

PART I.  
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.  
THE BOOK WANTED.

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“PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE PEOPLE.” — ISAIAH LXII. 10.

Some disciples of Christ live, life-long, under condemnation, and know no better. They are always doubting, and think they must always doubt. And very many live a life of ups and downs, and suppose that to be the best God has in store for them while in the body. Occasionally they gain some lookout in the mount, and then, through the swaying branches of the trees of life moved by the breath of heaven, they catch glimpses of the river of the waters of life, gleaming in the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and are filled with gladness. But then again, soon they find themselves in the low grounds of unbelief, wrapped up in fogs of doubt, and chilled, and poisoned, by the mist and malaria of worldly cares and worldly company. To all these, a book which should bring the knowledge, as really reliable and true, that there is actually, a sunny side of the Christian life — such an experimental knowledge of Jesus, as would place the soul, as a vineyard on the southern slope, under the sun and the rain of heaven, to blossom and ripen its luscious fruit in abundance for the glory of the Master — Ah, how such a book would be hailed as glad tidings from God!

Many have heard or read upon this subject, and do really believe there is something better than they have found, but are afraid. They are convinced that there is something in it, but they fear to try to find out what it is. They are earnest Christians too, and would gladly go on out of the wilderness of doubt and perplexity if they dared to venture. They see that there is a land of milk and honey offered by the promises of God, and would press for it, but alas, the spies bring back a bad report of the land, “Hard to gain,” say they. “Cities walled up to heaven. Giants in the land, sons of Anak.” “Hard to keep, even if conquered.” Fear chimes in with this, and so they shrink back. Or they fear heresy and wildfire. So much has been written about “perfection” and “sanctification” in conflict with the Bible and church standards, and so many have made shipwreck, and run wild, that the spectres of grim and ghastly errors rise up to affright them from the very first step. Now a book which should clearly point out what is warranted by the Bible and the standards, and show it in plain and full contrast with what is condemned by them, would be hailed by such persons as an angel messenger from heaven, beckoning them onward and upward to the land of Beulah.

A few, at least, probably more than any one knows or thinks, are convinced, and feeling after something they scarce know what, whatever it is, set before them; but they move fearfully, spectres affright and hinder, but do not wholly stop them. Or if they urge their way regardless of these, their struggles are wearisome and vain. Often and often they put forth the hand to touch the spring of the door, to admit the light, but alas, the hand finds only the cold dead wall and recoils from it with a chill, only to be stretched forth again and again, to be withdrawn in disappointment. With what untold joy, would these struggling, groping ones, receive and devour a book which should show up to them, the Way, the Truth, the Life, and point out also the many false ways they must avoid to gain the true, and walk in it!

Some have already found the way, and are glad journeyers therein. They are on the sunny side; they have gained the heights of Beulah, and delight in everything that relates to it. They would rejoice in anything defining to them distinctly the relations of this blessed Christian life to further Christian progress, and to all Christian duty. And moreover, they would be thankful to God for a Book, which they could safely put into the hands of others, hopeful of good, fearless of evil. One they could heartily commend as unfolding the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel, without feeling under the necessity of cautioning and warning against false theories, wrong terms, or evil tendencies.

The Book wanted, therefore, in this department of sacred literature, is one that will set forth the truth as it is, with the clear ring of the fearless silver trumpet, in no uncertain sound.

Whether this shall prove the Book wanted, God knoweth, time will show, and the reader will judge.