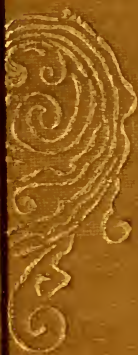


BRIGHT THREADS



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Johnston



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BRIGHT THREADS

BY
JULIA H. JOHNSTON
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TO

The Dear Home Circle

ONCE GATHERED AND STILL CENTRED
IN THE CENTRAL CITY OF THE
PRAIRIE STATE.

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J. H. J.

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*The fabric of life is a homespun web,
Each weaver fashions his own;
The warp and the woof are of God's own giving,
But the "filling in" of the daily living
Is the weaver's choice alone.
Then choose bright threads for the homespun web,
As the shuttle is daily thrown.*

Pleasant Thoughts.

“MAKE yourselves nests of pleasant thoughts” is a piece of advice worth taking.

Harrowing reflections, teasing suggestions from “The Angel of the Afterthought,” and perplexing forecasts, are numerous enough, more’s the pity; but they need not be wrought into resting-places when one has a choice of building-material. Take happy recollections and bright anticipations instead, and weave in all the present joy that a thankful heart can extract from its surroundings.

Build the nests high too, in secure yet breezy places; for everything that makes life and shelters it should be lifted, not lowered. Watch a bird at its building, and see how it frames its nest.

Out of all manner of places, with discerning eye and dexterous beak, it takes the threads and fibres that it weaves together presently, in cunning and curious fashion.

So the heart must be discriminating, and must be content with shreds and odds and ends, with small attentions and good intentions, and bits of happiness and hope. But put together all the reasons for good cheer and grateful feeling, and the pleasant thoughts will make a nest to dwell in. Reject all troublous things in the building, and let fears and frets be as wayfarers only, not venturing in to lodge or to loiter.

Keep the memory of past pleasures to warm the present, but "let us not burden our remembrance with a heaviness that's gone." What if it did take Shakespeare to say that? A generation of people not as clever, may do better than say it—they may live it. No matter, either, if the memory of past

gladness brings the present into sombre contrast : —

“What can I pray? Give me forgetfulness?

No, I would still possess

Passed away smiles, though present fronts be stern.”

Let all the people say “Amen” to Jean Ingelow’s decision, and use the pleasant memories for a dwelling-place to-day.

But the past is not the only storehouse. There is the future. Why not draw upon it in hope rather than in fear? Forecastings are sadly apt to be dread forebodings only, but as one says, “Why not ‘perhaps’ good as well as ‘perhaps’ evil?”

What an uplift of spirit comes from buoyant anticipation. While surprises are sweet, looked-for pleasures are thrice enjoyed. If they fail, then at least a third of the happiness, the forward look, is secure; and it is better to indulge to an innocent degree, even in castle-

building with airy foundations, than to allow the thoughts to go burrowing into some possible Doubting Castle of the future.

Let us take on trust happily, what is sure to come helpfully when it does come,—

“If thou foredate the date of woe,
Then thou alone must bear the blow.”

What if we are coming daily nearer to Marah's brink? “The Lord will sweeten the waters before we stoop to drink.” And as certainly as the desert has its bitter springs, so surely do Elim's palms and fountains lie beyond. Look forward to the encampment there, when Marah shall be past.

To be sure it takes a resolute spirit, and “grace upon grace,” to contemplate always the pleasing things which bring pleasant thoughts, and to turn away from what is depressing, and from which nothing is gained; but why not be res-

olute, and take the grace? That is not necessarily impossible which is hard.

The temptation to linger over annoyances and disagreeables is a device of the Evil One to make us miserable. In life's greater sorrows and supreme crises, God hides us away from trivialities, but every-day living is beset with trifles that hinder pleasant thoughts.

Nothing is to be gained, however, from dwelling upon people's foibles and follies, upon little slights and stings, upon the "total depravity of inanimate things," often harrowing, it is true. It avails little, as a means of grace, to meditate upon mistakes and weaknesses, most humiliating to remember, and hard to forgive, because pride and self-respect have been wounded by them. To take them at once to our compassionate God, asking him to correct them and us, and then to put away the mortified feelings that follow failures, will do more to foster true humility, which is far different

from humiliation, than any furious beating of ourselves can ever do.

Unpleasant things have their mission, but, that accomplished, let them be dismissed. There is not only fine philosophy in this, but we have a distinct Scripture word for it: "Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, think on these things;" which must exclude thoughts about unlovely things, all "envying and grieving at the good of our neighbor," and all petulant recall of what we have been denied or deprived.

To have pleasant thoughts in plenty, one must lay by in store, and be quick about it. And oh, the fresh occasions each passing daytime brings, when "joy comes to dwell with common things," and we are daily loaded with benefits!

Think of the bounty and beauty of all out-doors, and the gladness of seeing and sharing it. Think of the comfort of home life, its confidence, its small courtesies and loving-kindness; the gener-

ous appreciation of friends, and the sympathy that foredates our call. Remember the providential interventions in small things, preventing annoyance as well as disaster, and ordering minute details that make the perfection of our good times, in unexpected or planned-for outings and recreations. Note the opportunities always opening, the sheaves safe in the garner and the seed still in the hand for sowing, and give thanks for all.

Think of the unsought and undeserved privileges, associations, and companionships, new acquaintances, goodly fellowships, widening circles of influence and effort; the letters and the messages, and the "glimpses through life's windows," which belong to every life. For surely there is no life without its windows. If there be but one, it is a skylight, and opens to the sun.

Meditating on such things as these will fill up the measure of pleasant

thoughts, and furnish the heart with material to build a habitation, while the unhindered hands are busy with homely duties or sacred ministry. If every member of the family circle were of this mind, and did after this manner, would not life be happy and harmonious? Could any but songs of thanksgiving rise from "nests of pleasant thoughts"? As character and conduct depend upon habitual thinking, and as "the duty of being pleasant" rests upon all, let us build these nests of pleasant thoughts and abide therein. "Home-keeping hearts are best," sheltered in such a nest.



Good Wishes.

AMONG the buds and blooms of spring,
The happy birds exultant sing,
As if rich fortunes from their throats
They scattered with their lavish notes.

But who expects a bird to bring
Substantial good on fluttering wing?
Among the blossoms, with their song,
They cheer the heart the summer long.

Good wishes, love-thoughts, greeting-
words,

I think are something like the birds :
They bring no real, substantial good,
Yet who would spare them if he could?
The wingèd thoughts that seek the sky,
These are the sweetest ones that fly.
May these, with sympathetic song,
Make glad the heart the season long.



The Angels' Song.

OF old the starry Syrian skies,
Above the shepherds bending,
Were opened to their wondering gaze,
While angel voices blending,
Proclaimed good tidings of great joy,
All other songs transcending.

None other than angelic tongues
 Could utter forth the story,
For mortals knew not of the birth
 Of Christ the Lord of glory,
Descending as a babe to save
 A world in sin grown hoary.

The echo of the angel-song
 Through all the world is sounding,
Repeated now by human lips
 In gladness more abounding,
The tidings run — “Good will toward
 men,”
The darkened earth surrounding.



A Christmas Wish.

May all the bells ring joy and peace,
And every earthly clamor cease,
 For you on Christmas Day.
May every fret and care draw back,
That nothing joyous you may lack
 From dawn till evening gray.

Fringes on the Garments.

FRINGES are not necessarily fripperies. The innate love of decoration and dainty finish to which the feminine mind confesses, need not degenerate into tawdry embellishment nor extravagant outlay. It is not proof positive that a woman is devoted to the pomps and vanities because she makes herself comely for loving eyes, with a finishing touch of ribbon or jet upon her apparel, or mayhap a garden flower, after weightier matters have been first considered. One little glint of becoming color, or a bit of graceful drapery, may make more impression than the whole excellent quality of the sober and serviceable gown. It is a matter worthy of note, that the Lord took thought for raiment in the earlier days, and prescribed the pattern. He not only gave commandment concerning the high priest's garments of blue and purple and scarlet and fine-twined linen, embroi-

dered with gold in cunning work, and draped with the curious girdle of the ephod, but he ordered the people's common dress. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue." Think of a bit of sky-color on the trailing hem of a work-day robe. And to what purpose? "That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them."

With us, alas, beauty of apparel is apt to be a distraction; but with the reverent Jew, the fairest ornament he wore was a reminder of his allegiance and love. No disfiguring cowl nor hempen girdle rude were signs of bondage to any rites, but a fringe and a ribbon of blue signalled to passers-by, his race and his religion. From the hem of the high priest's garment hung golden bells and pomegranates, when he ministered within the

veil where none might follow, but the fringes were for the common people and for every day. How our God must love the loveliness he lavishes so freely! The rudest hillside edges droop with fringe of grasses and flower-bells; the river sets a ribbon of blue along the hem of the bordering fields; the barest mountain fringes out at the base with blossom-starred valleys; and the hidden spring holds up its goblet of unfailling cheer with a fringe of ferns about the rocky brim.

Should the soul wrap itself austerely, and be content with utility and integrity? It may do so, and be saved. It may do so, and be useful and highly respected, even influential and esteemed. But will it be "lovely and of good report"? The gentle courtesies, small and sweet, the refinements of considerateness, the delicate amenities of life, like fair embroidery work, should "adorn the doctrine" which rugged conscientiousness, unswerving will, and diligent endeavor should strenuously assert.

The King's daughter must first be all glorious within, but afterward "she shall be brought to the King in raiment of needlework." He may accept the work of her hands, although she come unadorned; but let her come as she is called, in clothing of wrought gold, "so shall the King greatly desire her beauty." Therefore, "let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," as well as his strength and fear.

If one should go about to separate the filaments of fringe that should be upon the garments, there will be found among the shining threads habitual cheerfulness at home. One may be strictly conscientious and sturdily just, and yet carry sometimes such a "February face, so full of frost and storm and cloudiness," that mental thermometers thereabouts feel the instant chill. No one would think of making merry with the owner of such a face, nor of venting any of the happy nonsense that is oftenest the

finest sense in the household where cares are heavy enough. The persistent habit of making the best of circumstances, the practice of noticing pleasant things, recognizing small services, and appreciating even fruitless efforts, will fringe a week-day dress with brightness.

Good-morning, good-night, thank you, if you please, and I am sorry, may be accounted slender threads; but they are golden, and they glisten. Life's home-spun might be durable and vastly serviceable without them, but it will be like the "sad-colored cloth" of pilgrim days. It is essential to be good; but it is Christ-like to be gracious, and most of all in the home. The Jew's garment-fringe was not basted on when he went to temple or tabernacle. It was to be always "upon the four quarters of the vesture wherewith he covered himself," a perpetual memorial.

The ability to receive gracefully, to "take for love's sweet sake," makes a

most desirable fringe, as does the gift of refusing kindly; for "a good asker deserves a good nay-say."

To be easily pleased, ties another bright thread in the fringe. The happy faculty of responding heartily to efforts in one's behalf, and the faculty of enjoying and of finding small pleasures, sets a ribbon of blue around the garment's hem. One might belong to the noble army of martyrs without it, and live greatly; but with it she will live graciously and winsomely. The fringes on the garment make one beloved at home as well as admired abroad.

Then hearken and consider, O daughter of the
 King,
 Be mindful of thy broid'ries, while daily minist'ring.
 Be not withal contented, if lacking spot or stain,
 Thy common week-day garments in others' eyes
 remain;
 Let all the gentle courtesies, each small observance
 sweet,
 Make daily life a blessing, abiding and complete.

Songs Without Listeners.

THE wind is setting the leaves a-quiver,
Whispering secrets tender and sweet ;
The branches feel a delicious shiver,
Bending under the viewless feet ;
The brook runs on with a rush of laughter,
The jubilant bird-notes follow after —
This I hear from a mossy seat.

But far beyond me the light wind passes,
Birds fly on with their happy songs ;
The rippling water laughs at the grasses,
Far away, and the whole day long :
Yet who will listen to fair birds singing,
And all these sounds through the silence
ringing ?
Surely the music suffers wrong.

It does not die for the want of a hearer,
Sweet bird-music, or insect whir,
The rustle of leaves as the wind comes
nearer,
Filling the air with a pleasant stir.

They are not lost, these beautiful voices ;
The Lord himself in their sound rejoices,
 To his good pleasure they minister.

And how do we know but life's empty
 places

 Ring with songs in the self-same way ?
If we could listen behind their faces,
 Silent souls might a sound betray ;
And a wordless burden of praise and
 pleading,
No human or curious listener needing,
 Rises to heaven the long, long day.



Minikin Miseries.

ONE able-bodied giant may be met and slain with great satisfaction ; but a small army of imps with pin-point spears, deploying, reappearing, scoffing, and teasing, may baffle the finest field-drill, and dishearten the stoutest soldier that ever drew sword.

“We regretted three hours wasted at the coach-office,” writes Maria Edgeworth in one of those “Letters” edited by Augustus Hare, which every one has read or intends to read; “but these are among the minikin miseries of life.”

“Minikin miseries!” Doesn’t everybody know that they are legion? They swarm and crowd and clamor about, they peer and pounce, they leer and leap out, upon all occasions, drawing blood by the drop, and eluding capture and control in the most derisive and exasperating fashion. Giants command a certain respect, and enlist the highest powers against them; but the contemptible minikins are beneath notice. It is humiliating to be bothered, buffeted, and bruised by them; yet we are.

“Three wasted hours!” What an accumulation of grudged and miserable minutes! Miss Edgeworth was wise enough to name the miseries and pass on. There are serene heights which the

wriggling imps cannot storm, but the lower levels of life are beset continually.

Minikin miseries infest the kitchen. A mislaid utensil, a forgotten supply of the simplest thing, a pinch of salt too much or too little, an untimely ring at the front door that delays the bread just ready for the oven, a hurried movement that cuts the finger or burns the hand, the offending odor of burning vegetables or scorching cake, are a few of many. Isn't it astonishing how one may be put out or put about by them? Who that keeps a journal of events, and chronicles battles and victories, would ever think of recording skirmishes with the minikins? Yet the ordinary woman knows well the discomfiture and disquietude that they bring, till she wonders if she can be a Christian at all, when such trifles so move her.

There are other minikins that spring out suddenly, in the home and by the way. One's own inadvertence may chal-

lenge them, but that is small consolation. The teasing physical discomfort, not distinct enough to call for remedy; the repugnance felt toward certain duties; the aversion to effort; the irritation that follows failure to accomplish all one has planned, — these are distressing in proportion to the tendency to “take things hard.” The uncomfortable consciousness of anything amiss, or inappropriate to the occasion, in one’s apparel; the necessity of wearing unbecoming things, or gloves that do not quite fit, when one dotes on trimness and inconspicuousness; the too candid remark upon haggard looks; the mortification of being caught in the disarray of house-cleaning-time, when one knows she never can look regal in sweeping-caps, with unmistakably dust-marked face; the antagonism, entirely natural, to worn carpets and decrepit furniture; the humiliation of being misunderstood when one has said precisely the wrong thing, and the

chance to correct a bad impression or rectify an error is gone; the weariness of listening to vain repetitions of other people's miseries; the irresistible desire to straighten out crooked things that one can't lay hands on; the sensitiveness that makes one wince at discordant notes or colors—ah, what an army of impish, agile minikins beset the path of every day!

Every one knows that they are but for a day, and that small discomforts and rasping, irritating trifles will speedily pass away. Nevertheless, the pin-pricks sting. The hope of ease to-morrow is a plaster for the hurt, not a shield against the thrust of to-day.

There are tranquil souls who dwell on reposeful heights above these trifles. Blessings on them. Really it is a mighty achievement "not to mind" the minikins, or to bear them beautifully as did Maria Edgeworth—at least, she did in the book. It is easy to do it on paper; but she must have taken all things in

sunny humor, according to convincing testimony. Others have done likewise, clad in the invulnerable habit of cheerful acquiescence, or resolute resistance, as the case required.

But there are others as well-meaning, but not as well-balanced, who suffer positive pain from the minikin pin-pricks, and ignominious defeat in many a daily assault. What shall these do, poor souls?

Nothing is gained by ignoring the enemy, whether the forces be giants or imps. Be on guard, and the battle is half won. Then, too, it helps wonderfully to put these minikin miseries in the right place. They are indeed among those opposing forces that try and test the soul, and strengthen it through the tug of war. They do seem mean and small, and one is ashamed and mortified to think of minding them; but, in truth, it is heroic to resist and overcome them. No flags fly, and no trumpets blow, to announce the victory; but every self-conquest is

recorded by One who "knoweth our frame;" and life's small drudgeries, aggravations, and incidentals, its minikin miseries, are recognized as foes that we must face, while for their rout and full defeat "He giveth more grace."



A Winter Parable.

How still it is! Did ever shout
Of summer friends ring blithely out?
The echoes of the long ago
Are muffled in the fallen snow;
The hills, through many a day and night,
Have kept their fleecy garments white;
The gorge between is heaped and piled
With drifts fantastic, wind-beguiled.
The narrow footway, lost or strayed,
Reveals one track, where he assayed —
Our venturous guide — but yesterday
To pass along the untrodden way.
And yet the pathway, as of old,
Leads on, through wonders manifold,

Until the rocky cave we win,
And walls familiar shut us in.

But never in the bloom of May,
Nor ever in midsummer day,
Amid the wealth of living green,
Was sight so fair by mortal seen.
O miracle of ice and frost,
This columned splendor, light-embossed!
All common words of praise are lost!
The drops that in the summer fall,
And lose themselves in channels small,
Have felt the Frost-King's icy spell,
And turned to jewels as they fell.
Ah, plashing drops, to purpose spilt,
What crystal marvels ye have built;
Two pillars, of such measurement
We may not guess their full extent,
With flutings fine, and traceries rare,
And frostings all beyond compare.

But hark to the murmur of water!
That musical murmur we know.

Where is it? Where is it?

There is it? There is it?

Yes ; it is tinkling and rippling and
sprinkling,
Making soft laughter below,
Melodious laughter below.
The spring from above never ceases to
flow ;
A way it will find,
Through the shaft or behind,
Rippling in laughter below ;
And slipping past the crystal bolts,
Right onward doth it go,
Down deep beneath the snow.
Talk not of silence while brooklets are
singing,
All softly, down under the snow.
Grieve not because the sight and tone,
By man unheard, unseen, unknown,
Are beautiful to God alone.

But now another sweet surprise
Lies hidden under snowy guise.
The bank where ferns are wont to grow
Is swept of drifted depths of snow,
And lo ! some green things growing there,

A summer look of beauty wear.
The winter parable is old,
And yet may often be retold :
Some pleasant growths resist the cold,
And often that which seems to chill,
Protects and serves and blesses still.
Yet mark — the roots must lie below.
Go where the ferns are wont to grow,
If you would find them 'neath the snow.

But winter twilight comes apace ;
And evening shadows interlace
The leafless branches, lifted high
Like pleading arms against the sky.
Our zigzag track we soon retrace,
Albeit with uncertain grace.
The entrance to the gorge we reach,
And homeward go too glad for speech :
While silent stars behold again
The marble beauty of the glen,
And through the silence and the snow
The living waters softly flow !

(“ ROCKY GLEN,” IN MIDWINTER.)



"The Bright Battalions."

"HE fought with the bright battalions" is the enthusiastic tribute of a biographer in setting forth the sunny character of a brilliant writer and beloved friend. This, too, is added by way of emphasis, "He rejoiced in Fuller's maxim, 'An ounce of cheerfulness is worth a pound of sadness to serve God with.'"

Every one who fights at all, aims at victory. Surely, then, it is worth while to be arrayed with those most certain to win it. Young soldiers, and all newly enlisted ones, will do well to consider with whom they march.

Do look at the "bright battalions"! Faith belongs to their ranks, and sings the song of triumph in advance. Doubt never led a conquering army in the world. Can any one encourage his fellow by saying, "Fight on, you must win, you shall overcome," in the battle with

sin, with fear or difficulty, while his face, his conduct, and his very air show that he does not believe in the prospect himself, nor expect the victory for himself or others? Can a discouraged heart undertake anything worth doing, or lead another to attempt it? Certainly not. It is confidence that conquers,—confidence in the cause, the final triumph, and, most of all, in the Great Leader of the bright battalions of truth and righteousness.

Hope also belongs to the bright ranks, and there is no room for melancholy in the same company. How can despondency lift up the fallen, or make a gallant charge against the forces of evil? Can gloom brighten anybody? Nay, verily. Whoever goes forth to help those in need, and to right the wrongs of the oppressed, must do it with a hopeful spirit, and with some expectation of doing service, or he will be unfit for the work, and will be sure to fail. Those who look on the dark side, and take the

worst views of life, are not the ones to whom others turn in trouble, as chosen leaders into the light. The charity that "hopeth all things" accomplishes most.

Love also marches with Faith and Hope. This is the all-conquering, all-controlling power. What triumphs Love wins over selfishness, unkindness, and all forms of sin! But Love is not puffed up over victories; it is lowly enough to stoop to the lowest, and take a stand for the humblest. It is the light of heaven that makes Love radiant. It belongs to the bright battalions that conquer "In His Name."

Don't forget the "ounce of cheerfulness to serve God with." A pound might be better, to be sure; but an ounce of it is far more effective than a pound of sadness. "Put a cheerful courage on," whatever the opposing forces and threatening dangers, in life's constant battle. To prophesy evil and forebode defeat, may precipitate the very things

feared, by unfitting for the fight. The blessed contagion of cheerfulness is a good thing to spread.

Is there, indeed, nothing to discourage and dishearten in the world and in the work for others? Oh, yes, on every hand. But in order to overcome the powers of darkness, the good soldier is commanded to "put on the armor of light." Let every would-be conqueror wear it, and, in the unceasing conflict, "fight with the bright battalions."



On The Heights.

THE beautiful bending river,
The billows of changing green,
The light where the sunbeams quiver,
The shadows that lie between,
Are seen from the heights above them,
Where lieth a charmed repose,
And one can but look and love them
From dawn till the daytime's close.

The fields in the sunlight golden,
Respond to the smiling sky ;

The tale is a story olden,
The harvester's joy is nigh.

The gold of the sheaf and stubble
Lies brilliant against the green ;
The stress of the toil and trouble
Is gone from the happy scene.

The heights overlook the beauty ;
Refreshment and rest are here ;
But some one toiled at his duty,
And yonder the fruits appear.

The peace of the heights will rest thee,
With a look beyond and below ;
But the call of the field will test thee,
And ultimate fruit will show.

So hark, for a season's quiet,
To the syllables, soft and sweet,
Where the whispering breezes riot,
And the birds for their chorus meet.

In the hush of the heights unbroken,
Recover thy strength, and then,
When the ringing word is spoken,
Hie down to the fields again.

Unweighed Vessels.

THE service of the house of the Lord at Jerusalem required many vessels of divers sorts. So David prepared with all his might, and Solomon builded and finished and furnished, as became his royal estate.

There were vessels of gold for supreme uses, and "silver basins of a second sort" for commoner service. Besides all these, there were pots and shovels, and all manner of basins of bright brass, which Hiram of Tyre provided; and "Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because they were exceeding many; neither was the weight of the brass found out," — searched out, the margin has it, — for the weight might have been discovered by some process, had it been needful. But no search was made, and the vessels of brass were left unweighed.

Is it not so in the temple-service of to-day? It is the glory of it that its

vessels are "exceeding many;" what matter if some go unweighed and uncounted? The pots and shovels are provided, the basins are ready, and the small drudgeries as well as the dignities of church life are maintained, though few know how, or think to inquire.

Somebody attends to the collecting, the printing, the repairs. Some one looks after refractory water-pipes and depraved furnaces, notifies and instructs the janitor upon special occasions, and sees that all things are done decently and in order. Somebody is on the alert for small opportunities to make worshippers more comfortable, to welcome the stranger, to hand a hymn-book, close a creaking door quietly, prevent interruptions, and relieve awkward situations.

Willing and womanly hands lend themselves to the homeliest incidentals, and furbish up, as well as furnish newly. Carpets are mended and turned and re-sewed with vast contrivance, and pew-

cushions toilsomely made over for many to enjoy in serene comfort, unaware of the back-break that they cost, or the unpraised labor of the hands that renovated and refashioned the worn belongings of the sanctuary. The services are exceeding many, but they are not counted up. If common conveniences were lacking, and decencies and decorations forgotten, what an outcry there would be! Things missed are followed by quick complaint; while those provided, no one dreams how perhaps, are not always as quickly recognized, and received with thanks.

Many a home missionary teacher has had to do with other vessels than even the "silver basins of the second sort" in her work, as the janitor-service rendered, the struggles with smoky stoves and degenerate pipes, and other difficulties abundantly testify. Commonplace, unnoticed things, are not wrought without time and pains. Laborers toiled in the plain of Jordan, "in the clay ground

between Succoth and Zarthan," many a long day before all those unweighed vessels were ready for temple use. It was no child's play to shape and polish them, for they were of "scoured brass."

In the social world, there is ample occasion for the common and uncounted services, which have their place among the more formal and imposing observances, as certainly as the brass pots and shovels had their uses in the temple-plenishing, which also included golden chargers, bowls, and cups.

Some one must have tact enough to keep unpleasant objects and subjects out of sight, attend to "Mrs. Malaprop," look after the odd ones, meet little emergencies with pins or a needle, with a mollifying word or a timely explanation, as the case requires, and fill in corners generally with unobstrusive self-forgetfulness, warding off small catastrophes, or putting a cushion under impending jolts and jars, in order to secure and

conserve the good times that people have together, on social pleasures bent. These small courtesies and kindnesses are never paraded. Who exhibits the kitchen utensils at a party? Yet without them where had been the dainty fare? The people who minister in these minute yet helpful ways, furnish vessels of bright brass that have never been weighed.

But it is in the home life that the unweighed vessels are multiplied and do constant service. Who counts the homely duties of the house-mother, or numbers the details of her work? Who can measure the opportunities of the big sister? Somebody must put things to rights after heedless feet and fingers. Some one must take "the stitch in time," and often the "nine stitches" too, that could not be saved betimes. Somebody must notice and do the hundred odds and ends of home-keeping, — fasten loose threads, tie up cut fingers,

bathe bruises, soothe wounded feelings, spur the indolent, restrain the over-eager, meet emergencies on the moment, and be ready always for one thing more, where there is a houseful to be tended, taught, fed, and fondled, amused, instructed, and loved through everything, unfailingly. These indispensables are not of the nature of golden censers nor silver cups ; yet many a vessel of scoured brass has proved a cup of loving service, carrying refreshment to little ones, served in the name of Him by whom the nameless but not unnoticed ministry shall be at last rewarded.

The incidental accommodation of a neighbor, the time given to little extras that could not be claimed by right, the pleasant word sweetening the service, the bit of encouragement given, and the timely admonition when it was not the hour for preaching-service and there was no congregation assembled, may all be set to the account of the "unweighed ves-

sels." The doers of such small deeds never stop to appraise them; perhaps the receivers do not always appreciate them, but they are "exceeding many." In Ezra's time there were thirty basins of gold, and four hundred and ten "silver basins of a second sort," with other treasures; but perhaps Nēbuchadnezzar thought it not worth while to carry off the pots and shovels of bright brass. Nevertheless, they answered their purpose in their time. A golden charger would have served but poorly in removing ashes from the altar.

But the cups of loving service, of whatever sort, are unforgotten. The divine scales are accurate. He who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing" is not obliged to search out the weight of the brass vessels; and He knows, too, what is in them, many a time, for "His eye seeth every precious thing."

Hiram's servants toiled "in the clay ground of Jordan" for hire; but the

King's children serve everywhere for love, and not to be seen of men. Pots, shovels, and basins are needed, and they are furnished; but the Father who seeth in secret keeps account. There are no unweighed vessels in the heavenly record.

Why are they so precious? Because "holiness to 'the Lord'" is "upon the pots;" and a day is promised when even "the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."



Unthought Happiness.

TRY to breathe in the fragrance of the blossoming grape, or to smell it, as the saying goes, and it is next to impossible to detect the exquisite and delicate perfume. So the faint, elusive odor of the trailing arbutus evades the determined effort to inhale and enjoy it. But perhaps in one moment more the sense is taken unawares, and perceives

the delicious fragrance, while the long-drawn breath of satisfaction testifies involuntarily to the delight.

Thus it is with happiness, many and many a time. It eludes the too-eager and premeditated search: the very pursuit seems to prevent the realization. But sometimes, when going upon sterner errands, with no thought of finding pleasure, but simply of doing duty, suddenly the unsought joy meets us on the way, with breath as sweet as the strange, delicious odor of the unobtrusive bloom upon the vine, or of the shy Mayflower that trails along the sheltered places in the spring.



"The Servants Which Drew the Water
Knew." (JOHN ii. 9.)

THE guests at the marriage supper
Detected the flavor fine,
But "the servants which drew the water,"
Knew the miracle of the wine.

"Whatever He saith to you, do it,"
"He knoweth what He will do;"
And many a beautiful secret
The Lord will reveal to you.

The jars that we fill with water
Shall minister royal wine;
We shall know and dispense the gladness
Of miracles most divine.
And we shall rejoice hereafter,
If we "filled them up to the brim;"
And the wine of heaven will be sweeter
When we "drink it new with Him."



"Hope — Failure."

"HOPE deferred maketh the heart sick." What, then, shall be said of its total failure? An eminent writer of the day says this of it: "More people die from lack of encouragement than anything else. They call it heart-failure, but it is hope-failure." Isn't this pitiful?

The command to "reprove, rebuke,

and exhort" requires small self-denial, mayhap. It comes rather natural to "warn the unruly," and to hand over the practical application of thousands of sermons to other hearers; and there is a great clearing of skirts, in the matter of responsibility, in telling other folks what to do. We know exactly what should or should not be done, and know how to gauge failures accurately, too! But the obligation to "comfort one another," and to "do good and to communicate," is no less binding. To communicate is to share in common, dividing up so that the good will go round; and what is better to pass on than hope and courage? These are not marketable commodities, but must be given away, though not without cost, perhaps, to the giver. The receiver can only take gratefully the offered elixir that quickens life into something worth having.

Even where there is little to commend, it is possible to encourage. Children

must be thus nurtured into hopefulness. Even after failure, praise the effort, saying, "You did well to try, though you did not succeed. Try again, and you will surely do better." A deal of encouraging is often needful, but then there is nothing for it but to "put to more strength." Usually, however, hope is easily nourished. A single word or look of approval, will hearten up the fainting courage for fresh endeavor.

"She does very well under the circumstances," says one of Mrs. Whitney's quaint characters, "but that's the trouble — she's always under a lot of them ; she never gets above the circumstances at all." Some are stimulated by difficulties, but to others they are depressing ; and this lays the duty to help, upon the exuberant, expectant spirit that gives courage by mere contact. But there must be a point of contact, "contagion begins there."

Discouragement is deadly. Its physi-

cal effect is evident, as well as its mental result. So many suffer from it, that to be widely useful, one must "practise the grace and virtue of praise" at home and abroad. A little expression of confidence beforehand will often nerve a timid spirit to successful effort. "I am sure that you will do well" may carry a shy child bravely through some dreaded performance, where a slight show of distrust might lead to a hopeless effort, almost sure to end in failure.

Doubtless there is a quantity of overweening conceit in the world that ought to be put down and kept under; but it is no less true that a multitude of sensitive souls in the homes, and in all circles of friends and acquaintances, positively suffer from self-distrust. Sceptical as to their own ability, hampered by hindering conditions, cast down by repeated failures, they need, in school-boy phrase, to be "encouraged up a lot," in order to go on at all — yes, "encouraged up,"

lured, led, lifted into hopefulness, out of the despondency that cries out "There's no use in trying."

When the buoyancy of hope is lost, encouragement must come from without, or the pulses will grow fainter and fainter, and "hope-failure" may be the piteous end. It will not do to give encouragement only "to him that asketh;" hopelessness is dumb, and the mute appeal of him that needeth, whether he voice the cry or not, should meet with sympathetic response.

No occupation or profession is considered more honorable than that of nursing, and it is woman's especial prerogative to care for the sick and the convalescent. In the world's great hospital of wounded spirits, there is full scope for the exercise of her gifts. Trained nurses are in demand here also; and one may well put herself under the drill of the God of all comfort and the God of hope, for the swift intuitions,

the ready application of remedies, the manifold means and methods of healing, requisite in helping discouraged hearts along life's trodden way. Hope-failure is not absolute till it reaches the last pulse-beat; but long before that, prevention by the ounce should forestall the need of cure by the pound. Blessings on the cheerful souls, "saved by hope," and well-schooled in the practice of encouragement, who can invest and invigorate others with their expectant spirits, and who make a business of giving tonic treatment to fainting hope. It takes an observant eye, a discerning and discriminating spirit, and a "heart at leisure from itself," to discover patients suffering from the sickness of hope deferred or failing, for they are not all gathered and registered in a ward by themselves. Nevertheless, to give one's self up to encouraging all sorts and conditions of disheartened people is a mission worthy of the highest talents, and worth all it

costs. There are uncounted openings for going into "The Cheering-up Business," with hope, faith, and courage as indispensable capital, which, being "loaned out," may save many from desperate failure, and will return vast rates of interest upon the investment.

It is not enough to refrain from giving a hopeless fellow-mortal another push downward; we must lift up and help on. The sin of omission may have fatal results; and "ye did it not" may be the sorrowful reproach, after a lost opportunity.

"There is that withholdeth more than is meet" of commendation, encouragement, and good cheer; but "it tendeth to poverty" by and by. They are poor indeed who have no memories of help given, and gratitude received, laid up in store by them.

What tender pity is lavished upon the ended struggles of one who sinks disheartened, a pathetic victim of hope-failure. To what purpose is this waste?

A wealth of sympathy, late outpoured,
When life is by death exalted,
Availeth nothing to cheer the way
Where the tired pilgrim halted.

“As if life were not sacred too,” writes George Eliot, speaking of the hallowing touch of death, which is too often held sacred alone.

“If I had known,” is a useless after-thought, when, having passed the way we are going but once, we miss the chance to cheer a fellow-traveller. Resolve instead to —

Keep the hope-song ringing,
And to watch along the way
For the little needs up-springing
In the path of every day.



The Bright Reflection.

IN the British Art Exhibit at the Columbian Exposition, there was a remarkable picture of a blacksmith's shop. All the homely details — the smoky walls

and rafters, the lurking shadows, the forms and faces of the men showing in the half-lights — were portrayed with singular fidelity.

But the greatest artistic triumph appeared in the marvellous reflection upon a boy's face, of light from an unseen forge. The ruddy glow, illuminating the sturdy figure and honest features of the rugged fellow, busy with his work, was simply wonderful. No need to picture the red flames of the forge beyond; their existence was distinctly evident. The bright reflection proved their presence and their power.

So it is always. A vivid reflection is invincible proof of light somewhere. Should not the Children of Light give this testimony daily? While hands are busy with common work, the face may shine with radiant reflection of light divine, and the quiet life may be illuminated, if the worker will keep near to the Unseen Source.

Good-Morning.

GOOD-MORNING ! Long the night may
be,
“Until day break and shadows flee ;”
But, measured by the pulse of time,
Alike the day and night hours chime,
Though tired hearts and wearied strength
Accuse them of unequal length.

Good-morning ! As the night is past,
And sunlight glory comes at last,
So, of our darkness and dismay,
We may be able soon to say,
“This too, at last, has passed away.”

Good-morning ! May the day be fair,
With grace and gladness everywhere ;
And all life's errands lead your feet
In pleasant paths of service sweet,
Till evening's curtain, shadow-wrought,
With shining stars is deftly caught,
And heavenly voices, understood,
Proclaim both night and morning
“good.”

The Art of Overlooking.

THE discriminating art of forgetting is invaluable, but the art of overlooking may take precedence even over this distinct aid to happiness. It is well to put aside the annoyances of by-past time, dropping the remembrance of disagreeables; but it is better still to pass them by in the beginning, without taking them up. Prevent the impression, and there will be no occasion to erase it. A mollifying ointment is good for a hurt, but better no hurt in need of healing.

Do not dwell upon unpleasantness long enough for it to take a place in the convolutions of the brain. Do not scrutinize what is obnoxious, unseemly, or disquieting, if nothing is to be gained by it save a disturbing memory. Don't stop and stoop to examine displeasing things along the life-path; keep the eyes at higher levels, and overlook the thorn-hedges at the sides, taking care to keep

the middle of the track so as not to brush against them.

Even excellent people are sometimes rather trying. Some are positive and persistent in opinions which we, in our vast wisdom, know to be wrong of course, though, strangely enough, our convictions fail to be convincing to them. Our way is crossed when there seems to be no need of it; small domestic calamities are legion, carelessness is culpable; and yet, after all, these things in themselves, or in their consequences, are not vital. If no principle is involved, let them pass. Do not mark to-day with futile struggle to mend them, nor to-morrow with their memory. If they cannot be righted, or even resisted, never mind them. This one bit of advice is so hard to follow that it will be good discipline for a sensitive soul to practise the precept. Even disappointments and hindering interruptions the resolute sunshine-seer will not lay to heart, but will look over and be-

yond them to the next bright thing to be seen.

Often the mere recognition of a thing seems to give it force and form ; therefore do not notice the apparent slight, the covert criticism, or the tokens of impatience. Overlook also the little inadvertence, the unintentional mistake, and the small disaster that cannot be retrieved. Taking note of such things brings confusion to others and discomfort to one's self. The too acutely observant spirit is unquiet and overburdened. The constant accuser, who calls one to account for every slip, and demands endless explanations, is a very uncomfortable sort of a friend. Overlook the unmeant offence, and, with no chance to fester in the memory, it will leave no scar behind.

It is amazing how the vexing things of the moment, that seem to grow large while we look, sink into insignificance by and by. Why give them opportunity to disturb the present? Gauge them

sensibly by the measure certain to be applied in the calmer afterthought, and forbear the excited protest, forego the resentful expression. One cannot always be sensible, say you? Very well. One can at least emulate the example of the old lady who was "determined to endeavor to try."

A discriminating observer of "the method" of a mother who had trained a large and very energetic family, a diverse and tumultuous set indeed, said that one secret of the marvellous success was "a judicious amount of letting alone." The mother never brought on a controversy or a clash of wills, when, by prudent overlooking and good management, matters would presently right themselves.

Some people, it is true, have a happy faculty of overlooking; but all may attain a certain facility through "love, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and never faileth."

An art, we know, thanks to our bulky Websters, is knowledge applied to practical purposes. It is aptitude, skill, dexterity, acquired by experience. What hourly opportunities common life affords for such acquirement. The art of overlooking may not belong to arts liberal, polite, or fine; but it is a kindly and useful one for every day. Cultivate it in life's intimate associations, and thus forestall, in measure, the need of the art of forgetting.



Alleyways.

“GOOD-EVENING,” said one lady to another, as they met upon the crossing of a narrow alley that cut through the block.

“Good-evening,” was the reply in a startled tone. “I beg your pardon; I did not see you at first. I was looking at the beautiful view at the end of this

alley, and wondering that I had never noticed it before."

The first friend turned, and caught a glimpse of green bluffs and shapely trees showing fair against the sunset sky.

"It *is* beautiful!" she exclaimed. "Strange that I never saw it before. This is *our* alley."

"We seldom know what is at the end of our alley" was the smiling response. and the two parted and passed on.

True enough. We neither look for lovely views nor expect to find them, through these narrow ways between barns and coal-houses, with nothing to brighten the back-door aspect. They have to do with the drudgeries of life altogether; but they are necessary, and they have an outlet into cleaner spaces, while the blue sky roofs them over.

Let us not consider the most uninviting alleyway hopelessly forlorn, till we see what is beyond it; and let us not

miss the view that may be at the end of our own. That which lieth nearest is not always seen.

Life has many little homely thoroughfares which our front-door callers little wot of, and we ourselves are not obliged to use them constantly. When we use them, let us glance through them; for, though beauty looks in at unexpected places, only the observant eye discovers it.



His Eye Seeth Every Precious Thing.

(JOB xxviii. 10.)

THE treasures of gold and crystal
 Ungathered by human hand,
 The hidden wealth of the rivers,
 The drift of the unknown strand,
 To the eye of the Lord are open,
 He seeth each precious thing;
 The soundless depths, and the darkness,
 Their measureless riches bring.

In distant and desert places,
He cares for His precious things;
He values the unsought jewels,
Befitting the brow of kings.
The secret and guarded treasures,
Too sacred for mortal eye,
Are only seen through the window
That is open toward the sky.

The "precious faith" of His children,
Who sees but the Lord alone?
The "precious seed" they are sowing,
He watches, wherever sown.
The tears and the self-denials,
The patience and hope and love,
With never an outward signal,
He notes and records above.

But what of the things most precious
Withheld from the Lord who gave?
The seed locked up in the garner,
The gold that we fain would save?
Whatever the treasure hidden,
By mortals unseen, unknown,
The "eye of the Lord" is on it,
He marks it, and claims His own.

She Picked It Up.

As Evelyn walked along the street, her quick eye noticed a bit of green upon the dusty crossing, and she stooped and picked it up. It was a broken branch of rose-geranium ; and although the large green leaves were drooping, they held their fragrance still.

Evelyn fastened them in her belt with a long breath of pleasure — the odor was so sweet. Presently she went into the Public Library. As the librarian handed out the required book, she looked up and smiled, —

“So *you* have the geranium leaves,” she said. “I smelled them as soon as you came in.”

On the way home, Evelyn stopped to see a friend.

“Where did you get such fragrant geranium leaves?” asked Grace at once. “I smelled them the minute I came into the room.”

“ I picked up this forlorn-looking branch on a crossing,” was the answer. “ I couldn’t bear to see the leaves lying in the dust ; and I do think they are unusually fragrant, perhaps because they are so bruised. I believe almost every one I have met has noticed the odor.”

“ But while they lay in the dust nobody knew how sweet they were. You picked them up, and afterward other people cried, ‘ How sweet ! ’ ” Grace was given to moralizing.

Truly it is something even to rescue a spray of bruised leaves, and give them a place and a chance to breathe out their sweetness. It was well worth while for a passer-by to stop and to stoop for this.

It is better worth while to wrest from neglected and unsuspected places small, sweet, common joys, opportunities to give and to receive pleasure, which many are too busy, too heedless, or too hurried to notice. Others may share these after they are picked up.

It is best of all to lift a bruised life, fallen upon the highway under the press of earth's sorrows and strivings, or suffered to fall by careless hands that should have upheld it. Sometimes look down, that you may lift up.



The Passion for Finishing.

IDLERS and easy-goers, who dally and delay, have sermons preached to them in plenty. Culpable time-wasters, whose besetting sin is to begin and not finish, may betake themselves to those who admonish them to improve each shining hour by using all the odd minutes. This little preachment is not for them. They would pervert the doctrine and exaggerate the application, in the most heterodox fashion. There are active souls, however, who need to be cautioned against excess of energy caused by their own exacting standards. Many a woman

is her own severest task-mistress. No one else would dare to demand or extort what her own merciless will requires. "Do thyself no harm" is a suitable admonition for such workers, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

These fervent spirits foster the passion for finishing until it becomes a "choice virtue gone to seed;" and many things lovely in the blossom are unsightly in the seed-pod. Sometimes the work itself is injured by the doer's anxiety to have done with it. Finish is sacrificed to finishing. The house-builder does not commend the workmen if the hard-wood polishing is too speedily accomplished. Perfection is marred by slighting haste. But the evils of this passion for finishing are usually visited upon the worker. The feverish hurry and grudging rest, the preoccupied attention and determined speed, of one bent upon accomplishing plans in a certain

time, are surely familiar. The irritating effect of the strain is also in evidence. Enormously useful things may be done in an incredibly short time, and humanity may seem to be much benefited; but a person who has not the devouring desire to "finish up" may be much pleasanter to live with. "Easy to live with" is perhaps the climax of compliment, and the test of perfection. To be able, on occasion, placidly to "let things go," and "take things as they come," may give a peculiar charm to busy home-life.

"This part of the house-cleaning must be done to-day; this piece of sewing must be finished by nightfall; this visiting accomplished before tea-time; this outline filled, these data gathered, this writing finished to-day," — thus the inexorable announcements run. The lumbered housewife and the expert needle woman, the social visitor and the enthusiastic student, may find their self-set time-limits and task-limits a great

snare. They make no allowance for their tracks crossing other people's comfort and convenience, or the claim of their own well-being. "I must" is often the cry of one who makes her own "must."

Blessings on the brisk and busy people who may be trusted to complete their undertakings, and to fill up the measure of purposed or promised work. The world would be in a state of distraction without them, and things would go sadly awry. Conscientious workers will not fail to be faithful and diligent, even unto the end. But when the urgency of a subtle ambition to "accomplish something," in order to have "something to show for the day," overtaxes time and strength, and goads both brain and body to the exhaustion-point, it is a delusion to call it a virtue. It is rather the spirit of self-pleasing arrayed as an angel of light, or an unrecognized characteristic miscalled "sense of duty."

“Do it and be done with it” is an excellent motto; but undue haste to finish for the sake of finishing is often responsible for nerves at excessive tension, tempers at the snapping-point, and tranquillity wrecked. It is hard to keep a quiet mind under stress of breathless haste. This “passion” is also accountable for dropped opportunities, which one may not return to pick up; while unexpected duties, coming perhaps as interruptions, only chafe the eager spirit. The ability to bear interruptions is one of the loftiest virtues. It comes only through “the self-renouncing will,” and a “heart at leisure from itself.”

Plans not pliant enough to swerve, purposes not elastic enough to stretch, upon occasion, are irksome bounds and bonds. Unlooked-for things are sure to come; but it is not so much their coming, as the fixed determination to pursue one’s own way in spite of them, that causes the fume and fret. The impera-

tive duty is to let "all things work together for good," and not to fight them. Thus broken and disordered plans, unfinished tasks and hindered wishes, will take their divinely ordered places. The stars in their courses will not be hindered if our plans fail. We overrate what we set our hearts upon. "What will it matter by and by?"

Most people like to do whole things. Few are content with odds and ends, even in the department of "the great commonplace." But the odds and ends may be bright bits; and it is a worthy, although modest calling, to fill in, and to fill up, and to give symmetry and finer finish to what we may not wholly fashion or finish ourselves. There is a deal of mosaic-work given out to do. In a realm higher than the housewife's, and broader than that of any labor of hand or brain, there is an inborn longing to achieve something worth the doing, and to complete the work of the lifetime. Threads

of influence and opportunity are given, and we instinctively yearn to finish the fabric we have wrought in part. It is hard to be thwarted in the honest and earnest desire, but sometimes this must be. To give thanks for "sweet joys missed and pure aims crossed" in life's utmost and highest endeavor, is more pleasing to Him who asks it, than any achievement could be. When, at the end, that which we most longed to compass in fulness and fairness as work for Him must be dropped in its incompleteness, none but our Master can unclasp the hands so gently as to take from us the unfinished work so that the loosening may not hurt.

The finishing touch He will give it,
The touch of His hand will avail
To bring to completeness and beauty
The work of our fingers so frail.



Directed Steps.

“A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.” — PROV. xvi. 9.

THE little steps, the daily steps,
The Lord directeth them,
If we but follow close to Him,
And touch his garment’s hem.
His noiseless footfalls on the path
That leadeth on before,
Their traces leave, which loving eyes
Discover more and more.
We hear his word, “This is the way,”
Repeated o’er and o’er.
The tired steps, the faltering steps,
The feeble ones, and slow,
The Lord directeth even these,
If after Him we go.
The onward, eager, marching feet,
These, too, will He command;
Our way, indeed, we may devise,
But may not understand
The strange, divergent paths, by which
We reach the promised land.

For just one step, and only one,
 His promise we may claim ;
 Until "the way clears for the next,"
 'Tis evermore the same.
 And thus He makes us hold His hand,
 He's but a step away,
 And keeps us looking unto Him
 That so we may not stray.
 Oh! let us listen as we walk,
 To hear what He may say.



"The Wholesome Pinch of the Just
 Enough."

It is a generous soul that coins a thought into bright speech and hands it over without asking or waiting for the change. Others, furnished with the productive capital of a fine suggestion, may put it to the exchangers, and get good out of it, even beyond the dream of the originator ; but at least a percentage of

the credit belongs to the one who coined and put it into circulation.

A suggestive phrase that makes an excellent investment, when one takes it to think out or work out, is "The wholesome pinch of the just enough." It is found in "Blessed Be Drudgery," that marvel of fine philosophy and practical help, compacted into leaflet form, by W. C. Gannett.

Nobody likes to be pinched, whether it is by a sudden nip or a tenacious clutch; but there's odds in pinches as in other things. This is the healthy sort, that is not crippling, but stimulating. The just enough, squeezed out from what appeared too little, is enjoyed with a zest which abundance does not know. The fear of failure in the beginning quickens thanksgiving in the end. What we almost miss, and gain, is valued far more than what we easily obtain.

The rare contrivance that makes a becoming gown out of the barest suffi-

ciency of material, that furnishes a room which does not show the pinch that was felt in doing it, that concocts an appetizing meal from left-overs or from inadequate supplies, by means of skill and pains and care and brains, gives the right to a woman to carry herself like a queen. She has conquered circumstances, and compelled both ends to meet, when it took admirable stretching. She may be tired after the effort ; but she knows what she can do in emergencies, and how she can squeeze through. Not every one is so favored. Those who "have all and abound" haven't the least idea how it feels to succeed in making things "do" when resources are scant and difficulties pinch. There is something triumphant about it that makes a body feel most comfortably "set up." It can't be very, very wicked. Conscience does not call it sinful pride, and common-sense applauds the innocent elation, if it does not become inflation.

A little more than just enough would make many of us too lazy for anything. There must be a spur of some kind. Without it, few would work as they do, nor gain the facility they win. The pinch of the just enough keeps people from going to sleep; it rouses, animates, and urges, and there is nothing for it but to strive for the "more" that seems imperative, or to make the just enough answer the purpose, which cannot be done without contrivance.

This wholesome but little-desired "pinch" is a great safeguard against exuberance and extravagance. It controls and holds back; it schools in managing; it furbishes up the mind; it stimulates and strengthens the will and the wits. What a world of educating experience, of skill that amounts to genius, of exultant happiness over successes hardly won, would be lost to life if all were amply able to adjust supplies and demands, and there were no call to show

force of character, or special ingenuity in adapting means to the ends.

This "pinch" is felt outside of what wealth will buy. Circumstances over which money has no control conspire to cramp many in intellectual development, in home-making and heart-culture, and in general usefulness. Very small talents, or very few, may be given, scarcely enough, it would seem, to meet the inexorable demands of life; but it is worth a deal of striving to learn how to make the most of what one has, while the conscious lack of anything to spare is a strong incentive to strive for more. One might be shockingly wasteful of opportunities as well as of money, if the means of using them were always abundant. There is great danger in feeling perfectly satisfied that there is a great plenty, whether it be of goods or of grace. The lightly valued affluence may be easily squandered or misused.

While man may discover the fact and

the value of this kindly provision which forces into activity the energies that might lie dormant, only divine Love and infinite Wisdom could have so ordered it. This nice balance of need and supply, that leaves nothing to spare, must be for the greatest good of the greatest number; for see how general it is. Like the wilderness manna, the portion of a day is given in its day. There is just enough and nothing over, but there is the certain need of fresh gathering to-morrow. It is a wholesome pinch, which reminds of the necessity and urges the effort.

But the just enough is not too little. It cannot be that for any one who puts a child's trust in God, who has promised that there shall be no lack of any good thing to them that fear him. All is wise and well. Let us be "content with such things as we have," with things as they are; for the "pinch of the just enough" is not cruel, but wholesome and kindly.

Shavings and Kindling.

SHAVINGS and kindling are the first essentials in building an old-fashioned fire. It is wasteful economy to stint them in the beginning; for one burns more finally, in coaxing the reluctant blaze that had a poor start for want of feeders. Abundance of kindling makes a good bed for coal. It does not warm the room, but it is a means to that end; it has little substance, but much utility; it disappears, but serves a purpose; it gets no credit, but does good.

As curled ribbons of wood and pine-splinters are necessary for a fire, so a thousand nameless preparations are requisite for any work worth doing. Much practice goes before perfection, and a multitude of experiments before success. Many inked and pencilled sheets "whose end is to be burned" prepare the way for good writing. Repetition gives facility in handcraft and brain-work, although

visible results cannot be summed up. What matter? That which is first burned supplies the conditions for a steady fire.

Countless little courtesies and kindnesses, self-denials and activities, must kindle and consume before the steadfast character can blaze and glow with light and heat. Numberless incidentals, having small apparent connection with the end sought, must precede life's achievements. Shavings and kindling come before coal. Don't stint the measure and spoil the fire.



She Left Her Water-Pot.

A WATER-POT was a valuable utensil in the East, in olden days as now. The woman at Sychar's well must have been intensely interested in the One who sat, "wearied with his journey," upon the curb, when she left her water-pot to go

into the city with the wonderful invitation, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did."

But this was an extraordinary occasion, the supreme moment of a lifetime. The opportunity to receive living water, and to bid others come and drink, justified the woman in hastening back to the city without her burden for the family supply, leaving her water-pot by the well-side, unfilled and unregarded.

The question is often earnestly asked, "Shall I leave my home cares to attend meetings, and my regular duties for outside work?" That depends. "Wisdom is profitable to direct." Home duties are God-given, and the common round divinely ordered. But little things, even life's small essentials, must not be held so close to the eye as to exclude a glimpse of larger claims that occasionally demand the setting aside of usual duties. There may be opportunities which justify leaving the water-pot to

“go tell.” When these come, and guidance is clear, be sure to use them; for —

The Lord's occasions, lightly passed,
Return unto Him who gave.



Is Jesus in the House?

“It was noised that he was in the house, and straightway many were gathered together.” — MARK ii. 1, 2.

WHO cared to mark the furnishing
Of that Capernaum dwelling-place,
Where once, in days of long ago,
The Saviour came in lowly grace?
What matter if the walls were rough?
The inner court both rude and bare?
Behold, within, a Guest divine!
'Twas noised abroad that *Christ was there.*

From lip to lip the tidings spread;
His presence could not be concealed;
And lo! the gathered multitude
Their need of help and cure revealed.

For straightway, all about the door,
They pressed, in thronging crowds, to
hear
The word of life which Jesus preached,
The tender gospel of good cheer.

Is Jesus in the house to-day
In all His sweet, attractive grace?
'Twill speedily be noised abroad,
And burdened souls will fill the place.
Is Jesus in "His House of Prayer"?
Does Jesus in *thy* house abide?
Then "He will draw all men to Him,"
With pleas that will not be denied.



"Making up the Hedge, and Standing
in the Gap."

A GAP is not a gateway. It is an opening which implies a breach, a defect, a flaw. "Standing in the gap," adds our useful Webster, "is exposing one's self for the defence of something."

Stopping a gap is making a weak point secure.

Not every one can do this. Unhappily it is the willingness, not the ability, that is usually lacking. Long ago Ezekiel lodged complaint against Israel's prophets because they had not "gone into the gaps neither made up the hedge;" and later he recounted the search after one man who would do this, and added that none was found. (Ezek. xxii. 30.)

But that was a great occasion, a supreme opportunity. There are lesser ones nowadays, but they are not unimportant; and the search still goes on for those who can make up the hedge, and stop gaps. For some of these, one does not even look for a man. It is a woman who is needed. Those not called upon to defend the nation, except in caring for the home detachments, may find chances in plenty to stand in a breach, in the home, in society, and in the church. Enclosing hedges are often

broken. Blessings on all who are willing to fill chinks! It may be very fine and gratifying to be called upon in the first place to do the setting out and enclosing, but to be able to fill in the unexpected openings opportunely and effectively is a praiseworthy aim and attainment. To be an emergency woman is a laudable ambition.

Home-life gaps are legion. Usually the house-mother fills these, but why should she always? Let her daughters emulate her example, as they will have brave chance to do. Somebody must do the small duties that seem to belong to nobody, and use the unexpected opportunities to make others comfortable, or prevent their being uncomfortable. It is the filling in which makes up the hedge of home, and keeps all secure within. Some one must be ready to stay at home or to hurry back, to run to the grocer's or the baker's, in the event of unlooked-for guests, who may

be ever so welcome, though not prepared for. The bit of homely work suddenly dropped by an ailing or absent housemaid, or the one responsible for the doing, must be taken up by some one, and all manner of gaping edges must be brought smoothly together.

In a household or a neighborhood where many diverse minds and wills have constant intercourse, it would be amazing if there were not occasional differences of opinion, breaches of harmony, leaving family peace defenceless at that point. Surely it is a holy calling to make up the hedge again, and keep it from widening into a breach hard to mend.

Look at the social gaps. Think of the depressing silences that sometimes fall when some guilty hedge-breaker blunders upon forbidden subjects, or people unacquainted and uncongenial are thrown together, and don't know what in the world to do or say. Mayhap they

are only shy ; but, dear heart ! that is bad enough. The most observant hostess cannot be ubiquitous, and through some yawning gap discomfort or discord may come hurrying in if no one stand there to prevent. Those who can and do fill up the chinks, with pleasant greetings, kindly courtesies, adroit and tactful introductions, and other good offices, are blessings indeed, whether they are brilliant or not.

Church-life offers a thousand opportunities to make up the hedge. Somebody is always falling out, leaving a chasm to be filled in. First-best singers and players upon instruments fail, perhaps for excellent reasons ; first choices for special efforts and occasions may prove unavailable, and somebody must play second-best or there will be a disastrous gap. Why should any one be sensitive about being second choice or second-best ? It is rather a comfortable thing to be even the last resort ; for the

conviction that at least there is no one to do the work better, and that all are glad to have this service rather than none, is vastly reassuring. Hedge-makers and gap-fillers should not be criticised, if they do their best.

After all, it is a high compliment to be considered equal to an emergency upon short notice. The confidence that appeals for help at the last moment ought to be mightily uplifting. Presidents of missionary societies and leaders of meetings have a warm feeling toward those whom they can trust to act as substitutes when asked, in extremity, to make up deficiencies, to fill in and fill out the enclosure of the allotted hour, and who may be counted on to do it pleasantly, unaffectedly, and without looking abused or annoyed, when called upon without due notice, under stress of circumstances.

"I cannot do it well enough" has a sound of humility, but in substance it

may be anything but that. True humility makes up the hedge because the work must be done, not in order to make a creditable showing of the worker's way.

Generally those nearest the breach, whatever it is, should make haste to stand in the gap. In the highest and most sacred work, nothing is trifling nor valueless. The blessed little things belong to the great whole, and are dignified by the relation. Let us cultivate the happy faculty of filling chinks, of making up the hedge and standing in gaps, even the minor ones, —

"Content to fill a little space,
If God be glorified!"



"They Heard not the Voice of Him
That Spake to Me."

(ACTS xxii. 9.)

THE flash of the light from heaven,
That shone on the broad highway

As the pilgrims neared Damascus,
Was seen by them all, that day ;
But none except Saul of Tarsus,
Whose eyes in the glare grew dim,
Could hear, through the blinding glory,
The Voice that arrested him.
The message from heaven spoken
Was meant for his ear alone ;
For him was the silence broken,
The will of the Lord made known.

And so, in this latter noontide,
The Voice of the Lord is heard ;
But none may hear for another,
Nor interpret the spoken word.
Each heart that is called to carry
A message of love and cheer,
And summoned to serve or suffer,
Alone the command must hear.
I may not judge for my neighbor
What errand for him may be,
For I know that he cannot hearken
To the Voice that speaks to me.



“Mint and Anise and Cummin—These
Ought Ye to Have Done.”

SATISFACTION depends much upon seasoning. Tasteless food may nourish, but flavor gives it relish. No one wishes to sit down to a dish of salt or of sage, and eat it by the spoonful; but “Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt?” And what would become of the art culinary, in its substantial and seductive achievements, were there no summer-savory, sage, sweet marjoram, or mint? “Add a bay-leaf” directs the priestess of cookery sometimes; and, although the quantity is small, the command is imperative, and the result gratifying. The triumphs of our grandmothers in savory dishes are suggested by the very mention of “sweet herbs,” which rioted in summer gardens, and afterward proclaimed their virtues in Thanksgiving viands by appetizing odors. But the stores of garden and garret were used

sparingly. A tithe of a small portion sufficed to, "half-suspected, animate the whole." The seasoning is not the dish, but it must not be left out.

People nowadays are perhaps wont to bring against the scribes and pharisees a railing accusation not warranted by our Lord's words. It was not the tithing of mint and anise and cummin which he disapproved, but the omission of the weightier matters of the law, in glaring contrast with minute observances. "These ought ye to have done," he says distinctly, while reproving them for leaving the others undone.

The weightier matters, of supreme importance, are set before us abundantly, and cannot have too much attention; but now and then the tithes of mint and anise and cummin are forgotten altogether. This leaves many an offering, in itself wholesome and sustaining, savorless, and even unacceptable, because the seasoning of delicate tact and

good-will is lacking. Blundering generosity may give lavishly, but may spoil the gift in the giving, as food is spoiled by what is left out, as well as by what may be added. Receivers are often unreasonable, perhaps; but are they to blame if they miss what they want most,—even the subtle element that makes it sweet “to take, for love’s dear sake”? The most learned discourse upon the qualities of albumen will not make the Scripture question less pertinent, “Is there any taste in the white of an egg?” Everybody knows there isn’t, and a request for salt and pepper is not immoderate. They cost little, but they make all the difference between palatable and unpalatable food.

By a deft and discriminating process of seasoning, the accomplished cook makes tasteless things attractive. This is what tact and loving-kindness in manner will do for good deeds that might otherwise be scorned. But let us, for

compassion's sake, avoid excess of "manner" as we would extravagance in seasoning. The sweet herbs in a dish should not be the most aggressive and conspicuous element in it.

Small concessions in unimportant matters, little sacrifices of taste, opinion, and preference, a considerate remembrance of others' whims, aversions, and choices, the sweet temper that avoids irritating subjects, contradiction, and friction, and soothes disquietude and small exasperations, — these, and kindred kindnesses, are the sweet herbs that give exquisite savor to commonest life. Some people are capable of stupendous sacrifices for another's welfare who would never think of closing a door softly to avoid the shock to quivering nerves; and others are willing to give away fabulous sums of money, who perhaps grudge a few minutes daily to make a child happy, or to write a letter giving such gladness as money could not buy. These tithes of

time, convenience, and courtesy are not supreme, nor are they the whole of life, but — "Mint and anise and cummin — these ought ye to have done," together with the "weightier matters."

Attention to small details is another flavoring of good deeds which enhances their value, as the caraway and dill were mingled with other things in our great-grandmothers' capacious pockets, and seasoned with their slight diversion the sermons of long ago. A letter that brings the very essence of home-life to the absent is not of the generalizing sort, with sweeping statements as to family matters and the affairs of neighborhood or state, leaving out all homely incidents, intimate glimpses of love and longing, and the small happenings of every day. The satisfying letter goes into details, answers questions, acknowledges little love-thoughts, and accepts small commissions. What a delicious flavor of every day does Paul's refer-

ence to his cloak left at Troas give to the great apostle's letter; and while it contained many weightier matters, it is to be hoped that Timothy remembered, among other things, to go to Carpus for that cloak, and brought also "the books, especially the parchments," desired.

In this age of organization, when it seems as if every other woman, at least, were secretary, treasurer, or chairman of some society or committee, the minute attention to details, and exact compliance with directions, are unspeakably comforting to those who must collect statistics and combine reports. Prodigious things may be done for the benefit of a society, and vast sums of money secured by enthusiastic effort; but if accurate records are not kept, and remittances come tardily, somebody at headquarters may be kept in such a tumult, and find the straightening out such a strain, as largely to overbalance the pleasure in the work done. These things are the

omitted tithes of "mint and anise and cummin—these ought ye to have done."

Life is exceedingly complex; it has many ingredients. Sweet herbs, aromatic herbs, soothing herbs, must be tithed for the mixing. Let us aim to make people not only wise and good, but comfortable, and give them what is not only wholesome, but relishing. Let us guard against the "omission or careless performance" of the little ministries, while we observe faithfully the weightier matters, lest the untithed mint and anise and cummin draw forth the reproofing word, "These ought ye to have done."



The Daily Chart.

OUT upon the sea a great steamer cut its way. The passengers were deeply interested in a safe and speedy voyage; but not one knew how to guide the ves-

sel's course, nor mark its progress. Every day, however, there was placed in plain sight a chart of the ship's course, while tiny flags indicated its position on each date. Some one knew where the floating palace took its way, how far it swept, what points it reached and left behind. It was the daily pleasure of the passengers to consult this significant chart.

Suppose that for a day it had been withheld, would dismay have followed disappointment, and fear beset them all for lack of the usual signals? Would any have said, "We are surely going wrong" or, "We are making no headway," because the way could not be traced? Surely not. Pilot, engineer, and captain would be as wise and worthy of trust as before, and the ship would pursue her way as safely and surely. The simple matter of seeing the record would make no difference in any case with the facts themselves.

So it is upon life's tossing sea. It may be wondrous pleasant to see how the vessel speeds, but it is not necessary to its safe-conduct that passengers should see the chart. All is secure with Him who "knows the way He taketh," though His path be in the sea.

That daily chart with tiny flags might be wrong, after all. A mistake in calculation, or an unsuspected divergence of the needle, might make it a false record. But nothing can deflect God's purpose, nor turn his course, who guides his chosen safely home.

What matter if we cannot see?
Enough for us His word shall be:
"Fear not, for I will pilot thee."



The Doors Being Shut.

JOHN XX. 19, 26.

THE doors were shut; without were foes,
The unbelieving, clamorous host;

Within, the sad disciples met
To talk of what concerned them most.
The recent grief, the heavy loss,
The heartache, and the painful doubt,
Were shut within the bolted doors
That barred the curious gazers out.

In this seclusion, love had leave
To give its pain and longing speech ;
For all the mocking multitude
Were out of sight, and out of reach.
And lo ! the Master in the midst,
His entrance all unseen, unknown,
Proclaimed his presence and his peace,
A message meant for these alone.

Oh ! close the doors, disciples true,
Who crave to-day the word of peace ;
For enemies are fierce without,
And earthly clamors never cease.
Haste, bar them out ! Let silence fall ;
But let the heart its longing speak,
And wait his noiseless coming in,
The risen Saviour, whom ye seek.

Unowned Fields.

IT is a blessed thing that one is not shut out from enjoyment because he may not hope for possession.

“From the green fields we do not own,
We yet may watch the wild birds fly.”

The fields are not walled, and our eyes need not be closed as we pass. The owners themselves have no more senses to gratify than we ; and sights and songs and perfumes, the atmosphere and influence all abroad, where birds fly, orchards bud, and crops ripen, belong as much to the passer-by as to the property-holders.

Moreover, there are exemptions and compensations for the non-owners. They are not responsible for the cultivation of the fields, or for the payment of taxes. It might even be a burden to hold the title-deed. Often one forgets this, and only covets the beautiful field for one's own.

There are fields of opportunity, influ-

ence, wealth, science, art, and of marvelous gifts and attainments. Others own them, and we can but eye them. But if we cannot rejoice in the ownership, we can rejoice with the owners.

Verily, there are other ways of enjoying things besides owning them. Look up, and "watch the wild birds fly," and do not fret over unowned fields.



"In White."

HERE is a good word dropped by some one, that ought to be passed on: "Serve God, and be cheerful. Religion looks all the more lovely in white."

Think of it! Religion in white! Fair draperies may not be essential, but they are certainly influential. The first impression may be made by them before the absolute essentials are sought.

Those who are not Christians will readily discern the difference between

the garments of gloom and the garments of praise. There is good cheer somewhere. If it is a hid treasure, seek for it, and then make religion lovely "in white."



"All the Days."

THIS ray of promise falls on darkened
ways,
"Lo, I am with you alway—all the
days."
The bright, untroubled, gladsome days
of life,
The days of bitterness and care and
strife ;
The days when peace doth like a river
flow,
The days of grief with weary hours and
slow.
He goes not on far journeys, Christ is
near,
He leaves no day without its help and
cheer.

As once of old "He knew what He would
do,"
When servants were dismayed and
troubled too,
So now, with infinite supplies at hand,
He walks with us, though in a barren
land.
Some sweet surprise He doubtless has
in store,
Some secret that He never told before.
For this, perhaps, He leads through
shaded ways,
And you will understand ere many days.



Bitter Herbs.

"POISON not thy wine with bitter herbs
when God hath made it sweet."

Here is a fine corrective for the misery-making propensity of morbid natures and sensitive spirits.

Many a time the Lord himself mingles myrrh with the wine of life; and then

the sainted Judson's words are timely : "Take the cup in both hands, and sit down to the repast. You will find sweetness at the bottom." But when the Lord has made it sweet, why not take the cup of thanksgiving? why not drink the wine of gladness with its fragrance and flavor unspoiled? Why float upon its brim one leaf of the bitter herb of our own gathering, "I am afraid it is too good to be real, too sweet to last"?

Happy natures, in the home and out of it, that take joy unreservedly, as a child from a father who loves to give it, are blessed themselves, and a blessing to others. What good times there are for those ready to see and seize them, especially for all who are content with draughts that are simple, though sweet, and are satisfied with small cupfuls! There are some who will have nothing if it is not to be had in largeness and lavishness. Oh, the folly of it! Take sweet sips, and take them often,

and life's long day will have ample refreshment.

Our Father who "knows how" to give good gifts, surely loves to see his children enjoy to the full the bounty and blessing which his intimate knowledge and love confer. Imagine the feelings of an earthly father, whose child, sitting down to the wholesome fare of the family table, should persist in bringing from some fence-corner, sprigs of boneset or leaves of rue, to sprinkle upon each dish and flavor every cup! Yet there are people, let us believe they are few, who will even "gather wild gourds, a lapful," and "shred" them into the day's portion provided by wiser hands than theirs.

Fear of the future is a bitter herb. Vague forebodings of evil too often poison the sweet cup of the present. Such herbs are of our own gathering. They grow outside of the Lord's garden; and we break over the fence of trust that should be built about each day, in

the unseemly and hurtful scramble after the wild stalks and bitter roots. The joy of meeting is marred by the fore-dated pain of parting, and dread of separation mingles with the sweetness of daily intercourse with hearts held dearest. Why poison the wine? It is not the trustful, thankful way.

Morbid fear of being glad, lest the joy invite sorrow, and precipitate disaster, is a bitter herb that a few souls go far to gather. What wasted journeying! Would an earthly father inflict pain at the most jubilant moment of a child's life simply because of the gladness? If pain or disappointment come at such an hour, they are but forerunners of good, not the consequences of trustful joy. Why accuse the infinite Father, who pitieth His children, of such an abhorrent exercise of power? It is His "good pleasure" to give the kingdom to his "little flock;" He wants to do it. Surely He would never give a little cup of hap-

piness beforehand for sake of making pain more swift or bitter. The thought is profane. It is poison. "The Angel of the Afterthought" is fertile in tormenting suggestions. — "If I had only known" embitters many a present cup with the thought of something missed or marred in the past. "Beware of 'Had I wis,'" says the old proverb. If the lack of knowledge is blameworthy, there is great cause for repentance; but let it be after a godly sort. Many a time, when there was no chance to know and no responsibility for not knowing, in the past, the soul distils the poison of the bitter herb into the present joy, spoiling what God has made sweet. Is it grateful? Is it wise and well?

Some conscientious and careful souls feel smitten and remorseful over the taking of some sweet cup which cannot be shared with all. They may thus miss the full benefit of the health-giving draught. Even unselfishness, gone to seed, has

a bitter flavor in the pod. The devoted house-mother or the general caretakers, not wonted to take thought for themselves, may mourn so deeply the privation of those who cannot enjoy unexpected good times with them, as to spoil the effect of the rest and refreshment meted out now and then. Blessings on the sweet spirits who find it hard to resign themselves to absolute rest and enjoyment because others are denied it! But when the pleasure comes, unsought perhaps, without defrauding another, and vain regret but spoils the cup the Lord made sweet, without giving others so much as a taste, why poison it with bitter herbs.

The thought of one's own ill-desert is another herb that is often bitter. It is not deadly, but it is distressing. Sweet surprises, dear praises from loving lips, ready appreciation, unexpected commendation, unsought privilege, undeserved consideration, humble the heart that

knows its weakness ; and sometimes an excess of feeling presses a bitter drop into the cup of rejoicing. But every good gift from above cometh down from "the Father of lights," because He is good, not because we are worthy or ever can be. Humility is not a bitter herb, but humiliation is. It grows in dark places, fed by mortified feeling, tended by wounded pride. True humility is well defined as "not thinking ill of ourselves, but not thinking of ourselves at all." This is a heaven-sown plant, and should grow in sunshine as well as in shadow. It need not embitter the cup of joy.

Beware, then, of the bitter herbs of many names and natures, and of the nameless ones, too, of unaccountable, groundless fears and feelings. Not the sweetness of stolen waters, not the nectar of forbidden sweets, but the wine that God makes sweet, may be counted wholesome and good. Do not mingle

with poison his kindly offered cup
 "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing
 which the Lord thy God hath given
 thee." Israel was warned of old that if
 they did not serve the Lord with joy-
 fulness and gladness of heart because
 of the abundance of all things, they
 should serve the enemy in hunger and
 thirst, and in want of all things.

"Go thy way, eat thy bread, and drink
 thy wine with a merry heart; for God
 now accepteth thy works," is his message
 to the honestly earnest and faithful.

"Joy is the grace we say to God."



"There's All Eternity Before."

SUGGESTED BY HIS WORDS, AND INSCRIBED TO
 BISHOP C. C. McCABE.

TIME'S fair and fleeting yesterdays
 Are heaping high the storied past;
 With gleaming hours, all jewel-set,
 The treasure-house is filling fast.

But why regret the vanished gold
Of Time's most dear and hallowed
store?

Why mourn the unreturning days?
"There's all Eternity before!"

The ship that spreads her canvas white
To meet the free and favoring breeze,
Goes speeding toward the wished-for
port

That beckons o'er the wind-tossed seas.
Time's mariner is outward bound,
Nor marks the dim, receding shore;
The land-locked harbor may be fair —
"There's all Eternity before!"

The baffled hopes, the hindered toil,
The bonds which eager spirits wear,
Shall find a recompense at last,
When dawns the nightless morning
fair.

Life's fret and fever then shall cease,
The scourging haste will all be o'er,
The long, long leisure comes apace —
"There's all Eternity before!"

O solemn warning! Comfort sweet!
 These days and deeds are not the
 whole;
 This broken life shall be complete
 When Jesus calls the trusting soul.
 Ring, tuneful bells of passing Time,
 Till Time itself shall be no more;
 While Faith repeats the chant sublime,
 "There's all Eternity before!"



"Multiplying Horses."

"He shall not multiply horses unto himself."—
 DEUT. xvii. 16.

A STRANGE command, surely, to be set among those forever binding upon Israel's kings! What harm in horses?

Ah, they had to be brought from Egypt; and should the people return to Egypt, to the end that "the king should multiply horses," the Lord's command would be broken, "Forasmuch as God had said, ye shall henceforth return no more that way."

King Solomon afterward had horses brought from Egypt, and doubtless prided himself upon his forty thousand stalls for them; but if he had held no communication with that land of bondage, would Pharaoh's daughter have "turned away his heart," and "come up to the house which he built for her"?

It was not safe traffic, for all its fascination.

It is not safe now for God's children to multiply unto themselves anything that will certainly bring about intercourse with the land of bondage whence they have come out. The pleasures and pursuits that belong distinctively to "Egypt" must be foregone. By reason of their connections they are dangerous; their tendencies are toward the place of which God has said, "Ye shall return no more that way."

Long after the command was written, Ezekiel records the rebellion of the king who "sent his ambassadors to Egypt

that they might give him horses," as if relief and defence might come from there; and the solemn questions flame upon the page, "Shall he prosper? Shall he escape that doeth such things, or shall he break the covenant and be delivered?"



**"Drink Waters Out of Thine Own
Cistern."**

So says the wise man.

It is a pitiful sign of destitution and improvidence when one willingly depends upon others for common necessities, and when life has nothing but what is brought to it, being without resources within. There should be a reserve for time of need, when neighborly offices fail.

Cisterns are filled from above, if conductors are furnished for the rain from heaven. So every one may have sources of refreshment, and supplies that shall

defend him against loneliness and despondency, when outside helps are cut off.

There are countless neighborly interchanges that cheer the way, and cups of cold water are given by friendly hands, but not all daily needs can be ministered unto by others, nor can that which gives refreshment to one be at the disposal of another. Don't depend upon neighbors for everything. "Drink waters out of thine own cistern."



The Sweetened Bitter.

Heed well this lesson : Life's alloy,
The sweetened bitter, bringeth joy.
The healing leaves give Marah's flow
A taste no other waters know.



Large Investments.

THIS is a day of large enterprises and extensive investments. The fascination

about bold undertakings and great ventures almost amounts to infatuation. A Western farmer, gazing over his prairie acres, might have much ado to conceal his contempt for the farms of early New Englanders, if they were mentioned in comparison ; and at best he would have but a condescending pity for those obliged to engage in such small business as cultivating such bits of stony land.

It would be a great advantage to the world if this spirit could be turned to account in the more important business of life as well as in secular traffic, and if all who despise little things would also despise littleness.

A noble, devout, disinterested man, who gave his whole life to the service of others with singular zest, once said, on being drawn out: "I am sure I am not more benevolent than others ; but when I was only a boy, it seemed to me that living exclusively for one's self was too small a business."

Isn't this vitally true? One person is but an atom in the magnificent universe, an infinitesimal unit in the world's millions. Think of concentrating a lifetime, and the energies of an immortal soul, upon that atom! Isn't it revolting, especially when one comes in contact with so many other atoms in need of help? One who exists for himself lives in a house without windows. He can't look out, and doesn't deserve to have any one look in.

This small business grows smaller and smaller; there are no dividends. There is no excuse in engaging in it either; for opportunities to help others are on every side, and invite large investments, sure to bring permanent returns.



A Broken Branch.

A SYMMETRICAL tree is a thing of beauty, but an orchard of beautiful yet

barren trees would not be satisfactory to the owner. A fruit-bearing branch is valuable, whether it be shapely and fair, or gnarled and broken.

Once upon a time a very huge and ancient apple-tree in an orchard, set forth a suggestive parable in the face of passers-by, if those who ran but chose to read.

An immense branch, broken from the trunk, but not severed from the root, was cast upon the ground by the high wind. There it lay along, the size of a tree itself, like a defeated giant, but not defeated after all. Its object was to bear fruit, and bear fruit it did. The tiny apples with which it was covered when it fell, grew apace and ripened, in spite of the fell disaster that had visited the branch. It still had vital connection with the root, though torn from the trunk. The tree was marred, the branch broken ; but, in spite of all, it fulfilled its mission. Beauty, symmetry, a conspicuous place high in air among the other

branches, were not essential, although desirable. The vital thing — connection with the root — insured the life and fruitage.

So a maimed life, cast from its high place, injured by some sharp stroke, but not destroyed, may still be fruitful and also fair, may live in the sunlight, gladden the eyes, and enrich the lives of others, if, at the root, there is still vital connection with the Infinite Source of life and love.



He Is Risen.

RING, chiming bells of Easter,
Repeat your message glad !
The gray old world is waiting,
In sombre raiment clad.

Break forth, break forth in music,
Uplifting, sweet, and true ;
Ring out — “ The Lord is risen,
The Lord is risen *for you !* ”

For you, who find life's burden
So irksome and so great ;
For you, O troubled spirits !
For whom Care lies in wait, —

The Lord for you is risen,
“ If ye be risen with him.”
Your souls shall break their prison,
And leave these shadows grim.

Sweet bells, prolong your echoes,
And sound through all the year ;
Proclaim, “ The Lord is risen,
And ye have naught to fear.”

May Easter blessedness come to you,
And the Lord Jehovah make all things
new !
New glories shine through the common
days,
New blossoms brighten the trodden ways,
And your week-day dress be the Robe of
Praise.

As You Pass.

SYLVIA went out by herself, to have a little confidential time with Mother Nature, to hear what she might tell her, and to receive what might be given by this good mother who lives out-of-doors.

As she passed beyond the edge of the woodland, on her way into its depths, where she expected to find the choicest treasures and to hear the sweetest secrets in the stillness, Sylvia noticed a fine spray of goldenrod, the first of the season.

“How beautiful that is!” she exclaimed. “When I come back I will gather it and take it home.”

But the wood-pilgrim wandered about, and in and out, following beguiling little paths that seemed to go everywhere and led nowhere after all; and when she turned her face homeward, she came out of the wood a long distance from where she had entered it. The place was not very familiar; and Sylvia, while thinking

that she knew where she was, searched everywhere about for the goldenrod left. She could not find it, nor any like it, and went home without the coveted bloom.

“The next time I’ll take it as I pass, and not wait till I come back,” she resolved, with wisdom born of disappointment. “The safe way is to take such things when you see them first, otherwise you may miss them altogether.”

There is a little sermon wrapped up in this reflection about the goldenrod. Expand it, and it may prove practical. Learn to take the little sweetnesses and pleasant things of life as you go, and do not be in haste to go farther, promising to enjoy the first things upon the edge as you return. It may be impossible to find them again. And when a bright little opportunity blossoms as you pass, stop to pluck and use it. You may not pass that way again.



Wounded Feelings.

AN accidental knife-thrust will draw blood as quickly as an intentional stab. The act may be deeply deplored; but if there is life at all in the body, nothing can keep the red current from leaping out when the keen blade cuts through the skin.

What then? Shall the blood be left to flow, and the wound to gap? Surely not. When enough vital fluid has poured out to insure no poison being left, stanch the flow, bind up the hurt, and leave it to heal by the first intention, not tearing it open now and then to inspect or to show it. No amount of pity can make a wound lovely to look at.

To the hurts which the spirit must bear, apply the same treatment. Sensitive feelings cannot ignore a sharp thrust, even if unintentional. With no outward sign, there may still be the instant, inward

pain. Unkindness, ill-humor, and, above all, injustice, make deep cuts.

What then? Let the poison run out with the first natural flow, and then bind up the wound. Let charity cover it from sight. Forget it, forbear to show it, and it will speedily heal, without a scar.



Multiplied Seed.

“He that ministereth seed to the sower . . . multiply your seed sown.” — 2 COR. ix. 10.

HE gives it first, the Lord of all ;
In His dear name we let it fall.
What though the garden-space be small?
In one small acre seed is grown
Which faith and hope may scatter far ;
The harvest-time shall make it known,
How many precious sheaves there are,
And what the fair and bounteous yield
On some far-distant, larger field.
'Twere joy enough the seed to sow,
If never sheaf were seen below ;

But ah, the Master is so kind,
Some golden grain He lets us bind,
Before the final reaping-day,
That we with joy may go our way.



A Passing Salute.

IT was at the time of the World's Fair. The Japanese Tea-house looked very inviting to a party of visitors, and they went in to refresh themselves. An attractive Japanese woman waited upon them in a deft and gracious way. Fastened upon her curious robe might be seen a little silver cross. A lady in the party wore one like it; and presently the native of the far-off islands pointed significantly to her own cross, and then to the counterpart worn by the visitor. The two King's Daughters recognized each other, smiled, and clasped hands.

It was the silent salute of two passing travellers who knew that they would

meet again. Neither understood the other's tongue; but the silver speech of the shining symbol was intelligible to both, and each claimed kinship with the King, and fellowship with each other.

The communion of saints is not limited to speech, nor to any land or tongue.



Up the Hill Is Into the Light.

"How hard the way is!" cried one, toiling along the up-hill path in deep shadow. "Isn't there a pleasanter way round? Must we go straight up?"

"Yes; we must go straight up," was the answer of the elder companion. "There is no easier way. Up the hill is into the light."

Many a time pleasure-seekers and treasure-seekers find themselves toiling along in the dusky shadows up a steep path. They are thwarted, hindered,

hampered, in the press of life; but up the hill is into the light.

At the end of life's long ascent "the city lieth four-square;" in "the mount of the Lord it shall be seen," and "the sun shall no more go down."



The Thoughts of God.

O PRECIOUS thoughts of God,
What wealth can dearer be!
Though I am poor and weak,
He thinketh upon me.

How wonderful His thoughts
How oft misunderstood!
He knows my thoughts afar,
He thinks on me for good.

He knows the thoughts He thinks,
Most gracious thoughts of peace,
To give expected ends,
The captive to release.

His thoughts are not as ours,
They cannot come to naught ;
Nor can we ever stray
Beyond His loving thought.

God send us happy thoughts of Him
Which neither doubt nor care shall dim.



Beads Upon a String.

SCATTERED beads are unavailable decorations. They roll into unnoticed cracks and corners ; and one or two, picked up, will not make a necklace ; they must all be strung.

Beads that are worth stringing may be threaded again and again. When the string breaks they disappear into cran- nies, none know where, and perhaps none care ; but by and by somebody finds and strings them, the same beads, but connected and usable once more.

So thoughts and truths are threaded upon words, and re-strung over and over. It is easier to string them than to make them; but like gold and coral and amber beads, they are worth re-stringing: they do not perish with the breaking cord. They hide for a while; and somebody, rejoicing as over a new discovery, finds them, by their shine, in a chink. It is only a re-discovery and a re-stringing after all. What of it? There are not new thoughts enough to allow each of us to make a necklace; but neither are there enough to waste, through the breaking string, the outworn or forgotten form of words. Who thinks of the string? Yet it holds the beads.

Let us, then, who cannot originate much, take heart of grace. It is worth while to find what is already made, and to bring it within reach. Be alert to see and to seize the first unworded suggestions, the bits of existing truth, that may, with care, be strung upon words to help

somebody. Let us find the simple and strong words, for thoughts of love and sympathy which the world still needs, though they have been strung again and again. There may be some who have not seen them; for these, the old comforts may be set in order new, although "at random strung, like beads upon a string."

"THE ANGEL OF LITTLE SACRIFICES."

This should be the guiding and the guardian angel of the home. What a gentle, unobtrusive angel it is; how sweet and silent, dear and helpful. It is not in great emergencies, demanding unlimited surrender, that this genius presides. It is in the daily living that the ministry is needed, in the thousand frictions, the small exactions, nameless adjustments, and countless opportunities that befall. It is the angel of little sacrifices that hovers near when little self-indulgences

are quietly given up, and small preferences yielded without a word; for what is trumpeted is spoiled, and the injured aspect or the condescending air ruins the result.

Firmness in principle, regardless of feeling, may be indeed heroic; but the graceful yielding of what is called a mere preference, which yet may be as deeply rooted as a principle, may in fact be scarcely less heroic, when all the clamorous, self-asserting feelings inside rise up and protest against it. Where many live together, there must be innumerable choices and desires, and even whims and conflicting plans. Some one must sacrifice wishes and convenience in trifles, or the machinery will certainly jar. It may be in such minute affairs as the placing of furniture, the arrangement of drapery, the hour of meals, the cooking of a dish, the time for study or for calls, or the choice of amusement, that the gentle angel finds the opportu-

nity for unselfish relinquishment, where justice alone would assert its rights. But in such trifles the perfection of harmony in home-life is found and kept.

Where "mother" is, there is this good angel. Her great renunciations may perhaps be known and sung; but her countless small surrenders, that ease the way, prevent concussion and conflict, and sweeten the daily cup, none may know, though all may feel the blessing that follows them. Let us emulate those who, to us, personify this good angel, and seek the grace that makes them winsome. If "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," nevertheless, let us seek, for it is worth it all.

"HELPERS OF JOY."

Of making many societies there seems to be no end, though there must be a limit somewhere. Here is one, however, that may exist without organization, by

laws, officers, or fees, and be joined without formality. The Golden Rule is its constitution, and Paul may be called its founder or forerunner; for he says of himself and associates, to the Corinthians, "We were helpers of your joy."

To be a helper of joy, one must be sympathetic and unselfish; and this may make joining the circle a costly thing, but the recompense will overpay it. There's none too much joy in the world; some of it has to be helped on and eked out, or some people will have little enough. Those who do not know how to enjoy life ought to be shown how, and helped to do it, by way of finding the sunny side, when they forget to look, or grope in vain.

But one of the most effective ways of helping joy is not to spoil it by refusal to share it. When the cup runs over, there should be somebody to catch the overflow. Joy bubbles into speech, and somebody must listen. It may not be

easy and comfortable to do this when one is inclined, instead, to brood over one's own unpleasant experience, and to resent another's exuberant gladness; but the command to rejoice with those that do rejoice, is not conditioned upon our feeling like it.

Crowd out other feelings to make room for sympathy in others' joy, and the joy itself will crowd in. We may be oftener asked to listen to a tale of woe than to a song of gladness; but when the chance offers, let us be helpers of joy; for, —

“ All the angels would be glad,
If, in the world He built,
Although there must be some things sad,
No drop of joy were spilt.”

A CHEERFUL EXPECTER.

The look forward is inevitable. Most of us are some sort of expecters; but isn't it strangely true that the glance into the future is rather of foreboding

than of faith? A cheerful expecter does more than keep himself happy; he sheds and shares his hopeful anticipation. There is a gracious contagion about it.

Cheerfulness has been called "the bright weather of the heart." One person can't have all the weather. Don't be a doleful prognosticator, but a cheerful expecter, and make bright weather in the hearts around.



IN "THE GARDEN OF GIRLS."

THERE is delightful variety in the garden of girls. Like children pressed to make a difficult choice, one is tempted to say, "I like them all best."

Can it be that any girls are anxious to outgrow the beautiful blossom-time? Let them not be in haste, lest they squander the joys of the unreturning days, and defraud others, who need them just as they are, in the blithe years of life's be-

ginning. Girlhood, in early and fragrant flower, is one of the choicest gifts of God.

As no great occasion is complete unless graced with flowers, so life must have its nosegays of girls in clusters of youth, brightness, good cheer, and helpfulness. How people smile on them; surely they ought to be loved into the very best that is possible in girlhood, and bless the barren places with whatsoever things are lovely.

And noticeably first in the garden is

QUEEN ROSE.

Queen Rose has beauty, and is blessed among girls for this boon from above. She has gifts and grace, and graciousness too, if she is sweet clear to the heart. Radiant Rose has opportunities and outlook beyond many, and royal bounty is hers. There should be a distribution of favors no less regal. What

can a rose gain by hoarding sweetness? Every one looks at Rose; but this must not spoil her so that she will not look at her modest little cousin Sweetbrier, whose leaf and petal wardrobe is not so fine and full. Beauty has a heavenly mission; be true to yours, Queen Rose, and make the garden fair, so that passers-by may easily forget the stones and brambles of the wayside. Keep the inmost, delicate petals close-folded over the heart of hearts, with that fine reserve that makes the half-open bud lovelier than the full-blown flower. Let others enthrone you, my Rose, and be worthy of their lavished love, remembering who has made you beautiful. Strive to be "exceeding fair," which reads, in the Bible margin, "fair to God."

But none can love flowers and not love

THE PANSIES.

Do look at the pansies, with their wise faces! How much they must know!

Pansies, in the garden of girls, must surely stand for thoughts, as they do everywhere. How many can describe accurately the leaf-draperies that pansies wear in the garden-bed? But who does not know exactly how the bright blossoms lift their faces to the sky, and what royal colors they wear? Girl-thoughts are often royal too, as the purple petals of the pansy; and the intellectual girl has wonderful influence in this, the Woman's Age. But remember always, dear, gifted Pansy, that your choicest beauty and blessing lie in the heart of gold!

But here we have, with all their witcheries,

THE MORNING-GLORIES.

Such flowers for good cheer! They brighten the great commonplace, these do. They will clamber over an aristocratic trellis, twine around a cotton string, wreath a sunflower stalk, festoon a back-

kitchen window, or grace the front veranda. They never stint their bloom, nor wait for admiring on-lookers before they fling out their banners.

The morning-glory girls are as welcome everywhere as their namesakes, the "daughters of the dawn." They bring morning-colors into the life about them, and brighten both kitchen and parlor. Don't tell me that my favorite morning-glory is not very intellectual, nor extremely select. Don't call her "common" because she graces the back yard. We must have a back yard, most of us; and I dote on the flowers that will grow there without a gardener's care, when one can't afford a gardener.

Shall I reveal the secret of my morning-glory's charm? It is a happy heart. Blessings on the merry-hearted, not the giddy — oh, no! but the glad, and even gleeful, who take hearty and wholesome pleasure in all that is given richly to enjoy, who make the best of things, and

have sunshine and to spare, for daily use and home consumption. A habit of giving a blithe "Good-morning," a way of being content, a fashion of covering rough and waste places, and hiding them with bloom, may not be in any wise brilliant, but few things are better.

There is room for morning-glories everywhere; for the healthful, good-tempered, happy girls, ready to "do good and to communicate" in all sorts of homely ways, and not needing to be brought from the greenhouse, either, wrapped in tin-foil, when a body needs heartening up a bit.

Are you climbing up to your privileges, dear Morning-glories? If God has given you that dear gift, a happy disposition, rejoice in it, and use it for him. Let it spread itself around, as the pink and purple blooms of dawn caress and cling and open everywhere.

But what have we here?

HOLLYHOCKS.

Yes, we have indeed! Why not? The quaint flowers of grandmother's garden are coming round again. They present an improved appearance, however, for they are more double than of old; and hollyhocks, in full pink and white and pale yellow, are the prettiest flower-cushions imaginable. But they have very short stems; they are seldom used for bouquets; and they cannot clamber about, and peep over the wall.

So there are stay-at-home girls, that may, in their secret hearts, make moan over their limitations. They may also dislike their names, being sometimes called, or mis-called, "old-fashioned;" and they seem to be kept aloof from the bright bouquets that grace the great occasions. Let them take heart. They have their dear associations, and are greatly to be desired. Let them content themselves upon the short stems,

in the cramped area of influence and opportunity; but let them grow double where they are.

No garden border would be complete without

MIGNONETTE.

It is not easy to analyze the elusive yet potent charm of this unobtrusive little flower. Not in form, color, or grace does it rival its garden neighbors; but in its delicious sweetness it wins its way.

Let no girl say she has no gifts, no way to win or to be winsome: for she may be, and ought to be, sweet — sweet of temper and of spirit, friendly, loving, and sympathetic; and the Gardener can make her so. The white cup of the lily is fair as well as full of perfume; but fragrance is refreshing, however offered. The lily may seem a trifle stately and aggressive, but lowly mignonette makes no parade. It lifts no lovely chalice;

but somehow one finds out that it is sweet, and loves it for that. This, too, is a heavenly gift; and any girl in the garden whose name is Mignonette may well give thanks for it, and others may well covet the name and the nature. While sweet odors are evanescent, their effect is strangely lasting. A waft of perfume has wonderful power to quicken memory; and even remembered fragrance has dear and peculiar associations, though without visible or palpable records. So, sweetness of disposition endears itself in a nameless way, giving and gaining love.

Exceeding fair is the Garden of Girls,
In the dew-fall of early youth;
And under the Gardener's loving care,
May it blossom with grace and truth.



His Way is in the Sea.

His path is in deep waters,
His way is in the sea ;
The tempest and the darkness
His messengers may be.

The mystery about us
Is not of doubt and fear ;
The mystery of mercy,
His love at last will clear.

And, as of old, the waters
Of tossing Galilee
Opposed their billows vainly
When Jesus walked the sea,

So now the storm and tempest
Are subject to his will ;
His path is in the waters,
He cometh *toward us* still.

A strange and awesome coming !
Yet faith and love rejoice
When, sounding through the darkness,
They recognize his voice.

His voice, so long familiar,
Proclaims his presence nigh ;
His greeting falls like music :
“ Fear not, for it is I.”

The listening heart may hear it,
This word of rest and peace ;
And when he giveth quiet,
Earth’s jarring tumults cease.

And lo, the wind-swept water,
His strange, dark path, afar,
Gives back the bright reflection
Of many a radiant star.



Convenient Herbs.

SOME remedies which are very effective are not easily obtained. They may be exceedingly rare, or their preparation may be difficult and expensive. Sometimes what is wanted most and would be most effectual for healing is not at hand

in the emergency, and then it matters little what virtue it possesses.

But there are simple herbs that may usually be found in the home garden or the garret, and somebody is sure to have a store of these to recommend and to offer for the common ills that flesh is heir to. A simple remedy at hand is of greater worth than a more costly and complicated one absolutely unattainable.

There are inward hurts that need healing, and "a wounded spirit who can bear?" Bruises and broken bones and bodily sicknesses are disabling, and must have suitable tendance; but heart sorrows and wearing griefs, anxieties and adversities, are also disabling, and what shall be done to gain health and effect a cure? Various reliefs may be suggested which are not feasible; but, happily, there are remedies at hand, and convenient herbs with healing power. We need not go on far journeys, nor even

“Hide ourselves for calm.
The herbs we seek to heal our woe,
Convenient by our pathway grow;
Our common air is balm.”

The common tasks are wholesome herbs. Work is a restorative in spite of the instinctive aversion which a sore heart feels toward it. Why should every-day toil go on when life within is changed by some sharp stroke or slow sorrow? Because the comfort of others depends upon the doing of homely duties, and because the small drudgeries themselves are remedial. There is a compulsion about them which acts like a tonic, and they wrest the attention from the inward wound till it has had time to heal a little.

Small kindnesses and considerate care for others are soothing herbs within easy reach. The effort to be interested in affairs around us, when our own are wofully absorbing and painful, will often be rewarded by a diversion that is wholesome and helpful. As a poultice draws out poi-

son and allays irritation, so the common courtesies of life will prove to be emollients for inward hurts, caused perhaps by occurrences far out of the ordinary.

The habit of quick and keen observation stands one in good stead in times when help is needed. Simple diversions of thought, a readiness to take up little pleasures, though the zest seems to be gone out of life, will have restorative effect; and gratitude for remaining blessings, is a sweet herb with wonderful healing powers.

The ability and purpose to make the best of things will greatly serve the end, as one goes along the daily path in search of relief from any trouble. By the aid of this spirit, very common herbs may be found to have peculiar qualities, and may be used with benefit.

Do not overlook the fact that while convenient herbs abound, divinely adapted for relief, they must be gathered and used, or they will do no good.

Handfuls of Purpose.

INCIDENTALS are not always accidentals. Non-essentials may be a part of the plan, no less than the absolute requisites; as when one deliberately presses down and heaps up the good measure required by law, and justly expected. The unexpected overflow may give more pleasure than the whole of the even measure. Little surprises have a distinct and delightful flavor.

Imagine the quick elation with which gleanings Ruth gathered the first "handful of purpose" let fall for her in the field of Boaz. She came to glean laboriously; but the dropped handfuls lightened her labor and her heart, and her exultation over the unlooked-for accumulation must have yielded to a thrill of grateful joy, as she recognized the purpose of the Master himself in the unexpected aid.

So the small and sweet surprises in

life's field of daily labor, come through an infinite purpose of love ; and the handful of comfort dropped where the finding will most help and cheer, is divinely and definitely ordered. The unlooked-for success, the blithe salutation, the confident assurance that all will go well, the encouragement that makes effort easy, the fresh token of friendly confidence, the sudden outcome of grateful appreciation, the glimpse of light and loveliness through a suddenly opened window when all seemed circumscribed and humdrum, — all these are as much a harmonious part of divine plan as the tuneful music of the singing spheres.

The stacked and garnered sheaves reward the toil of the husbandman, but the gleaner's work has its recompense too. There are handfuls of purpose for her — for it is usually a woman. Occasionally a woman may “consider a field, and buy it,” tilling and reaping her own land; but generally Ruth gleanes, and

her work is "the large aggregate of little things." Her expectations are not extravagant; and when, through handfuls of purpose let fall, she beats out "an ephah" at night, there is a jubilant sense of satisfaction about it, which only the gleaner knows.

There is a difference and variety in the handfuls: Sometimes it is a handful of barley, a handful of common meal for some homely need; it may be a handful of herbs for extra savoriness or soothing, or it may be a handful of posies just to gladden the day. In all these, the loving purpose, the tender forecast, makes us grateful. The handful added to what we have been able to gather is of double value. Many a time a pleasure which we might never have found among the sheaves for ourselves, falls right in our way as we glean. It is worse than wasteful to let it lie ungathered; it is ungrateful. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things," even

the extras and the unexpected things, whether the additions be to purse or to pleasure.

The Lord of the harvest may say to the reapers, "Let fall some handfuls of purpose;" and those in higher service, doing the greater work for Him, may put into our way some unthought-of opportunities. Though we may not see the handfuls drop, we may be sure that it is of divine purpose that they fall.

One handful is usually vouchsafed; for it is apt to be all we can manage, and is better, "with quietness," says the wise man, than "two hands full with vexation of spirit."

If the Lord of the harvest is so kind, let us remember that "as he is, even so are we in the world;" we represent him here. By a little forethought, we may learn to share our handfuls. There are a thousand small attentions, courtesies, and accommodations, which no one would ask or expect, which considerate

love may plan and provide; and the choicest flavor of a little favor is forethought. It is one thing to overtake a friend and pass with cordial salutation, and another to go out of the way with intent to cheer the loneliness of an empty house, or to divert the brooding fears of one in suspense. It is one thing to toss a flower to a passer-by because it happened to be convenient, and another to select favorite blossoms and carry them on purpose. It is easy to applaud success, but often better to prophesy it, and thus to encourage and secure it.

Most people are so busy with the mere scramble of getting through with what must be done, that without provident forethought, there will be small leisure to put a handful of anything in another's way. There must be purpose, or there will be no performance. What can we do, with ready feet, willing hands, friendly speech, sympathetic heart, and

ready pen, with a little time and a little thought, to enrich our neighbor "on purpose"?



Incidentals.

THE most important thing about a road is its direction, whether it be a broad track or a narrow footway. If the path leads to the place one wishes to reach, that is the essential consideration. A curve here and there, a few scattered stones, some thorns by the wayside, are mere incidentals. It would be folly to magnify these, and to forget the aim of the journey in considering them.

But some travellers along life's great highway, and pilgrims of different ages, too, do this very thing; they make far too much of little uncomfortable matters that are simply by the way, and will soon be passed by, like a bit of prickly hedge along the road that leads to a great city of delight. The whole road ought not to

be condemned or lost sight of, because of the briery border that extends but a short space. Suppose one does scratch his hands! The skin-deep wounds will soon heal.

The student's path is upward and onward, and the education to which it leads is worth everything it may possibly cost. But along the way there are sure to be discomforts as well as difficulties. Lessons must be learned when a scholar would rather read an interesting book or have a good time with his mates. Problems puzzle, translations baffle, heads ache, furnaces sometimes smoke, the wind is in the east, teachers are not infallible in every minute particular, fellow-students are exasperating, one's own moods vary, and there are small discouragements and disagreeable things here and there, cropping out in unexpected places. But these are minor considerations after all. In spite of these incidentals, knowledge is power, and its

attainment is lasting gain and gladness. It is good in itself, and better for the usefulness it brings.

“When the goal is won at last,
Who will count the trials past?”

With each milestone reached, the path before beckons more attractively, and the irksome trifles past are forgotten. Why not be wise enough to make light of them at the time, knowing that they will pass away?

In the young Christian's life there are petty vexations, small annoyances, inevitable renunciations of self, difficulties and discouragements; but for all this, the road is royal, the opportunities magnificent, the joy heavenly, the grace sufficient, and the end a crown and a kingdom.

A man is on his way to claim a fine inheritance. He must needs wait at a junction in a dingy waiting-room. It is there that the connection is made for

the place he must reach. He is housed there from a storm, meanwhile. He does not complain that the waiting-room is not a palace. He is not to stay. His pausing there is a mere incident of the journey. He is going on.

Don't mind the incidentals along life's path, if they are unpleasant; look beyond, march on, and leave them behind.



Penetrating Colors.

A TRAVELLER lately returned from abroad repeats the story that others have told about the penetrating colors in the pictures upon the uncovered walls of Pompeii, in the porous plaster used so long ago. The colors used in painting pictures on one side of the wall went through to the opposite side, and the work of the artist could only be entirely destroyed by tearing down the wall. Such work is now a lost art; but in these ancient ruins the evidence of its exis-

tence still appears, and is noticed by the curious traveller as very remarkable.

Surely those old masters must have felt that it was worth while to do their best, and to have a care as they laid on their colors, knowing that their work would be lasting, and that not one side alone of the porous plaster, but both sides, would bear the traces of the brush.

The lost art is not a very serious loss. The world can get on without it, although painters would be glad to recover it as a curiosity. But there are other penetrating colors of enduring character, and their power will never be lost. Thoughts, emotions, motives, and intentions color our lives. They go through from the inside, and the effect of them is seen without. They cannot be effaced. The Bible speaks of the mind as the chamber of imagery; and the pictures there are in these penetrating colors, — “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,” for his thoughts and intentions give color to

his life and character, and make it what it is. If self is the centre of the inside pictures, then selfishness will show on the outside, sooner or later, as part of the very fabric of the life. This is a serious thought.

But it is comforting to feel that pure motives and lovely thoughts within, permeate the character and make it beautiful. Being good is part of doing good.

Outside influences go through inward also; and there is need to be careful about one's company, reading, surroundings, and associations, for these have a penetrating power, and their effect is lasting. Whatsoever things are true and lovely should be sought and thought upon. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us" is a fitting prayer.

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