

Read when at leisure
A. J. M.

June 14th 1896

SLUMBERSIDE,
QUOGUE, L.I.

My darling Helen:

I have meant to take ad-
vantage of one of these Sundays
that we are separated, to say
to you one or two things that are
better said by letter, because
better weighed and more easily
referred to. You are now in
every way independent of us, ex-
cept so far as persons living in
our house must conform to the

general house rubs, and I want to
make some suggestions to you,
based upon my observation of
your character, and my experience
of my own, for we are both much
alike.

It is my wish and hope to
make you, though in a small way,
independent so far as your personal
expenses are concerned, (if I am
not disappointed in what seem to
me reasonable hopes of a fairly
fixed income), by making you
an allowance. I am deterred as
yet simply from abstractness to

take a step from which I may have to recede; and this upon
expenses may have been heavy. I trust we may soon so settle
as to make me to do this.

This, however, is by the way; I mention it only that you
may understand my wish to have you your own mistress.
But when you are so, your answerability for the ordering of
your life is increased, not diminished. Instead of being
immediately responsible to us, as when a child, your rela-
tions are direct with your own conscience and with God.
I do not say this to burden an over scrupulous conscience

— rather, I hope, to give relief, where I at your age failed to
find it. But you do owe to consider what part you are
to bear in the family, and especially towards your mother.
You need caution on this side, because you will be, I think,
prone to error from the very care and conscientiousness
you bestow on your own work. Like all strong charac-
ters, for I think yours is strong, you are liable to
be over-impressed with the importance of your own
duties or occupations, and to neglect interruptions
in order to attend to other people's duties, or wishes,

It is a little difficult to point out
the mistake in such cases; for,
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unless there be the fixedness of
purpose, the concentration, that
does not willingly yield to distraction,
it is impossible to effect much;
yet unless, along with that fixed-
ness, there goes a readiness to
yield for the sake of others, one
easily degenerates into self-centred-
ness, which will become selfish.

I have heard mamma say
that she wishes to ask you to do
things, because your reply is so
apt to be that you have this, that,

or the other, & do. I should do harm,
and not good, if I said so - as
she does - that in many cases this
is true, and that in all the earnest
to do your work has its good side.
Yet we cannot walk in this life
as though our own work was all;
things are never so simple as that;
and the side-calls, the interruptions,
are just as much God's plan for
us as is the work itself.

You should study this ques-
tion, and seek to find your duty
in the house. But here I must
put in the other caution, I mean

from observation, and from my experience of my own
very similar disposition. Beware of thinking that the
end I am recommending to you, the purity, duty, and
happfulness, is due attained ^{chiefly} by diligent self-discipline.
That is the error that the Bible ever warns us against -
the error old as human nature - the error of the Jew,
who "had a zeal for God, but not according to know-
ledge; for being ignorant of God's righteousness and
going about to establish their own righteousness, they"
failed to attain to righteousness. Why? "Because they
sought it by the works of the law, not by simple faith"; that is
by scrupulously looking to merit it. The blessed paradox runs
all through the Bible; and until it is understood, the
preaching of the Cross is foolishness, as paradox ever
seems. You must labor and strive, yet ever realize
that your labor and struggle ^{of themselves,} feed only in themselves.
I suppose, by the most diligent pains, you could
make every outward act perfect, what have you
gained, unless the inward man of the heart is re-
newed also? a bare outward semblance, the

whited sepulchre, full of dead

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men's bones. The hypocrite de-
nounced by our Lord was not,
essentially, one who pretended to
be what he was not; but one
who thought that the outward
act was the essential, rather
than the inward spirit. Many
an honest Christian falls un-
consciously into the same error;
but such a result is a sim-
blance of life, a corpse beau-
tiful and jewelled, but lifeless.

and here you begin to see the di-
vine philosophy of Christianity
which preaches "the new creature"
The end I would have you
aim at, the unselfishness, is
not to be attained by striving,
but by the work of the Holy
Ghost. The new creature; that
you are already, by your bap-
tism, and your union therein
with Christ; but the new
creature, like all creatures,
begins weak and must grow;
and is it marvellous that he
whose life is everlasting, should
grow but slowly, but little

in the fleeting years of this human life? that in
this brief span of an endless existence it should
advance little beyond infancy? In this thought,
if you embrace the purpose I commended to you, of
going more out of yourself in the line of others,
you will find comfort. When you fail, as you
often will, you will recognize that failure is the
expected, and will not be discouraged; but you
will in the end realize, unless my own experience
is utterly misleading, that the Holy Ghost is working,
that you are getting better - you know not how.
And, in that condition, the beauty and grace is
that the outward improvement is not a mere
external condition, your own pompful accomplish-
ment, Works; but the simple, inevitable fruit
of an inward change, ^{a new life} which you could no more
effect yourself ~~and~~ than you could bid a

St Luke IV 20-26

mountain removed from its

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sent and he cast into the sea.

Somewhat I am not afraid
to say these things even to so
young a Christian as yourself.
You have the intellectual grasp
to understand that although your
works can do nothing, they are
the necessary outcome of a will
pleased to God; and unless your
will is given Him, the Holy
Ghost can do nothing. I do
not therefore fear that you

well reach the absurd conclusion
of those who, because works
cannot save, lapse into neglect.
And I feel that to our open
conscientious - often morbid -
scrupulousness, there will be
an immense gain when, after
a fall, you recognize that
such things are to be expected of
you, and that, for perseve-
rance, there is no need for
discouragement, as the Holy
Spirit will not stop working
Turn therefore your mind

to the fact that in the house where once you were
a child - under obedience - you are now a grown
woman, independent; but that, at the same time,
it is your home, the scene of your primary du-
ties, until God gives you another. Seek to see what
you should do, and when you fall short; but
alike in seeking and in doing, alike in perplexity
and in failure, but away anxiety. Let us as well as
growth are from God only - the work of the Holy

Ghost. Therefore they are sure to come, however long the
waiting - don't trouble - have faith. The process by its
very slowness will make clear to you the reality
of the Power that worketh in you. Words fail to
express the thoughts - that unutterable reality - that
comes to one who has learned - however imperfectly -
to realize his own powerlessness and the truth of
the inward working. Like some great tree, dis-
tinct & certain of existence, the growth from

year to year may be unpercepti-

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ble, the fruit scanty almost
worthlessness, yet the fact of
growth is to the Christian
attested by the Consciousness
within. I cannot place you at
twenty-three when I am at
fifty-five, nor can any man's
experience be transferred as
experience. Each must
gain his own. But I can
call back to you, from the
further stage to which I have

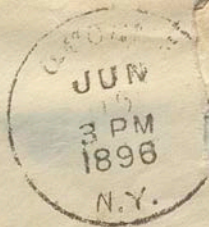
reached, that those things
are true which our fathers
told us - that amid all hu-
man failings and impotence
there is a Power which works
within us, and that the solu-
tion of all difficulties is to
be found - not indeed in re-
laxing our efforts, but in
recognizing our powerlessness,
and in looking ever to Him
for light and growth. Once
loved that, and doubt and

discouragement are at an end. This is what St
Paul and St John meant in their exaltation of Faith;
and when St James seems to oppose Faith to Works,
I have never been able to stumble; for it is to me clear as
the sun that he saw in Works, not the having but
the sign of the inward work - the inward life. Life must
result in fruit - in works; but neither fruit nor
works are life

I cannot and ought not to write to you often
in this way; but I will commend to you the book which
more than any other has affected my spiritual life - Goulburn's
Thoughts on Personal Religion. Years have passed since
I opened it, and many others have helped me; but as
far as I can tell, it has unshaken away the foundations
of my best thought. Of course, if it don't meet your
case, I would not have you persist. God will provide

Your loving father

A. J. Waban



Miss Helen Evans Mahan
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