



# The H. Mann will Brooks Collection

## Chapter X

### Impurity. — III. — How shall we Resist?

*Flee youthful lusts. — 2 Timothy ii. 22.*

*Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. — 1 Peter ii. 11.*

Now, how can we give practical effect to the counsel that I have already offered? It is, I realise, a difficult subject to write of, and that for many reasons. Among them is the fact that I am writing to those whose early training and habits have been quite different, and whose natural tastes and dispositions are so various. Some things which I would like to write, I cannot; but, as I have said, I write as unto the wise — that is, to those who will read in the spirit of earnest desire to know and obey the truth. These will, I think, find here, perhaps, more than is actually printed.

'How, then' — for that is the question shall we resist the evil of impurity, and hold in proper check the natural tendency of our lower nature to gratify itself?'

1. 'Abstain,' says the Apostle in the verse which I have placed at the head of this paper, and, therefore, I put that first.

Abstain. Never sanction a single lapse, either in thought or in act, from the path of chastity and of pureness. In this matter the first victory is the great victory; for purity, in the sense in which we are now using the word, is perhaps more than any other moral quality dependent on the will. Take your stand in the strength of God, with 'I will not' for a motto, and He will make you able to defy your tempter. Never consent to consider, even for a moment, what is impure, or to be a party to any word or deed which is not clean in purpose and in act.

If you find that your thoughts are involuntarily — that is, without the consent of your will — taken off to something impure, recall them definitely the moment that you realise where you are.



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Temptation will often be presented to you in this way; but the instant that you perceive the evil thing approaching, cry out, and with your whole heart, I will not.

In the same way, do not consent to any act, or touch, or look, which has in it an impure purpose or consequence. Abstain. That is the Divine note—experience has proved that it is the only safe rule. The beginning of impurity is like the letting in of water: it soon comes in as a flood, and is very hard to get out again. The beginning is the all-important point.

But does not the word 'abstain' suggest other kinds of abstinence? I think so. Of one lust often strengthens the power of another. Some one has said that 'sin is an endless chain.' Thus the man who is tempted to sins of the flesh should eat very moderately. He should abstain from such pleasant and exciting food as will heat the blood - as do, for instance, rich and highly-seasoned dishes. Animal food should be avoided altogether, and when this does not seem possible it should never be taken more than once a day. Food should not be taken late at night, except of the lightest, such as oatmeal in milk and water, or a cup of weak cocoa and toasted bread. And at all tables, in all things, eat moderately, never seeking to be satisfied, but rather to take just much as is needed, and no more, in order to preserve life and strength.

Avoid the appearance of evil. Abstain from looking at, or reading, anything which appeals to the appetites. No matter what it is, except it come in the path of positive duty, turn away from it at all costs. Your mind is the window of your soul. If you look for, and look on, what is not pure, then what is not pure will apply of its own accord to be looked at, and will soon demand an entrance at the door. In nothing does the eye more quickly influence the whole body than in this matter. There is, indeed, a subtle connection between the lust of the eye and the lusts of the flesh.

2. Pray. — Prayer is a guardian of the soul, nay, of the whole man. The life of prayer, the spirit of prayer, the love of prayer, the act of prayer. When travellers by night would rest in safety in the depths of forests that are frequented by beasts of prey, they light fires around the little camp, and the wild animals do not approach. The fire keeps them off. Even so the fire of prayer



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ascending from a cleansed heart is the surest protection against the creatures of darkness that assail both body and soul.

But by prayer I do not mean merely what I call dabs of praying — a minute or two here and there in the way — a system of snacks, with seldom or never a real meal. I do not mean this; but I mean two very different things.

(a) Real waiting on God in everything: your spirit joined to His Spirit; your heart depending on His heart; your will united with His will; your soul crying out in every irritation and disappointment, 'Not my will, but Thine be done', and your whole being looking up in every tempting hour and leaning on Him. 'Striving in prayer; labouring fervently in prayer,' Paul calls it. This fire of desire for God will keep away the birds of prey. One sight of the Cross means defeat to your foe.

(6) I mean also appointed times of intercession. Pinch yourself of a little sleep, if you can get them in no other way. Fix the times for them, and then do not be robbed of your appointment with God on any pretext whatever. Some Officers spend a part of a night with Him once a week, in addition to other times, and they tell me that this helps to a life of victory. God will not be treated like a pillar-box into which you drop your letter as you rush past to catch the train. He must be enquired of with thought and diligence, and this requires time.

3. Work. — Work is a great preserver. Never allow yourself an idle moment, never be without occupation. Idleness is a sort of commercial traveller for the devil. It introduces evil thoughts, and clears the way for samples of sin. The idle, the easy-going, the nothing-particular-to-do-just-now Officer always goes down. Hard work is the friend of the soul, the guardian angel of the conscience, medicine for the body, and a panoply and protection against all sorts of temptation.

Do not be afraid of being tired out. I sometimes hear people say 'I am so tired,' with as much agony and horror as if they had the cholera! To be thoroughly weary in every muscle and sinew and nerve is a grand experience, and a true help to keep the body in its right place.



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Here let me mention exercise and cleanliness. They are both necessary. Do not lie about, and beware of that ridiculous modern notion that you must ride in 'a penny 'bus' wherever possible. Plenty of walking about, and plenty of cold-water bathing will be good for both body and soul. 'Having our bodies washed with pure water,' says the Apostle; and this is a very important duty. Do not forget it, at your peril! I sometimes wish that we had kept up Jesus Christ's special service for washing the disciples' feet! Only, then, I hope that some of the disciples I know would bathe themselves a little oftener before they came to the meeting at which I had to attend to the washing!

Work, I say, work. Beware of soft things. Endure hardness. 'At it, hard at it, always at it.' If you can't sleep at night, get up and set to work, or go out for a walk, and look up to God in the darkness. If you are sad, work; you will find that work is a brother born for affliction. I am sure that it has wiped away more tears than any other comforter save God Himself. If you are not growing in the perception of Divine things, do some more praying or visiting. Go and spend a night in the churchyard, and there think of the forgotten dead, and remember how soon you will join them. Your work will help you to live, and if only that work is well done, it will live long after you have passed away for ever.