, "*My Lord and my God.*" The rush of recent events had, sadly enough, already set this sweet memory in the background, but it came back to her in full force this morning, and helped to deepen the sense of sweetness and restfulness in the atmosphere about her.

She bowed her head and joined in the prayer that followed, and thought it sounded strange indeed to her, coming from a woman's lips, overshadowed by the sanctity of the pulpit, yet the words were so simple, so earnest, so impassioned, that she could not, but in a degree, forget the surroundings and join in the petitions. In the little rustle that followed the prayer, she ventured to address a word of inquiry to the cordial lady beside her.

"Is the woman who prayed a missionary?"

"Oh, no; she is just a worker here at home; but she is very much in earnest."

Mrs. Harry Harper suppressed outward token of her surprise, but she had not deemed it possible that anyone not actually engaged in the mission field could have such a keen, throbbing eagerness of heart for the cause. Truth to tell, she had never even realized that *missionaries* felt as much as that prayer indicated;

though, of course, they were, by some mysterious process unknown to other Christians, gifted with superhuman powers of self-abnegation. Mrs. Harper did not put that belief into actual words, but she represents a by no means small majority who, in their secret hearts, seem to feel it.

I feel myself unable to picture to you the strangeness of this scene to the child-wife looking on. A great church filled at that hour of the morning with women; a sea of upturned faces—earnest faces, bright faces, young and beautiful faces, old faces crowned with silver hair—all of them belonging to women. Women on the platform, many of them; unembarrassed, at ease, apparently at home in all the details of management. All of them wearing those fair white ribbons, with those clear black letters, whose signification still eluded her. This was no fancy bazaar: whoever heard of one being thronged at ten of the morning by an army of plainly attired, quietly seated women, bowing their heads in prayer, led by one of their number! Mrs. Harper was at home in the management of fairs and festivals and fancy tables, and every contrivance of the sort beginning with “f” that she could think of, and none of them presented this front. She glanced about her curiously, the inscriptions on the walls being the next thing that caught her eyes—done in evergreen, evidently prepared for this present occasion; large, plain letters, enclose din evergreen frames, *Africa, China, India, Syria, Persia*. What had all those far-away countries to do with this gathering of women in the very center of America? She scanned them closely; nothing in dress or manner accorded with her somewhat curious ideas of missionaries. Nay, a glance on the platform revealed the presence of some ladies known to her by sight as belonging to the elite of her own city. Presently she was called form her reverie by the sound of a strong penetrative voice, belonging to a white-haired, majestic looking woman. A little wave of feeling went about the congregation, such as in an indescribable, but perfectly understood, manner reveals

the fact that one whom the people love, and have waited for, is before them. Despite the ignorance of the object of all this gathering and the position of the leaders, Mrs. Harper found herself strangely held by the power of the address that followed. Unquestionably the subject was missions. And in regard to that entire subject, viewed from whatever standpoint, Mrs. Harry Harper was ignorant. She listened to those words, throbbing with eloquence, coming to her from a woman's lips; she listens in fascination. The statistics appalled her! Could it be possible that there lived such an army of human beings who had no idea of God! Then certain sentences stood out in startling boldness. "In all these lands," said the speaker, "woman is reduced to the level of the brute." Childhood, wifehood, motherhood, womanhood, home, have no existence there. How could the happy young wife's heart help throbbing a response to this desolation? How *could* the lonely child, who so missed her old home and her mother, feel other than dismayed over the thought that so many knew not the meaning of the word? Coming back from the reverie into which these words plunged her, she listened again. "Fifty thousand ordained ministers in the United States; to furnish China half as well would empty the Protestant pulpits, and then leave a *deficit*." Mrs. Harper turned her head instinctively and looked at the word *China*, done in evergreen. How immense it was! Why should the people be left in such spiritual blackness? Presently the little lady beside her turned a beaming face her way, nodding assent to the sentence.

"Isn't she grand?" she whispered. Then her eye caught the little blank-book. "You have forgotten your pencil?" she said, inquiringly. "Do you want to take notes?"

All this in a moment, and a carefully sharpened pencil was laid in her hand. Then did Mrs. Harper feel queerly! She had not the slightest idea of taking notes. At that moment came a quotation, new to her entirely, but fitting in so perfectly with the glimmering of solemn thought which had caused her to choose for

the subject of her graduation essay; "The Procession of the Hours!" that she immediately copied it in her note-book:

"Eternity, with all its years,  
Stands present to thy view,  
To thee there's nothing old appears;  
Great God! There's nothing new."

Then followed sentences that she did not want to stop to write; sentences that held her by their pathos and their power. Suddenly she thrilled again over this, and wrote it down, the result amazed her so. She would tell Harry that just as soon as she reached home. Should the five hundred and sixty-seven thousand members of the Presbyterian church, of whom two-thirds are women, give to the Lord's treasury a daily copper, the result would be \$2,069,550 annually! One cent a day! Is it any wonder that the young wife, who could count almost daily and by the dozens the cents that she frittered away, felt her cheeks crimson under the recollection of the amount that she actually gave to the Lord's treasury?

One other sentence she copied into her little book, because it reached *her* heart; it was this: "As Christ passes from heart to heart today,

"Knocking, knocking; who is there?  
Waiting, waiting, wondrous fair;

"With adoring reverence and love may each woman exclaim: 'Rabboni what wilt thou have me to do?' May the Spirit of all grace descend on each one present, abide with us through this meeting; go with us to our homes, so that we may speak with other tongues, and lead other lives, worthy of Him who for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich."

Let me tell you, with joy, that there thrilled through Mrs. Harper's frame the resolution, "*I will, I will.*"

"But," said the speaker,

"Drops of blood can ne'er repay  
The debt of love I owe."

And the listener's heart throbbed its answer: "No, it can't; I *cannot* take back the past; what can I do?" Listen:

"Here, Lord, I give myself away,  
'Tis all that I *can* do."

One listener's eye-lashes were pearly with tears, as, with bowed head and quivering lips, her heart echoed the last word: "I do, I do."

"Who was that woman?" she asked at last, and abruptly. Other exercises and reports and singing had followed, but her heart had lingered with those closing sentences. The scene changed. The meeting had adjourned for lunch, and the great throngs of people were filing into the lecture room. Her fair-faced seatmate had moved forward, and she was addressing another stranger.

"The woman who gave the last report, you mean? Why that was Mrs.—"

"Oh, no; I mean the one who gave the address, the long address about the size of China and—and all that."

Then I grieve to tell you that the woman stared at her; she could not repress her astonishment.

"Why, that was the president. Is it possible that there is anybody who doesn't know *her*!"

Mrs. Harper was quenched; she felt much as she might have imagined herself feeling had she unwittingly pointed to the sun and asked, "What is that?" Nevertheless, bent on information she longed to add: "The president of what? And who *is* she?" But courage failed her. The bright-eyed lady turned again to her at this point.

“Come right in to lunch. We may as well go now as at any time; the room is large.”

“Oh, no,” said Mrs. Harper, holding back. What right had she to lunch with this army of workers; she had discovered that she was a drone.

“Oh, you surely will not think of going home!” the lady urged. “The intermission is so short; you will lose some of the addresses if you do. Come right in.”

And yielding to the pressure of the crowd, allowing herself to be swayed along rather than really going, Mrs. Harper was moved toward the lunch-room.

“Lost your badge?” said a benevolent looking lady, near the platform; “I have an extra one here. Let me pin it on.”

And lo! Before she could seem to gain voice, or even foothold enough to remonstrate, the deft fingers accomplished their work, and now she was a W.P.B.F.M. herself!

## Chapter 3

### Christ's First

I suppose it would be difficult to explain to you with what curious eyes our little lady looked about her, trying to take in her new surroundings and decide where she was. The people certainly appeared unlike any whom she had ever met; they waited for no introductions, they expressed no surprise, either by look or manner, because of this stranger in their midst; in fact they acted as though they hadn't the least idea that she was a stranger, but asked her opinion of the exercises and the decorations and the lunch, precisely as though she had always been one of them.

She drank her coffee and ate her sandwich between the chattings, and admitted to herself that lunch had not been such an enjoyable affair since she left her mother's home. For the afternoon session, she took her seat directly in front of the platform, eager to hear all that there was to hear.

It so happened, however, that the reports which filled up the next hour, though full of statistical importance to the initiated, were so entirely about matters of which she knew nothing, that they failed to interest our young fledgling, and she allowed eyes and thoughts to rove round the beautiful church and admire its decorations. It was just then and there that she raised them high enough to observe, over one of the side arches the fair design in evergreen, a picture of the world, and in the world, its central object to the Christian heart, a cross; surmounting these, in bold lettering, this sentence: *Christ for the World*. It was not that Mrs. Harry Harper, in common with all civilized humanity, had not

known this fact before. It was simply that she, in common with thousands of other women, had not *realized* it.

There flashed over heart and brain at this moment a dim realization of its meaning. Christ came and lived and suffered and died, not merely for the dwellers in New York and Boston and Chicago, and the lesser cities that had hitherto made her world, but for the *world!* For China, for Africa, and for those dreadful South Sea Islanders; actually he loved the world. Really loved individually those heathen in their degradation; loved them enough to die for them! It came to Mrs. Harper like a revelation! It struck her for the first time as the wonder of all wonders! The thing over which the world should have an eternal celebration, so long as it was left to roll in space. Now you will readily see how her heart was prepared for the next sight which met her eager eyes. Some change on the platform at that moment called her attention there, and, when her eyes roved again they turned to the left, and behold, arching over and corresponding with the decoration which she had been studying at the right, was another picture of the world; but this time the cross had been changed for a harp, and was overshadowed by a crowd, and the triumphal motto, in clear-cut evergreen was, *The World for Christ*. Our little enthusiast clasped her hands in token of the fullness of her glad satisfaction, while her eyes brimmed with tears. Yes, that was it: the *world* for Christ! After the cross, and all it embodied, what could the world do less than give itself, with all its resources, to the cross, and take, for its triumphal song through the ages, the joyful proclamation of its service? And what could Christians do better than to repeat the call, and extend the story and gather in the *world* for the *King*? This, then, was what this meeting was for; these Christian women were after the *world*. Here were the nations of the earth represented on either side, and here was the grand central aim. She did not know their name, nor how they worked, nor have much idea as to what there was that she could do to help; just then and

there, while the reports which she did not hear were being read, little Mrs. Harper went over, heart and soul and strength, to the W.P.B.F.M., whatever those letters in their fullness might mean. In the stillness of her own heart, not appearing to those near her to be other than a quiet listener, her soul and she entered into compact with the one who had given himself for the world; and she gave herself to the service of helping that poor disordered world back to its rightful king. *The World for Christ*. Nothing less than that could be her aim ever again.

Think of it, Christian women! What an aim! I wonder much whether the bells of heaven did not ring, and the angels shout a special anthem for her sake. Not perhaps that she could do so very much for the King, but, because in making this tender and solemn consecration, this little immortal, whom the King loved, had done so very much for herself; had taken such long strides toward her eternity of joy.

Well, the reports were over, and there was going on which recalled the little roving mind to listen. Somebody was reading; a woman whose face held her with its strength and its purity, though, remember, she herself had not the least idea *why* it held her. The title of the paper was the first thing that arrested her attention: Did not it fit in with her thoughts? "All I Am, and all I Have." Then she listened; there was need for listening, for the thoughts were personal. "My sisters," said the clear, tender voice, "let us tarry among these hallowed scenes, while we each answer the question: How much owest thou? What relation does Calvary hold to what we *once* were? What we *now* are? What we have?" Startling questions to our little friend. Had she ever realized for an hour in her life that Calvary had really anything to do with what she was, and had? "Ye are not your own," said the reader, "for ye are bought with a price; Calvary tells us what that price was." And instinctively Mrs. Harper's eyes sought the cross and the sentence:

“Christ for the world” “And as we try to estimate it, we can only say, with tearful gratitude, ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his.’”

“Yes,” said the listening soul, “I say it; I am his.” Then she set herself to the work of discovering, through the agency of that paper, what the confession involved. She was not left in doubt; it was a clear-cut logical network of inevitable conclusions, needing not the closing sentence: “So whether we have been entrusted with five pounds or one pound, the whole must be used for Him before we can enter into the joy of our Lord,” to enable little Mrs. Harper to see that the phrase “all I am, and all I have,” meant literally *all*.

It will not do for us to follow our little lady through all the changing excitements and experiences of that afternoon. They were too varied, and started too many trains of thought and purpose, to wait to lay them before you. Suffice it to say that by the time the closing hymn was sung, among the resolves of the hour stood out prominently two. First, that she would never be again the sort of woman that the morning had found her; and second, that Harry should go to the mass-meeting that evening. She longed, too, for information.

“Who are all those ladies on the platform?” she asked eagerly of the lady by whom she had been seated.

“Those? Why, they are the officers; the President and Vice-Presidents and Secretaries, you know.”

No, Mrs. Harry did not know; and these non-committal ladies were determined not to afford her information. She tried again.

“Are there any missionaries among them?”

Oh, yes; that lady with the clear, ringing voice, who answered questions and spoke about the flowers, she is a returned missionary from Persia. Oh, you must hear her. She is splendid; she speaks tonight. Will you be out tonight?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Harry, confidently. Then a memory of her old home stirring within her: “Are there any here from Boston?”

“Oh, no, I presume not. This is the Board of the Northwest, you know.”

And Mrs. Harry nodded, not her assent, but her satisfaction that at last she knew thus much: it was the Board of the Northwest. Behold her two hours later, in all the beauty of eagerness, a very wide-awake woman, attempting to detail to Harry certain of the day's experiences.

“Oh, Harry, you must excuse the street dress, for once, because you see I want to go out right after dinner. I want you to take me to the mass-meeting; it is at the First Congregational Church. Oh, Harry, such a day! I have so much to tell you. Will you take me tonight?”

“To a mass-meeting? What is it for?”

“Well, I don't know all the details, but there is to be an address by a returned missionary, and, oh, ever so many good things.”

“Returned missionaries are most always rather dull parties, my little woman.”

“Well, this one isn't dull; she's just as bright—oh, Harry, you can't think how bright and *so* interesting.”

“*She!* You don't say a woman is going to speak;” and the young husband held up his hands in real, or pretended horror. “My dear child, is it possible you have been to a Woman's Rights Convention today?”

“No,” began Mrs. Harry, indignantly. “I,” then she hesitated; “the fact is, Harry, I don't quite know where I have been. I asked the ladies, but they took it for granted that I knew so much that they didn't give me a bit of information, hardly. It is the Board of the Northwest, whatever that means. I only know it is a company of Christian women. They are just as earnest as they can be, and just as delightful; so cordial, Harry; and I feel as if I knew some of them real well; and I haven't been lonely a minute today, the first day since I have stayed all alone in this city.

“Poor little, lonely mousie,” interpolated her husband, drawing her to him, as she went on, eagerly: “and, Harry, they are not thinking about *rights* at all; I guess they have a right that they want most, the right to belong to Jesus Christ, and help gather the world for him. That is their motto: *The World for Christ*, and they are praying and giving and planning all about that; and, Harry, I want to belong. I feel in my heart that I *must* be one of them. I know some of the ladies live here, for I recognized some that we have seen in church, and they are ladies who can help me, and I know I have it in me to be one of them.”

“Oh, little woman! Is she going to desert her husband, and go on a platform and wear short dresses, and cut off her hair and travel and make speeches?”

“Now, Harry, don’t be absurd. I am in earnest; they don’t wear any shorter dresses than I do, or any different dresses; they looked as nice as any people could; and they wore their hair arranged just as other ladies do, and they didn’t make you think of themselves at all, but of their *work* and their aims; and I know, Harry, that I *am* one of them. A lady read a paper, the title of which was “All I Am, and all I Have.” It was beautiful and right, too; and I feel sure I can put my name to it. I’m not much of anything, and I haven’t anything, anyway; but you have, Harry, and you give a great deal of it to me, and then it is mine, I suppose.”

There was a sudden, half-startled movement on the part of the husband, then he drew his bride still closer to him and said, with a voice that tried to be playful, but had a background of earnestness in it:

“All you are and all you *have* belong to me, little wifie; you gave yourself to me, utterly. I will have no taking back.”

She shook her head. “No, Harry, no. We belong first, you and I both, to the Lord Jesus Christ; he bought us, you know; and, oh, today when I looked at the cross and thought of it all, I felt in my

soul that I wasn't worth the price, and I felt that I had defrauded him of his right. Harry, I want to belong to him utterly, and I want you to belong. Oh, Harry, let us begin all over again, and be his own.

Then was Mr. Harry Harper strangely moved. The fair little flower that he had plucked to bloom for him had never spoken such words before. He looked at her curiously; there was a new light in her face, a fixedness of purpose that he had never noticed before. He could not quite be sure that he liked it, but he knew that, along with the strong love in his heart for her, there arose a feeling of respect that was peculiar and new. He was not hard to persuade to attend that mass-meeting. Now I would that you could all attend it with him. If you could have listened to the words he heart that night, and joined in the hymns, and bowed your heart in the prayers as he did, you would have better understood how the service penetrated through the accumulated rust of years of half service, or of almost total neglect, and thrilled him.

Little Mrs. Harper was eager, alert, watchful, but happy. She had had, not such a conflict, as an awakening that day; she had felt the strength of the solid rock on which her feet were resting; she had resolved to tread firmly, and to, as she tersely expressed it, "belong." There was no conflict with her; the next point was to get Harry, so she should be sure of ever walking by his side, and she watched the varying play of emotion on his face, and now and again the drooping of his eyes, with keen interest and desire.

## Chapter 4

### Enlisted

The way home was taken almost in silence, and I do not propose to tell you of the hour which they spent together, directly the privacy of their own room was gained; only this, when the young wife said:

“Harry, here is the Bible that papa gave us, you know. You read in it, and then let us kneel down and pray together, and begin all over, just as though this was our first night in our home together. We haven’t done right, Harry. I have had a troubled sort of feeling about it, but now I am sure; and the way is to begin *now*.”

Harry, though his face flushed to his very temples, and his sensitive mouth quivered, did not refuse the Bible, did not refuse to bow with his wife in prayer, and the W.P.B.F.M., in more things than one, built better than they knew that day; for besides building for the future a building for the Master, the magnitude of which no tongue can tell until the story of all time is told before the throne, they were the direct instruments in the building of a family altar that night, which shall decay only when the voices of the two who joined before it are called on to offer the more perfect, acceptable service, when their eyes shall see the King in his beauty.

Swift fingers the next day made the street toilet of Mrs. Harry Harper. It was not that she was less neatly dressed; it was simply that she felt the need for haste; there was business of importance calling her. She was going to the missionary meeting; there was no

time to loiter over toilets. In her delicate gold-bound pocket-book there shone certain goodly sized gold pieces, which she meant to spend that very day, and her eyes were shining with joy as she beheld them, for had not Harry said that morning, as he kissed her good-bye:

“See here, wifie, those ladies will be taking up a collection, or something of the sort, for the cause today. You give these for you and me; and, darling, I know you are right in this matter. We will begin again. I am entirely willing that you should ‘belong,’ as you call it, to that work. Enlist wherever you choose today, and we will help the work together; and when you want money let me know; we will have a fund, dear, for the Board of the Northwest, or whatever Board you belong to.”

Is it strange that her fingers flew fast and her eyes shone? What heard she that day? Ah, me! If she should undertake to tell you, you would not get home in time for rest tonight! It was a white day to her. It teemed with revelations of what the Christian world had done, was doing, wanted to do; nay, more than that, *meant* to do. It had a thank-offering hour, and the gold pieces went up to the platform, sent by one thankful heart; and yet there were offerings presented that day from homes where the fingers who used to treasure the bits of silver had gone up to God, thereby making the silver as precious as diamonds, and yet given for the Master, that Mrs. Harry Harper bowed her head and wept over the meagerness of *her* offering as viewed in God's sight, and resolved, with all the earnestness of her awakened heart, that her well-filled purse should assuredly *belong* hereafter.

There were little touches of the practical; strong hints that gave her an idea what to do, and how to do it. “The Power of the Littles” was the title of one paper, to which she listened eagerly. She felt very little in her own eyes; was there possibly a power in her life that could be used, somewhere, somehow, for His service? Listening to the paper, with glowing cheeks and strongly

throbbing heart, she came to the conclusion, shared by many another, that really there *were* no littles; that it was possible to freight every action full of power for God. There was a young ladies' mission meeting that led this woman, who had so recently emerged from young ladyhood, to look back with a sigh and a regretful questioning: "I wonder why nobody ever tried to interest me in anything of this kind? Seems to me I would have been glad to have been shown the way." There was a communion service to which this fair young novice in the Christian life will always look back on as the day when she had first glimpses of what this memorial service might mean to the soul in Christ. There was an evening reception which Harry attended with her, during which time they made more acquaintances in the Church of Christ than they had done in the years previous.

"So glad to see you here," said one earnest-faced, bright-voiced woman, whom they had noticed frequently in the church into which they had most often floated. "I have noticed you in attendance both days; I am so glad; somehow it surprised me a little; I was not aware that you were specially interested in missions."

"I never was," frankly answered Mrs. Harper, with a conscious little laugh; "nobody ever said anything to me about being interested, and I never thought of it."

Then the woman who had addressed her exchanged glances with another good woman who was listening, and it is possible that their consciences reminded them they had let this fair little butterfly hover about them a good while without seeking to have her interested in anything. They made haste to recover lost ground.

"Oh, well, we shall be sure to say enough to each other on this subject after this. I see you are one of us," with an inclination toward the badge; "what society do you represent?"

Then little Mrs. Harper flushed, but answered, still smiling:

“I am here under false pretenses; I don't belong anywhere. I came to the meeting and a lady mistook me for one of you and pinned on my badge in haste before I could protest, and I became so attached to the mysterious little letters that I could not feel willing to give it up.” And she looked tenderly down at the fair white ribbon, fastened to her chain.

Prompt action was desirable now.

“Oh, that was all right; only you should ‘belong,’ of course. Don't you attend our church, the Fourth? I have seen you there.”

“As often as anywhere,” Mrs. Harper explained. “They had not placed their letters in any church as yet.”

“Well, you will join our society, won't you? Here's our Secretary; Mrs. Palmer, wait a minute; where is your pledge card? Mrs. Harper, will you sign?”

A few rapid words of explanation, a few delicate strokes made with the proffered pencil, and Mrs. Harry Harper was one of them at last, in orthodox fashion.

All this was only a year ago. But the other day, in a sister city, I was one of a party of ladies, a listener to a conversation, extracts of which you may like to hear:

“What an indefatigable worker for missions Mrs. Harry Harper is, isn't she? Did you ever see anyone who went into it, heart and soul, as she does?”

This from one of the group. There was prompt assent.

“She is really wonderful,” explained another. “Her interest never seems to flag, and she is just as ready with her purse as she is with her tongue and hands and feet. I really envy the Fourth Church; their society leads off every time, and they are certainly less strong financially than our church. It is just because Mrs. Harper keeps them stirred up all the time. They don't have a chance to settle into indifference. I wonder how the Fourth Church got hold of her?”

Then another voice: "Well, Mrs. Harper is peculiarly situated; she is boarding, she has no family cares or duties, she is wealthy, and her husband is entirely in sympathy with her. Why shouldn't she give time and money?"

Still another: "That is all true; but then, how many women do you know who have leisure and wealth, and who yet give next to nothing for missions?"

Then the subject branched off.

"What do you think about these annual gatherings? It seems to me they take a good deal of time and strength and money, and don't pay very well. What is the use of them, anyway? The money that they cost might be saved for missions. They seem to me just a selfish sort of gathering for the sake of having a good time. I never attended one yet and I don't believe I ever shall."

She need hardly have added that last; it was so apparent that the well-meaning woman had starved herself of all the spiritual and mental growth connected with such gatherings. She was too sincere to have made it fair to quote to her the historic words: "Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor." Yet despite the charity which endureth all things, and thinketh no evil, the old story of the broken alabaster box floated through my mind; but the practical woman went on:

"Now, I believe in missions as much as anybody; and I believe in sacrificing for them, and I say, stay at home and do it. I don't know many people who seem to me to be thoroughly in earnest about these things; they just play at it. If we had a dozen more women like Mrs. Harper we might almost evangelize the world ourselves in a little while; but where will you find another like her?"

"I'll venture to say she is going to the spring meeting," said one of the ladies, in a positive voice.

“Well, now, I don’t believe she is; I believe she is too thoroughly interested to waste her time or money.”

“Hush!” said one of the group, in warning tone. “Here comes Mrs. Harper; you can have a chance to ask her, if you choose.”

This suggestion met with instant approval, and was carried into effect as soon after the first greetings as possible. How fair the little wife looked in her tasteful dress, with her bright face aglow with feeling.

“Yes, indeed!” she said, eagerly. “I cannot think of anything short of an absolute duty that would hold me away from the meeting. Why, do you know, before that gathering a year ago, I never had thought of the heather or the missionaries twice in my life! I was converted there, or awakened, or something. I go to that meeting as one would go back to a mile-stone which marked a sacred memory. I have almost been likening it to the yearly feast to which the people used to go up when the Master was here; and I feel a little like those who said to each other: ‘What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?’ Only—no, it is different, for I *know* he will be there. Oh, yes, I’m going. How I wish every Christian woman in the world could go.”

*The End*