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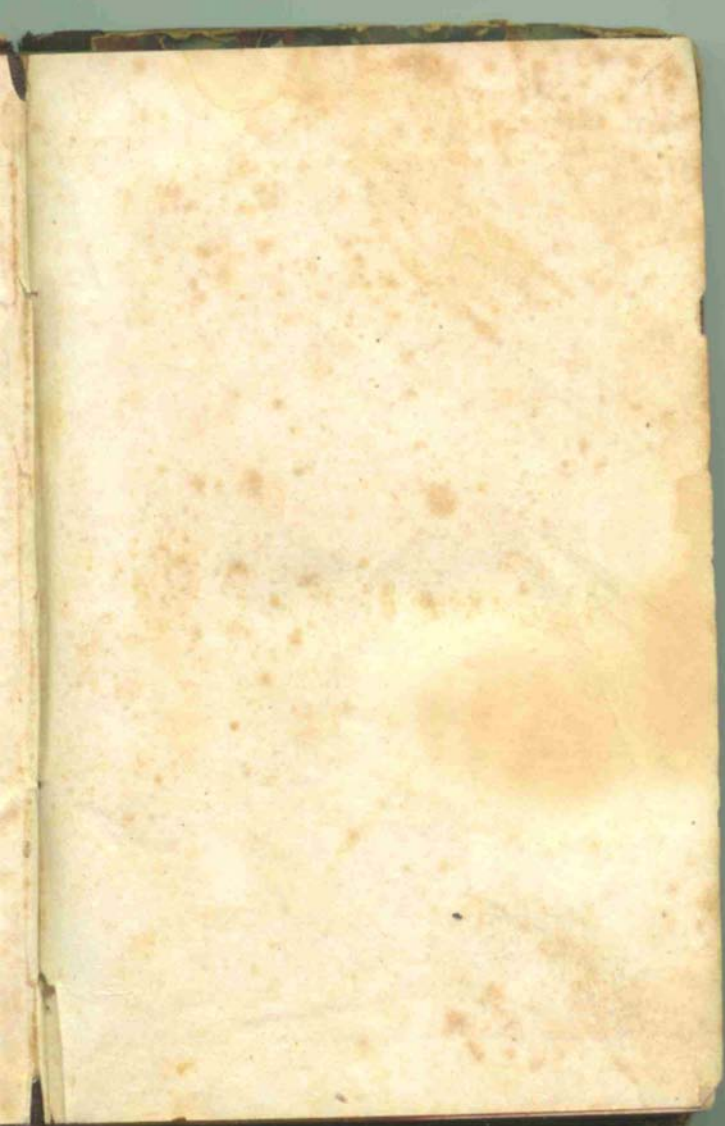
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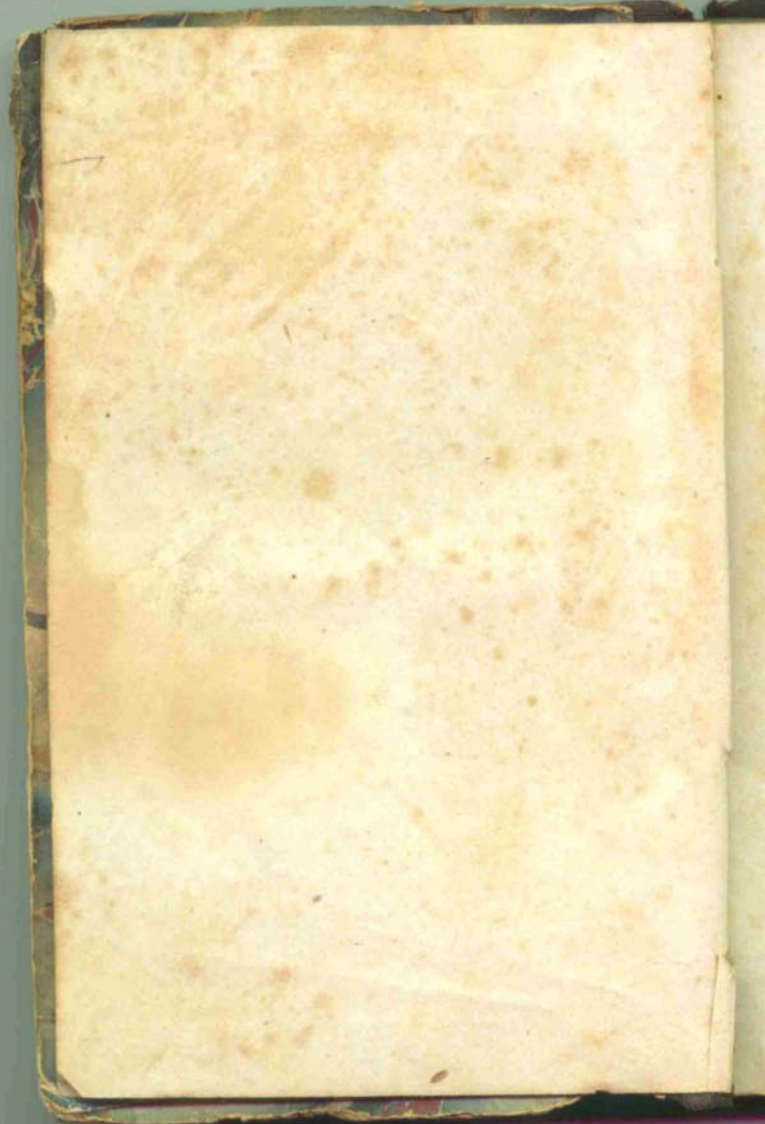
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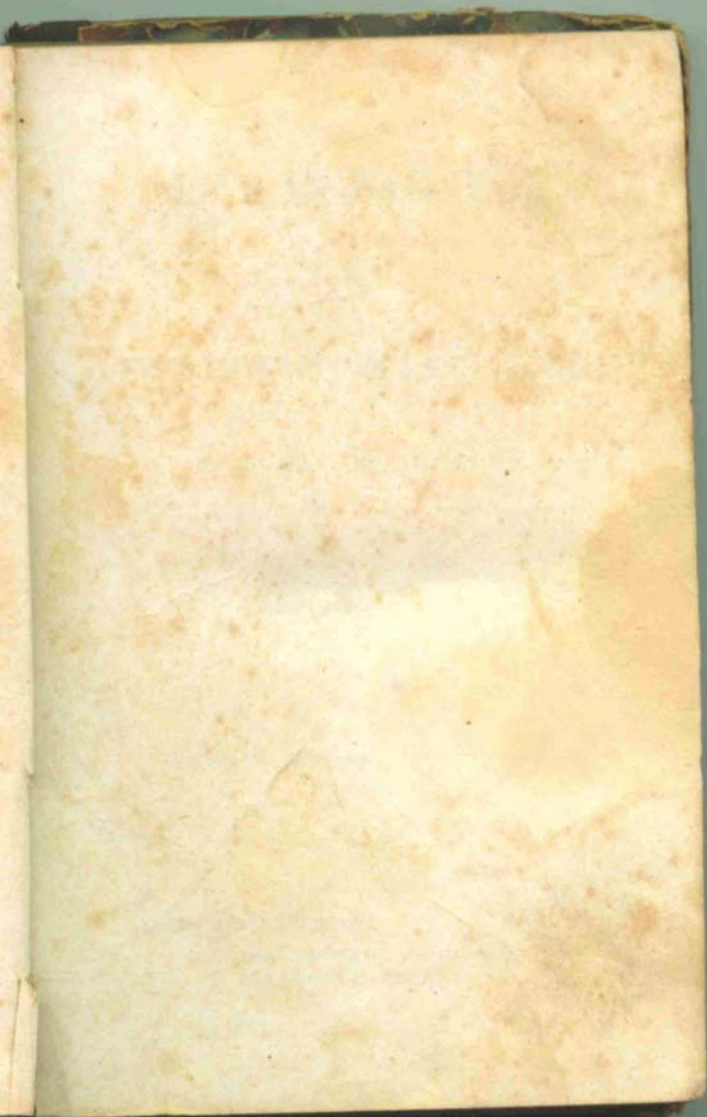
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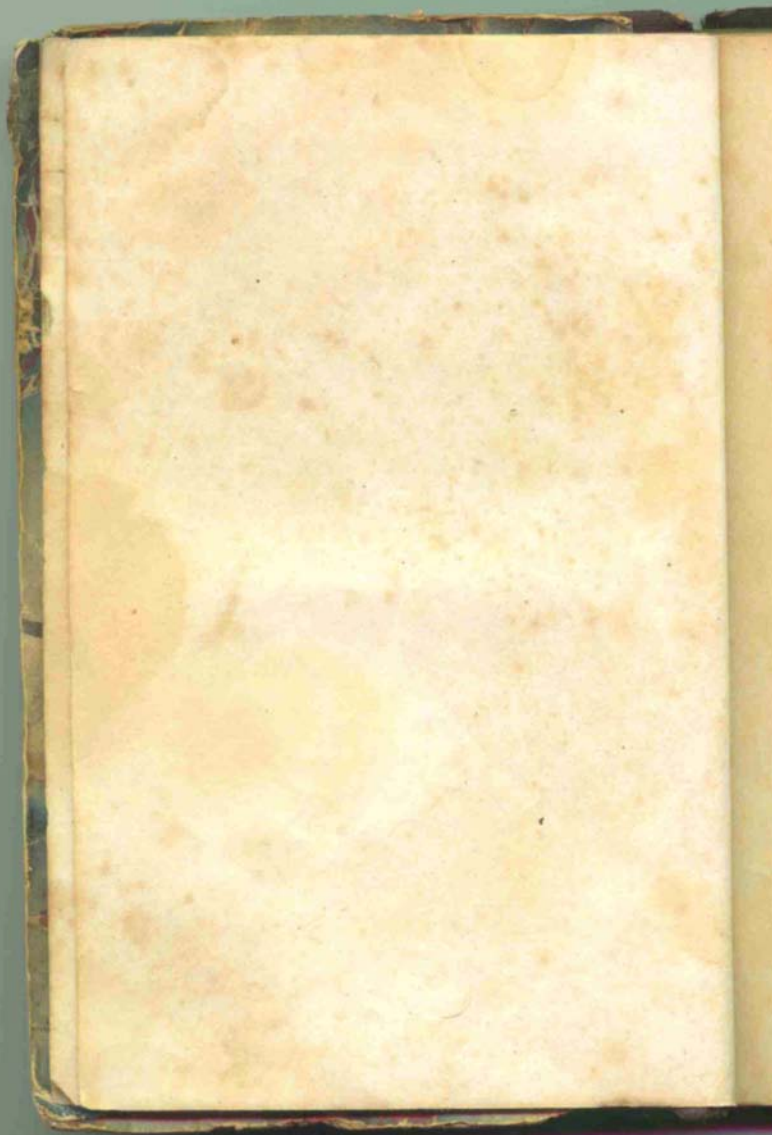
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LIFE IN EARNEST;

OR,

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY AND ARDOUR

ILLUSTRATED AND COMMENDED.

NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS;
FERVENT IN SPIRIT;
SERVING THE LORD.

Rom. xii. 11.

REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION:

1122 CHESTNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA.
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LIFE IN EARNEST
OR
CHRISTIAN HOPE AND LABOR

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1845, by
the *American Sunday-school Union*, in the clerk's office of the
District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

NOTE.

To "live in earnest" is to live with habitual reference to the great end of life. It is to make the life that now is, with all its relations and obligations, not only entirely subordinate to the life that is to come, but directly and in the highest degree conducive to the glory and happiness of the soul in that coming life. It is to seek with intense, agonizing effort the glory of God, and the bliss of dwelling in his presence eternally.

The motives to Christian activity and ardour are presented and enforced in a very original and impressive manner, in a volume lately published in London, entitled "Life in Earnest: Six Lectures on Christian Activity and Ardour, by the Rev. James Hamilton, National Scotch Church, Regent Square," (London.) They were delivered, as part of a course of lectures on the epistle to the Romans, in the autumn of 1844. In the preface to the English edition, dated

Jan. 7, 1845, the author says:—"As all my efforts cannot secure that amount of pastoral intercourse for which I long, I felt desirous of sending to your several homes a word in season, at the opening of this year; and as an appropriate remembrance at such a time, I have selected the following familiar lectures. You now receive them in nearly the same homely guise in which you first made their acquaintance a few Sabbaths ago."

The *American Sunday-school Union* issue this first *American edition, (in which the substance of the original work is embraced,) in the hope that not only *Sunday-school teachers*, (in whose success the society is specially interested,) but ministers of the gospel and private Christians also, will be excited by it to more diligence in business, more fervency of spirit, and more cheerful and zealous service in the cause of our divine Master.

* At the time of putting this edition in type, the committee had no intimation that any other American edition was published or contemplated.

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LIFE IN EARNEST.

CHAPTER I.

INDUSTRY.

“Not slothful in business.”

Two things are very certain,—that we have all got a work to do, and are all, more or less, indisposed to do it. In other words, every man has a calling, and most men have a greater or less amount of indolence, which disinclines them for the work of that calling. Many men would have liked the gospel all the better, if it had entirely repealed the sentence, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread;” had it proclaimed a final emancipation from industry and turned our world into a merry play-ground or luxurious dormitory. But this is not what the gospel does. It does not abolish labour, it gives it a new and a nobler aspect. The gospel abolishes labour much in the same way

as it abolishes death ; it leaves the thing, but changes its nature. The gospel sweetens the believer's work : it gives him new motives for performing it. The gospel dignifies toil : it transforms it from the drudgery of the work-house or the penitentiary, to the affectionate offices and joyful services of the fire-side and the family circle. It asks us to do for the sake of Christ many things which we were once compelled to bear as a portion of the curse, and which worldly men perform for selfish and secondary reasons. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God ; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." The gospel has not superseded diligence. "Study to be quiet

and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you. If any man will not work, neither let him eat." It is mentioned as almost the climax of sin, "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not:" as, on the other hand, the healthy and right-conditioned state of a soul is, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

I. This precept is violated by those who have no business at all. By the bounty of God's providence, some are in such a situation, that they do not need to toil for a subsistence; they go to bed when they please, and get up when they can sleep no longer, and they do with themselves whatever they like; and though we dare not say that their's is the happiest life, it certainly seems to be the easiest. But it will neither be a lawful life nor a happy one, unless it have some work in hand, some end in view. Those of you who are familiar with the shore, may have seen, attached to the inundated reef, a creature,

(whether a plant or animal you could scarcely tell,) rooted to the rock as a plant might be, and twirling its long tentacula as an animal would do. This plant-animal's life is somewhat monotonous, for it has nothing to do but grow and twirl its feelers, float in the tide, or fold itself up on its foot-stalk when that tide has receded, for months and years together. Now, would it not be very dismal to be transformed into a zoophyte? Would it not be an awful punishment, with your human soul still in you, to be anchored to a rock, able to do nothing but spin about your arms or fold them up again, and knowing no variety, except when the receding ocean left you in the daylight, or the returning waters plunged you into the green depths again, or the sweeping tide brought you the prize of a young periwinkle or an invisible star-fish? But what better is the life you are spontaneously leading? What greater variety marks your existence, than chequers the life of the sea-anemone? Does not one day float over you after another, just as the tide floats over it, and find you much the same, and leave you vegetating still? Are you more useful?

What real service to others did you render yesterday? What tangible amount of occupation did you overtake in the 168 hours of which last week consisted? And what higher end in living have you than that polypus? You go through certain mechanical routines of rising, and dressing, and visiting; and dining, and going to sleep again; and are a little roused from your usual lethargy by the arrival of a friend, or the effort needed to write some note of ceremony. But as it curtseys in the waves, and vibrates its exploring arms, and gorges some dainty medusa, the sea-anemone goes through nearly the same round of pursuits and enjoyments with your intelligent and immortal self. Is this a life for a rational and responsible creature to lead?

II. But this precept is also violated by those who are diligent in trifles,—whose activity is a busy idleness. You may be very earnest in a pursuit which is utterly beneath your prerogative as an intelligent creature, and your high destination as an immortal being. Pursuits which are perfectly proper in creatures destitute of reason