



Opening Prayer

MARY STEWART PRAYER

Keep us, O God, from all pettiness
Let us be large in thought, in word and in deed.
Let us be done with faultfinding and leave off self-seeking.

May we put away all pretense and meet each other face to face,
without self-pity and without prejudice.
May we never be hasty in judgment, and always be generous.

Let us always take time for all things,
and make us grow calm, serene and gentle.
Teach us to put into action our better impulses,
to be straightforward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize that it is the little things of life that create differences,
that in the big things of life, we are one.
And, O Lord God, let us not forget to be kind.

Closing Prayer

MEMORARE

Remember, O most Gracious Virgin Mary that
never was it known that anyone who fled to your
protection, implored your help, or sought your
intercession was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence, I fly to you
Virgin of Virgins, my Mother. To you I come,
before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not
my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and
answer me.

Amen.

MARY STEWART'S COLLECT

The Collect was written as a personal prayer for the day, and without any organization in mind. It was written at Longmont, Colorado, in 1904, where, just out of college, I was entering on my first job as principal of the local High School.

The prayer was offered for publication under the title "A Collect for Club Women," because at that time I felt that women working together with wide interest for large ends was a new thing under the sun, and that perhaps they had a need for special petition and meditation of their own. This must have been true, for the Collect has found its way about the world wherever English-speaking women work together. In England and in its dominions and colonies of Great Britain, the associated Country Women of the World have made it their own and distribute it throughout the Empire.

The first printing of the Collect was in an obscure paragraph in a column called "Club Notes" in the DELINEATOR, a woman's magazine no longer published, but at that time nationally popular. Later, copies were struck off by a local printer for the members of the Longmont Fortnightly Club of Colorado, a federated club. About 1909 Paul Elder and Company, San Francisco, printed it as a wall card. In 1924 wall cards were put out by the Armstrong Stationary Company of Cincinnati. All the earlier copies were signed by Mary Stuart, a spelling used until 1910 as a pen name. Since then the spelling Stewart has been used for both pen name and signature, and the Collect has been so signed.

The first women's organization to hear or use the Collect or to print it in its year books and biennial reports was the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Since then it has been reprinted in many forms in many lands.

From time to time amazing, not to say incredible, errors have occurred in credit for authorship, the most egregious of which is probably that which attributes its composition to Mary Stuart, the unfortunate and devout Queen of Scots, who, it has been alleged, wrote the prayer "while in prison sometime between the years 1568 and 1586. Since the Queen and the Collect are both well dated by internal as well as external evidence, it is hoped this forthright statement of its history may effectively put an end to the rumor.

A common confusion in the meaning of the title need clearing. Frequently one hears it called a "creed." Every line of it is a petition, a prayer that is a Collect. Nowhere does it assert a declaration of faith, as "I believe," which is a creed.

In the wide and independent reprinting of the original text throughout the years, errors of words, phrases and order have occurred and continue to be reprinted. This I think is not strange, stranger perhaps, that its basic rhythm and meaning have suffered so little. Most of the more frequent errors change the meaning slightly or not at all, some affect only the rhythm. Even so the prayer shows we have one common purpose, to fix our vision on one high goal, and yet move toward it from many different directions, richer for their diversity and ennobled for the tolerance and understanding they demand. In these days of world-wide war our prayers must seek a spiritual oneness big enough to comprehend the talents and energies of divergent states and peoples as well as of our friends and neighbors; obduracy close at hand seems, alas, so much more apparent. Indeed we have need to grow calm, serene, and gentle, if in these days our judgments would be generous.

Many of our exclusive women's goals are already won, such as the vote, freedom of the college and the professional schools, and certain long-sought opportunities in business and professions. While one of the ways we still work most effectively together in a women's group, we work for ends that concern men and women alike and our greatest need, as it is our greatest strength, to think and act as one.

Mary Stewart was born in Ohio, but at an early age moved to Georgetown, Colorado where she lived until she entered the University of Colorado at Boulder. She was graduated from this University with a B.A. degree and in 1927 received the honorary degree of Master of Literature.

Her first position was that of principal of the High School in Longmont, Colorado. It was at this time she became associated with the General Federation of Women's Clubs. For eight years she served as Dean of Women at the University of Montana, where she also taught Latin and English.

In 1919 she helped to organize the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs and served with its national board in many capacities. For years she represented this organization on the Women's Joint Congressional committee, and enthusiastically supported the woman suffrage movement.

After 1921 Miss Stewart's work was with the United States Government. She became the Assistant Director General of the United State Employment Service, Department of Labor, and from 1928 until January, 1942, served as Assistant Director of Education in the Office of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior.

Mary Stewart died in Cincinnati, Ohio on April 1, 1943.