

A COMPANION TO "WOMAN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT WOMEN."

THE

AFTERNOON

OF

116, 40

UNMARRIED LIFE.

FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION.

J'ai dit dans mon cœur, que faire de la vie?

LAMARTINE.



NEW YORK

RUDD & CARLETON, 310 BROADWAY.

MDCCCLIX.



Moste desire I, and have, and evir shall
 Thing, which that might your hert'is ese amende :
 Have me excused, my power is but small,
 Nathelesse of right ye ought for to commende
 My gode will, whiche fainè would entende
 To doe you service.

* * * * *

Quakith my penne, my spirite supposeth
 That in my writing ye find woll offence.

* * * * *

[But] not of malice, therefore beth merciable,
 A faithfull herte evir is acceptable.

CHAUCER.

R. CRAIGHEAD,
 Printer, Stereotyper, and Electrotyper,
 Carlon Building,
 81, 83, and 85 Centre Street.

TO

The Unmarried Gentlewomen of England

WHOM TIME HAS MADE FAMILIAR WITH SORROW

AND NOT AVERSE TO THOUGHT

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

WITH UNFEIGNED RESPECT.

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PREFACE.

It is not from any admiration of the use of modest formulas, intended to propitiate the reader's favor, that I now offer an apology, but because it is in the present instance really needed. I think that such a book as this will elicit some surprise and strong disapproval; it will be said that, to the public, feelings so deep ought not to be confided; that womanly reserve should forbid such a searching inquiry into the hearts of women; that I am, in a word, too bold and too explicit. These accusations have been heard within my own heart and satisfactorily answered there long ago, or I should never have taken in hand the subject before us; they were answered thus: the old barriers of womanly reserve have been demolished more and more every year by works of fiction, which owe at least the greater portion of their popularity to the amazing want of shade that distinguishes them; in these the feelings of women have been exposed, analysed, and, as I think, degraded, by the pens of women. If the characters in these fictions were imaginary, the passion was real; and the world of novel-readers can no longer think of a woman as a retiring creature who shrinks from notice, and would gladly keep her inner life in obscurity. This

type of woman's nature may never have been so common as to justify us in calling a more *expressive* turn of character unnatural and unfeminine; but, I think, no one will dispute that modesty, gentleness, and prudent reserve were in previous ages attributed to the received ideal of woman, and that in our day there is much to disturb the old-fashioned impression that retirement, being most favorable to her happiness, is by woman instinctively sought. Now, as I greatly regret this demonstrativeness, I should be the last to wish to extend it still further. My desire, and my hope—perhaps unreasonably ambitious—is this: to call back to their proper objects the minds of some talented women, who now seem so much at a loss for their right work as to spend themselves in a feverish excitement, clamoring through the press for joys they do not find in their own lot; or bewailing, in the person of an imaginary sufferer, the loss of peace which is forfeited by their own foibles.

I have endeavored to convince my unmarried countrywomen that we are already a privileged and happy sisterhood, and that if we wish for any more immunities, or any wider scope, good sense will look for these in our own hearts and *not elsewhere*: and thus I have hoped, in some degree, to withdraw from public inspection those feelings which can only be directed happily in channels of private beneficence and quiet zeal. If, in order to gain the attention my design needed, I have too prominently brought forward my own opinions, it has not been without reluctance; and, if there was anything like a printed whisper possible, my notions on several delicate points should not have been uttered more distinctly than in a whisper. But when I have hesitated at giving public circulation to thoughts which seem more fit for the confidence of a friendly *tête-à-tête* , I have remembered with comfort that what is individually characteristic, and therefore shy of notice, is but a small part of one's nature compared with the com-

mon feelings which unite the most retiring spirit to the whole race of mankind, and make human sympathies as invariable as human need.

As I share in the innumerable blessings of our country's pure faith and perfect liberty, I know not why I should shrink from admitting my cognizance of the sorrows which somewhat dim the effects of these national blessings, though at the same time they make them more dear to weakness, and more indispensable to peace.

Besides, I am convinced that in every town or village of my country there are hearts whose goodness, if I knew it, would open mine to full confidence, and from whose criticism I should fear nothing colder than the kindly reproof of friends. I am not concerned with what the unthinking, unfeeling, or irreligious, may say of my efforts; it is unlikely that they will bestow upon them even their notice.

In the following chapters I have addressed myself exclusively to the unmarried; not that I suppose marriage so to affect habits of mind as to leave to spinsters the monopoly of some feelings, and the unshared burden of some kinds of grief, but because in *theory* married women are supposed to be more occupied with external cares, more taken out of themselves, and for the most part blessed with the superior wisdom of husbands able to advise and willing to console.

Difficult questions, on which I am unable to form any opinion, I have wholly passed over, believing that to canvass them with an imperfect knowledge of their bearings is a most fruitless waste of time. The questions to which I allude are such as those on the feasibility of women applying themselves to more various and public employments than has been usual hitherto; those again which suggest the reasonableness of marrying for the sake of a livelihood, or of a home, when there is no pretence to more affection than is supposed to exist of necessity with esteem: these and kindred inquiries have of late been mooted with much feminine vehemence, and it is to be hoped

that they will meet with the careful attention they deserve from any who are in a position to answer them; they must at least awaken a tender pity for all those fellow-creatures, whom they so nearly, so sadly concern. Though I have confined myself to subjects which are within reach of my observation, I trust that the silence of conscious ignorance will not be mistaken for the cold neglect of an indifferent contemporary—too much at ease to regard with sympathy the sorrows that might have been her own.

THE AFTERNOON OF UNMARRIED LIFE.



FRONTISPIECE.

Like passing clouds the years go by,
And leave me here alone to sigh,
The world has me forgotten.

J. VON EICHENDORFF.

A LADY sits by a table well furnished with books, in a pretty drawing-room, complete in every comfortable arrangement; she is alone, and she is idle, though a book, vividly written, lies open before her; but her forehead is bent down on one hand, and the other has fallen listlessly to her side. When she uncovers her eyes,—grave eyes, cold and sad in their expression,—they turn to the time-piece, which is quietly carrying on its monotonous business with a happy tick and an unvarying face. In five minutes it will strike three:

she rises and goes to the window, looking out on a garden bright with the gaudy flowers of September.

Broad sunshine on the lawn; the mountain ash gay with berries; the lime tree thickly hung with greenish tufts of seed; and one of its side branches has thin and yellow leaves already, and a few here and there looking golden on the shady side of the tree,—the sunshine passed by them many hours ago.

How sear and sapless the chestnut tree looks out yonder! The prickly fruit is the only fresh-looking part of its massive growth. Two little girls have put their dolls to sit in a tall hole at the bottom of its stem, while they hunt for polished brown chestnuts, not yet to be found, though a high wind knocked down several green ones last week.

How eager and happy those children look! Never mind the French grammar now; it is safe upstairs on the school-room table, and many pleasant things are between them and to-morrow's lesson time. Hark! out there, beyond the trees, on the broad grass terrace;—what merry shouts! And a light figure comes in sight, running forwards to pick up an arrow; the

mirth of eighteen in her laugh, the glad confidence of a much-loved child, and a young beauty in her graceful movements as she returns to the group of her shooting companions.

The indoors watcher moves on to another window in the same room, where she can see them all. They did but leave her an hour ago, after luncheon, and yet she watches them with the sad distant sort of curiosity that only isolated or captive people feel. Her sister and two brothers are there; and a brother's wife, fondly admiring the skill of her eldest girl in archery, who listens, meanwhile, with girlish intentness to the polite speeches of a gentleman visitor, whose superior talents do not make him indifferent to beauty in any shape.

What made the silent spectator sigh? The transient vision of years far behind her now. In that same spot she had stood, young, and handsome, and energetic with gladness, on certain sunny days of previous summers, and *then* she was anything but alone. Some of those who so eagerly measured her distances, and ran for her arrows, were interesting, warm-

hearted people. Would that bright-faced girl ever linger about in the torpor of dejection as she does now? Oh! these comparisons will never do: rather let her find a fanciful likeness to herself among all those summer-ending flowers. She thinks of the lines of Mrs. Hemans:

"Give the reed

From storms a shelter,—give the drooping vine
Something round which its tendrils may entwine,—
Give the parch'd flower the rain-drop,—and the meed
Of Love's kind words to woman."

That will not do either; it is too sentimental to suit her case, and, besides, not true to its saddest peculiarities: first of all, she cannot compare herself with the drooping vine; she wants tendrils rather than something to clasp, since brothers, and sisters, and friends are quite kind to her, and she is dearly loved.

It is what she is *not herself* that causes her present despondency; not any lack in her outward life. And what then is she like? According to her own notions, she resembles that *Anchusa* Plant which the gardener has left standing between a glowing *Marvel*

of Peru and a spiked band of red Zinnias; which, having long done its regular blossoming, now and then opens a few blue stars on cool mornings, but which is for the most part dull-looking and unsightly, stretching its long prickly shoots on all sides with dim and shapeless luxuriance; leaning on nothing, attaching itself to nothing, with little lovely color, and no sweet scent.

For the person I am describing is no longer young—she is not yet old; she is of middle age, and just now she thinks this age a very dreary one.

She turns from the window, convinced that the glaring brightness of these September days, and an almost imperceptible chill which breathes through their sunshine, have a peculiarly disagreeable effect upon her. It is true that she is not quite well; a slight headache, a feeling of chilly languor makes bodily movement irksome; but we should fall into a common mistake, if we fancied that bodily indisposition *caused* the sadness which now pervades every thought. It has brought to a crisis the depressing influences of many past weeks, and stamped them

upon the prostrate mind with the threat of permanence; it has disarmed her of all the usual weapons against melancholy, and led her to suppose that they were powerless because they were not just then within her reach; but not one of the sad fancies that weigh down her spirit was originated by the infirmity of the flesh, each has arisen from some sickness of heart; taken singly she could resist each with patient good sense, but when crowding into her mind altogether she is overpowered; even her faith in the especial providence of God is a little benumbed.

Perhaps an acute doctor would venture to assure her that the mind began this mournful harmony of grief, that a more cheerful turn of thought might have given to the whole system a vigorous activity which would have braced every nerve, and prevented both the slight headache and the causeless languor; she will not believe it, and as the interaction of mind and body is subject to partial investigation only, the doctor may still hold his opinion, undisturbed by what she calls facts.

She now goes to her room; let us follow and consider

her thoughts with pitiful respect: some among us will easily divine them, for prayer is her usual succor every day about this time. To-day she reproaches herself for its lifeless formality. But she can command her actions if not her feelings, and she means to go and see a poor person who is ill at a short distance from the house, and her bonnet is put on. Ah! those slow-moving eyes have found their reflection in the glass, and there is another pause. I know why she turns to take off the bonnet; if I tell you, and you smile ironically, it will prove some ignorance of sorrow for which I might, some want of good feeling for which I cannot, envy you. She has seen her face looking hard, and cold, and dreary; the lines time and grief have traced there seemed so stern, the light of the eye so quenched, that she thinks, "I shall do poor old Betty no good; I am too heavy-hearted to speak comfortably; I had better keep my gloomy looks to myself." Is not sorrow often selfish? Now the head she looked at, lightly sprinkled with a few grey hairs, so few that she still observes them as fresh arrivals, had been often stroked by the soft fond hand of a mother, and

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yet at this moment she feels as if she had *never* known tenderness and perfect love.

If she thought of that dead mother now, the stoniness of her mood might melt to tears; but she goes down stairs with slow and heavy footsteps, considering what she can find the heart to do. Work? No, it leaves too much scope for painful thoughts, and music would be no music to-day, every note would bring to mind jarring discords between the past and present. How often had that same instrument felt her light touch in by-gone days, and brilliantly expressed her joyousness. Let it be silent now. Why not draw? Because she feels too indifferent about everything to make it worth while. What is the use of cultivating *her* talents? What do they avail her? No one takes an interest in them, or cares much for her success. (A "pathetic fallacy" this.) Once her father, and once some one else, whom both he and she loved rather better than he deserved, had praised her artistic taste; now it is a thing only remembered in old portfolios and fireside annals of another time.

Cannot any of those books in so many languages,

on so many themes, speak home to her present feelings, and occupy her mind with their emphatic words? Not one, at least not one of the few she has taken up or looked at with intent to open; for every power of the mind is in abeyance, or busy accumulating all imaginable pretexts for sighing.

Another five minutes gloomily spent in aimless emotions, and then blank time is suddenly filled with the joy of a little child.

A rosy little girl, not much above four years old, trots in holding a small tabby kitten in a basket sweet with clean hay. "Auntie, look! Uncle Herbert gave it to me; he said I might bring it in to show you; isn't it beautiful? You shall have it on your own lap, Auntie, for a few minutes."

The heaviest heart can hardly refuse to sympathise with a happy child. My poor idler smiles gladly; the child and the kitten are together on her lap, and she feels some of the happiness which the little one meant her to share.

I do not suppose that the rest of her day will make her feel so lonely as she has been during the last

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hour ; the spell of sorrow is often broken quite as unexpectedly, quite as quickly, as the spells of happiness.

You may blame her as weak, or scorn her as a coward for being stricken down by imagined griefs, and I shall not wonder ; but I pity you for your scorn, and wish that you may be wiser and stronger when some of the many days of darkness come upon you.

If you have attentively observed the outlines of this sketch, you will guess that it is the imaginary portrait of one who has reached the age of thirty, perhaps some years ago.

To any of you, my unmarried countrywomen, who feel the interval of time between thirty and fifty somewhat less interesting than the previous years, and yourselves a little drooping under the influence of "Time's dull deadening ; the world's tiring ; life's settled cloudy afternoon," I address myself, sincerely desiring your indulgence and pardon if at times my sympathy takes an intrusive, and now and then a dogmatising tone, for my purpose makes this to a degree inevitable. I cannot use towards you the simple tone

of dictation, as I might more excusably when counselling young people; but the imperative mood, by avoiding the many circumlocutions of suggestive advice, saves time, and in these days we have none to lose in needless ceremonies; suffer me, therefore, sometimes to dispense with them, and to speak as plainly to you as one spirit would to another. Be sure that I would not venture to touch upon ground so carefully guarded by the delicacy of self-love, if I was not urged to do so by lively compassion for sorrows which seem to me quite within reach of remedy: sorrows that disquiet many in the stillness of English homes, and which (being, in a certain sense, of artificial growth) ought not to be endured without a brave struggle to free ourselves from them. While I endeavor to promote the success of this struggle, think of me as a willing friend, and do not hastily blame me as an indiscreet one.

CHAPTER I.

"Give Youth and Hope a parting tear—
Look onward with a placid brow—
Hope promised but to bring us here,
And Reason takes the guidance now.
One backward look—the last—the last!
One silent tear—for youth is past.

"Who goes with Hope and Passion back?
Who comes with me and Memory on?
Oh, lonely looks the downward track—
Joy's music hush'd—Hope's roses gone!
To Pleasure and her giddy troop
Farewell, without a sigh or tear!
But heart gives way, and spirits droop,
To think that Love may leave us here!
Have we no charm when youth is flown,
Midway to death left sad and lone?"

N. P. WILLIS's lines on "*Thirty-five*."

THE unloveliness of such a state as I have tried to picture in my frontispiece has been tacitly acknowledged by the main body of our writers, both in fiction and in graver works; but I think we rarely meet with any direct notice of the trials of middle

age in single life *: either it is supposed that people of that age can fight their own battles unassisted, and that therefore any word of advice would be superfluous, or it is thought that these battles are too ignoble and obscure to interest spectators, and that to draw attention to them is unkindly impertinence; or (what I should be very unwilling to believe) the prevalence of vulgar joking about "old maids," "old young ladies," and the like, has affected minds that ought to pierce through the thickest accumulation of prejudice, and has prevented them from seeing how much real sorrow and noble endurance may be hidden under the quiet aspect of a "regular old maid."

I grant that to make such an aspect agreeably pathetic, or even interesting to the imagination, would be extremely difficult, and that the attempt to do so might justly be ridiculed; indeed, it is no small part of the trials of this lonely state that they are not redu-

* Written more than two years ago, when the subject had not been brought before the public to the degree it now is; when women's thoughts about women were not so often published without even the nominal disguise of fiction.

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cible to any picturesque shape: but who that loves truth will stop short at appearances, and not penetrate as far as is possible to the real *essence* of a life?

I flatter myself that whenever we come to the details of the inner life, however dull and distasteful its exterior may be, we shall find that *humanity* at *every* age, and in *every* class, has a strong claim upon our sympathies, and an intense interest for our minds, which no conventional habits, no frivolous jesting, or world-taught indifference can annul.

We are often cruel and foolish in our careless observations on the lives of other people; but cruel "more from ignorance than will;" from inattention to things as they really are, and from taking up without reflection the tone generally used about subjects that seldom get more than superficial notice.

I am far from holding the opinion that a single life is necessarily an unhappy life: there is too much reason to think otherwise; but I am very desirous that its peculiar disadvantages should be better understood, and rescued from the exclusive service of would-be wit; and I believe that those who feel them

most bitterly will forgive a recognition of these disadvantages, if they agree with me in thinking that an evil, clearly defined, is far less formidable than that which has the painful honor of being indescribable.

The penetrating sympathy of French writers has in this direction far outrun that of our own; such, at least, is the conclusion I have come to while searching in English books for the help I could not find. Probably, among us it has been considered a slight breach of decorum to put into print any admission of feelings which, I fear, the manners of the day too plainly acknowledge. It is true that within the last few years benevolent writers have been incited to plead that the existence of these feelings is a motive for some social reform; but, with this exception, I think we must expect the public to be shocked, or at least disagreeably surprised, if a woman ventures to say that those women who are not married, nor likely to be so, and who therefore resign for life their share of the sweetest and holiest feelings in human nature, deserve, if only for their position, some degree of pity, and all the consideration of tender respect.

I must take from a French authoress a poetical description of those sorrows which I can only speak of with reserve, and in plain prose. A few verses from Madame de Janvier's "La vieille Fille" will show how tenderly she has touched upon several of the dumb griefs of single life:

"Son cœur cachant à tous sa richesse inutile,
Ses secrets battements comprimés sous sa main,
Mystérieux parfum enfermé dans l'argile,
Beau trésor qu'on foulait en chemin.

"Ne murmurant jamais, tant son âme était haute,
N'ayant que Dieu pour juge en ses muets combats,
Et voilant son malheur comme on voile une faute,
Souffrant de ces douleurs qui ne se plaignent pas.

"Vivant dans ces longs jours isolée et sans guide,
Et voyant chacun d'eux, fatalement pareil,
Sans espoir, sans bonheur, triste, uniforme, vide,
Comme un morne horizon sans pluie, et sans soleil."

Poetic descriptions, it must be remembered, are not expected to be free from exaggeration, and this, I hope, greatly overdraws the average allowance of melancholy in a lonely life; yet I doubt if it will be

found far from the truth on many occasions of single life, when the heart

"Veut se fuir elle-même, et cherche autour de soi,
Et sent l'ennui de vivre entrer par chaque pore,
Et regarde bien loin si quelqu'un l'aime encore."

If I remember rightly, there is in "L'Education progressive" of Madame Necker de Saussure a good deal of valuable advice on this subject: it is an excellent book, to which every woman may refer with advantage.

"Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 't is pain;
O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty."

With any elderly reader, who wishes to keep her reason on the top of sovereignty, I may take it for granted that she is no longer so handsome, or so fresh-looking as she once was, and that she knows it; that she is not so interesting to a stranger's eye as she once was, and that she feels it. The facts are simple enough when thus stated; but in every-day life they may cause a complexity of chagrin, ill-

humor, and depression. The most sensible, the most truly humble, are not, and do not pretend to be, indifferent as to their appearance; I doubt whether in a healthy state of mind they can be, or whether it is desirable, if possible, that they should be, indifferent to it.

The "Pflicht der Erscheinung" (the duty of appearance), of which Schiller speaks so earnestly,* is not only felt by frivolous people, or at an unsettled and giddy age; and those who either ignore, or resolutely deny, its claims, fight against world-wide experience, and, in my opinion, perilously oppose nature.

It is, of course, easy to deny that there is any degree of duty in that which is instinctive in its origin, and often productive of great evils in its result; far easier than to keep the oft-abused tendency within its right bounds, and to confess that what causes misery might be useful, and lead to good, if properly managed: but, when truth is our object, can these short cuts to expediency be safe?

* In his essay *Ueber Anmuth und Würde*.

I may rouse the indignant contempt of my countrywomen by such a confession of vanity; but in honesty I am obliged to give partial assent to Burns, when he says:

"Our last, our best, our dearest,
That right to fluttering female hearts the nearest,
Which even the rights of kings in low prostration
Must humbly own—'t is dear, dear admiration."

It is so, because by a false, but very natural, inference admiration is often mistaken for incipient love. And I know not why we should be ashamed of prizing with due moderation the privilege so evidently assigned by our Maker to the weaker sex. Surely there is sufficient proof that to a certain extent every woman was formed for pleasing, and intended to please: I do not say by her beauty, for that would perhaps make the exceptions more striking than the rule, but by whatever we mean by "womanliness;" where this is wanting, when a woman is not generally agreeable, is she any the better for the deficiency? or do we not say emphatically that it is a pity, feeling that she has lost a very precious prerogative?

I dwell longer than a person careful of her dignity would choose to do upon a point so often passed over as immaterial, or brought into ridicule by perverse folly. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Those persons who *have* tasted the sweetness of either of these transient possessions will be the first to acknowledge this. Their sighs tell us that it is true; but will they, or any who value opinions more for their truth than for their apparent expediency, dispute the fact that a woman who fears the Lord, and has beauty and favor also, is much *more* praised among her fellow-creatures?

If any deny this because they think it is making too much of beauty, it may be possible to them to think a fraud pious; and this may be a *pious* fraud, but a fraud I shall ever think it, and expect the deserved penalties of dishonesty to follow,—feebleness of judgment, inconsistency in conduct, and a narrow conditional charity. In justice to all who are ugly or plain, let us fairly allow that beauty has a birthright of great advantages, as well as of great perils.

But when I speak of pleasing, I would in no wise be understood to say that I think fine features or any striking comeliness of the body, essential for that purpose; for the truth of Schiller's assertion, "even the little beautiful, even the *not* beautiful, can have a beautiful demeanor," is remarkable in every walk of life; and I suppose that what we call gracefulness is a far more potent charm than any perfection of beauty where it is lacking; and this is not surprising, if it results, as I believe, from an unusual harmony of the spiritual and physical life. Now in the case of a dissatisfied "*vieille fille*," I presume that this harmony is often sadly disturbed; for a person who feels loveless and unacceptable in society is not likely to be distinguished for her grace. I should expect in such a person to see those stiffly languid movements, that uneasy play of features, and that preoccupied expression of eye, which betray to a keen observer the disquietude of a mind not fully reconciled to its lot, and yet perplexed as to the cause of its discomforts; unless, indeed, a far sadder sight was to be witnessed, where

"Vanity, the last of Youth's frail peers,
Arm'd with a crooked crutch, and wither'd wreath,
Goes, with Despair, to fight the strength of Death."

Death which seizes on youthful charms many years before it can annihilate the hopes they nourished.

The most unmitigated ugliness of feature and of dress is less displeasing to eye and heart than this piteous incongruity; for the unsuitable adornments still grasped with an unrelaxing determination to look young, can only make a shocking contrast where the many dints of time give clear evidence that life is half run out. And, as I believe that middle age has charms quite as certain, though less obvious than those of youth, I deeply regret that any one should entirely lose the advantages of riper years by obstinately desiring to retain those which cannot possibly be hers.

I think that at this point some, whose piety would command my sincere respect, might wish to remind me that "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart:" and I would answer, that this does not apply to my present pur-

pose, which is to recognise the effect one human being has on others; for I now speak more of social than of spiritual life, and I believe, with regard to this last, that a frank assumption that we *do wish* to please is less prejudicial to spiritual life, than struggling to support a theoretic standard in defiance of the almost invariable contradictions of experience.

I think, also, that those who attempt this are liable to that kind of self-deception which makes people attribute their natural instinctive wishes to a religious motive, because they think it would be sinful to be actuated by anything less binding, and therefore dare not acknowledge the sway of impulses which are *permitted*, though not *directly* enjoined, by the Christian religion; and let it never be forgotten that the self-deceptions of religious minds are often more lamentable in their consequences than the faults of the irreligious.

The proportions of vanity and pride are so different in different minds, that one woman cannot appeal to another for consent on this question of the value of good looks, with any confidence; all I ask you to

grant is this,—that as other human beings exercise on average human nature an extremely powerful influence, making it an object of no small moment whether one is easily liked or disliked,—and that as beauty, or grace, or any personal advantage, disposes people to regard us with a favorable interest,—the loss or the impairing of personal advantages is to the sensitive nature of woman no trifling loss.

There may be many who, quietly owning to such a loss, could honestly assure us that they did not find it painful; that they were quite content to leave to younger women the enjoyments they had outlived, and merely to look on in the same arena where before they had been the objects of many an admiring eye; to be plain unimpressive members of society, instead of its fascinating attractions. If they were to tell me this without a tone of contempt for those who still hold what *they* resign, I should think them happy and truly good; I would fain be ignorant of any feelings less estimable than theirs, if with these I could combine indulgence towards the weakness from which I was exempt. One shrinks from the

recognition of mature vanity, as from an insult to human nature; and yet, as we are no longer able to keep an unflawed ideal of its present dignity, it may be wiser to look to the causes of disgrace, than to pass them over in theory as impossible. Neither after the investigation is it enough to allow that vanity is despicable, but too natural and often too pleasant a fault to be brought under control of conscience.

It is true, that power over other minds, and power lodged in apparent weakness, is sweet; and the pleasure of swaying the conduct and feelings of another by a glance, a tone, a little curl of the lip, is seducing, not only as a gratification of the love of power, but also because it satisfies a whimsical curiosity as to the strength of the chain of influence; it is also fearfully true that the woman who does not steadily resist every temptation to a selfish exercise of this power debases herself beyond all calculation, and becomes far more permanently enslaved than the victims of her vanity, far more miserably dependent on *their* favor than the weakest among them had ever been on *hers*.

I believe that many a sin of more dreaded name brings less ruin on the soul than vanity, for vanity consumes the heart. "Les passions les plus violentes nous laissent quelques momens de relâche, mais la vanité nous agite toujours."* And how can that heart singly desire the approbation of God, which throbs incessantly under the excitements of human applause, whether real or imagined? How can it be pitiful and tender, and considerate for the happiness and good of its fellow-creatures, when this constant agitation divides its attention, embarrasses every line of conduct with covert motives, and confuses the judgment, even to infatuation, by the useless testimony of scattered perceptions? Words *cannot* describe the confusion which this corrupting principle works within us, if allowed to gain the mastery; but some of its effects we know: utter disorder and growing darkness; restless desires to escape from the hollowness of dissimulation; discontent and apprehension, where light and peace should be ever on the increase.

* Rochefoucauld.

Never may it be doubted that vanity is a passion of exceeding strength. When by the orderings of Providence all its projects have been baffled, still it clamors for excitement, still snatches at images of hope with a feverish clutch, still presses to the empty heart the baubles that have pierced it a hundred times before. It can suspend every movement of reason, and silence each whisper of the Holy Spirit it grieves. And, without going to the farthest lengths in this destructive road, many a heart, otherwise inclined aright, finds itself confessing by daily practice—"Though the object of my desires is contemptibly frivolous, is base, is assuredly fruitless, contrary to my holiest resolves, and unworthy even of a wish, yet I *must* attain it. I must and will once more attract the notice that used to gratify my self-love." Practice, impulse, confesses to such folly; seldom, if ever, conscious self-knowledge.

Is this an extreme case? I trust it is: but if there is *one* such heart in my country, one person who, in the miserable bondage I describe, may chance to look at these pages, to her I must speak as pity commands

Let me ask *her*, "If you still try thus to retain former influence, to satisfy your hunger for attentions (which in happier days of girlhood were scarcely noticed, because then you had not learned to put on them the valuation of a vain world), *what is to be the end of this passion?*" It will strengthen as surely as the hindrances to its gratification increase; the struggles of a dying hope are more violent than any that have preceded them; the attractions of an unlikely admiration, an improbable love, are much stronger than those which flattered girlish vanity. The *less* chance you have of reaching a prize on which your heart is set, the more desperate will be the haste of your pursuit.

Do you not see that in cherishing these vain desires you are feeding an insatiable destroyer, who will consume *all* your precious things; who, though ever famished, will retain strength to torture even to the day of your death, unless, by the omnipotence of Divine help, you slay or weaken it *now*?

Have mercy on yourself while there is yet time. It may be that as you return night after night to your room—the home of your truest being—you feel

too sick-hearted with daily vanities to lift up even a sigh to the Physician of your soul: perhaps you dare not, because your mind still echoes with the folly of preceding hours; perhaps it is weighing the value of a few faded compliments, recalling looks which might be traced to something like admiring fondness, feeling about among the trifling incidents of a dinner-party or a dance for the most languid pulse of love. What vapid misery? and yet how difficult, how almost impossible, to dismiss at will the habitual tenants of your imagination. At such times prayer may seem to you like a mockery of holiness, for probably each day your *words* have asked that the thoughts of your heart might be sanctified, and your steps upheld in the right and narrow way; but do not, I beseech you, deprive yourself of the only remaining help.

There is *no degree* of sin or folly that can make it wrong for us to cry out, "Lord! if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" He can—oh entreat that He will; and though you have long wandered after vain things in a barren wilderness, do not for a moment doubt that he *can* bring you back to peace. Can a

Saviour withhold His pity, His aid, His prevailing love, from one of His flock who humbly cries to Him for succor? Even Jonah, who had not the fulness of promise granted to us, said, after his act of direct disobedience, "I am cast out of Thy sight, yet I will look again towards Thy holy temple." We can look unto Jesus, the propitiation for our sins, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The most sin-stricken heart may look to Him and be saved; and, for the despair consequent upon a long servitude to vanity, there is no consolation short of His pity, and His entire knowledge. He alone discerns by what a complex tissue of guilt, and folly, and evil influence the devil ensnares us, and makes our weakness both the veil and the instrument of sin. And if even a fellow-creature—for those who are in the same danger are often hardest on those that fall—if a fellow-creature can feel such compassion for the sinner as leaves no room in the heart for severe condemnation, may we not hope that He who "knows all, yet loves us better than He knows," still tenderly regards our prostrate souls, and may yet find a way for their escape?

"The creature was made subject to vanity," says the inspired writer (Romans viii. ver. 20). It may be that our subjection to its curse is something of appointed doom, as well as of guilty choice; but I do not venture to allow myself this excuse for one *conscious* movement of vanity, either in the heart or in outward action, nor for anything which I can forsake as being of evil tendency; it is for that instinctive appetency for what is vain, and for the bondage of the mind to external influence, that I need and apply this scriptural apology.

Let us now turn from an extreme case of folly and wretchedness, and consider the more common state of those who have left youth far behind.

"Our bodies had their morning, have their noon,
And shall not better;—the next change is night;
But their fair larger guest, t' whom sun and moon
Are sparks and short-lived, claims another right.

"The noble soul by age grows lustier." *

A comfortable creed, and in theory it must be true of

* Donne.

every soul that is going on unto perfection ; yet, practically, there are so many retrograde movements in our spiritual course, even when we are on the whole advancing, that the light of Christian *hope* does not always shine more and more as it approaches perfect day. If sin does not obscure, sorrow often hides its lustre ; and thus it sometimes happens that the humble-minded woman whose chief care is to serve and please God suffers very considerable abatements of happiness from finding herself less able to please her fellow-creatures than she used to be. Not to mention the many more disagreeable ways in which she may be reminded of this, we must allow that even the indifference of strangers strongly contrasts with the general welcome given to youth and fresh looks. It is an accidental stroke glancing lightly over the outside of her peculiar trials, but, as being connected with these, it may wound. It may remind her that her heart now shivers beside extinguished fires ; that thought is still busy among the wrecks of old hopes, looking for no new venture ; and all the dust and rubbish of broken purposes and dead interests, dis-

turbed by a transient touch, may make the atmosphere, long since purified by resignation, so heavy and dark that every fair prospect is for the time shut out.

Her sure trust in God, and patient waiting for heaven's joy, will save her under these influences from anguish of spirit, but not always from extreme dejection. Even from this I think that there is lifting up, when the advantages of middle age are well understood.

CHAPTER II.

"Profound the voiceless aching of the breast,
When weary life is like a grey dull eve,
Emptied of colour, withering and waste
Around the prostrate soul, too weak to grieve—
Stretch'd far below the tumult and strong cry
Of passion—its lamenting but a sigh."
The Music Master, A love-story by WM. ALLINGHAM.

"LE monde usé pour moi n'a plus rien qui me touche." This is the thought of many a grave woman when, pausing among the irksome trifles of an uninteresting period, she meditates upon her position in life, and asks herself what are its objects, its hopes, its results upon earth? and finds no answer in the silence of a vacant heart.

Discipline, probation, would be a sufficient answer to conscience, if she asked, "Why do I live any longer?" but that question is at rest in a religious mind, and what she often looks for in vain is the stimulus of secondary motives, which, though utterly

unable to make us happy without the predominance of religious principles, are yet with few, if any, exceptions indispensable for earthly welfare.

Observe in a religious woman the effects of losing her strongest secondary motive. The loss of a great love (of which almost every woman is able to form some estimate) is a loss greater than any human understanding can measure, for, on whomsoever she lavished such love, it was, while it lasted, the life of her life. To call it the sunshine of her world is no exaggeration of poetry; though fitful, and often clouded, and sometimes cruel in its fierce shining, it was the light that suffused every thought, every action, every object seen by her during the years through which it lasted. In its genial warmth all the brightest and most tender parts of her character expanded; it was withdrawn, quenched by the will of God, no matter how, and without it she must complete her life's long journey. Shades less dark, because uncontrasted with sunshine, may now cross her path, and a more temperate atmosphere may be about her; God's word may be a lantern under her feet, and a light unto her paths, and yet

must it not be to her a darkened world, not only when the first long desert of desolation is overpassed, but even when she revives, and, having seen "the vanities of after and before," resolves to lead a true and patient life, unsupported by any hope that can perish? Even then her contentment is stern, her feelings cold; hard armour for a woman's heart, and she must often faint under it. Then comes the effect of all this upon the temper; if missing the little dues of love that used to sweeten everything embitters it, if the unrest of a heart that has no longer an earthly home makes it pettish, if there is an acrimonious recollection of wasted feeling occasionally disturbing a constrained calm, can we wonder? All the elasticity of joy is gone; and the lost supposition that she is probably liked by all, because she is supremely loved by one, is replaced by a numbing belief that she is intrinsically unlovable. A belief which often goes far towards producing its own justification. Perhaps few of us know how much amiability and agreeable manners depend on the pleasant confidence (which only happy experience can give) that they have been and will be liked.

It is very soothing to a woman to feel that she is generally kindly thought of by all in whose society she joins; it is a superstition which cannot fail to strengthen the sweetest tendencies of every well-disciplined nature. But, when love which "is immortal till it change or die" fades away, how can any one value mere *liking*, or easily believe in its permanence? Not the drooping spirit to whom it seems that

"a terrible heart dearth
Reigns for *her* in heaven and earth."

Yes—even in heaven; for at times she has felt as if heaven, with all its ministering angels, was fighting against her: was it not known *there* that she was leaning on a broken reed when she knelt to give thanks for secured happiness and unchangeable love?

It is easy to speak confidently of the unfailing consolations of our religious faith; but to feel them when first bewildered by a great sorrow is very difficult, and very uncommon; for any degree of despair confuses the mind, and the especial providence which was never doubted in happier times seems distant and

uncertain when the "cloud is thick, and the storm great." And though faith triumphs, though by divine grace in all that the mind believes the heart completely trusts, we must not expect faith to *remove* the sufferings which it enables us to endure.

It must be fairly owned that we cannot in all ways make an imperishable hope a consoling substitute for those of which we so bitterly bewail the extinction; if we could, then would not our affliction seem grievous.

It is not, I think, only from man's fatal perversity that, if no reasonable hope presents itself, one quite as unreasonable will just as fully occupy the heart and mind; an earthly hope combines with earthly circumstances of every kind, takes nourishment from all, enlivens all; very different is the action of the one great hope worthy of our utmost efforts,—the hope of pleasing God.

This, though but in its earthly weakness, may kindle all our energies in solitude, and may be the mainspring of every *conscious* act of duty; but when the pettinesses of daily life press upon us, as, for

instance, when several dull and unfamiliar companions are hemming us in, how far easier, alas! how far pleasanter, to corrupt nature is the thought of an absent one who loves us, of doings that may interest and please that one, than the blessed though awful truth, "*Thou God seest me.*" This can give dignity to the most insignificant occurrence, and quicken us to good, and wise, and kindly dealings with every fellow-creature. But from the extreme reluctance and occasional inability of a fallen nature thus to exalt its habitual tone of thought, it often happens that a noble-minded woman, when bereaved of her hope of this world's happiness, declines to a much lower state of feeling than she has ever known before, without giving up any degree of hope for her future existence; she will retain this as her only stay, yet lamentably overlook many of those consolations and incitements to happy exertion which that hope involves; in fact, she will often look upon the eternal life which through Christ we inherit, as a state so entirely future that the torpor and joylessness of a depressed spirit seem to her quite excusable.

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Well for her if under this erroneous impression she does not snatch at the poor accessories of worldly comfort as a temporary solace, and thus sink gradually into the mournful condition so shocking to her earlier tastes, of a woman given up to making herself comfortable,

“Se stessa amando, poichè niun pur l' ama.”

It is a very natural consequence of having no one on whom to lavish the infinite tenderness of a womanly heart. The heart that in other circumstances would, we may suppose, have had an inexhaustible love for all that were added to the home-circle, finds itself the centre of one so much more distant from its influence, that undisputed room is left for the growth of inordinate egotism: time for true love and deep interest in relations and friends, but yet leisure for morbid solicitude about self. Poor, lonely self! which every year makes more incapable of love, concentrating in its narrow focus more of the petty cares, the trifling but absorbing anxieties, of a never-sleeping selfishness. *Nothing* external can long please a heart

so perverted from the wholesome course of nature; and grace earnestly implored, duties scrupulously fulfilled, cannot give it joy, and hardly peace.

A sad resignation to the will of God, and an unrefreshing, laborious charity, every now and then brightened by the intensities of reciprocal friendship, are all we can hope for when "anxious self, life's cruel taskmaster," is the most interesting object of every thought and wish.

You will, perhaps, think from what is here said that, while pretending to combat, I do really agree with the tenor of your most melancholy reflections, and that I should sigh in full assent, if you say with Chénier,

*"Ma vie est sans couleurs, et mes pâles journées
M'offrent de longs ennuis l'enchaînement certain."*

But it is not so; I have only stayed so long among disadvantages and sorrows to prove that it is not ignorance, or want of sympathy, which emboldens me to assert that in great measure these sorrows are as full of delusion as the hopes which time has

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already scattered; that they are not, I believe, "according to the will of God," and often need not be at all.

"Grief almost always may be fancy called,
And ah! too oft is joy but fancy too!
But should we therefore turn aside from joy,
And, slave-like, cling to rigid grief alone?
No—let us fathom deeply sorrow's source;
Reflection is the real magic song
Beneath whose spell the gloomy shadows fly
Wherewith an evil spirit haunts the heart."

E. SCHULZE.

No sensitive heart will deny that "life is full of weary days;" but these need not be comfortless, even in the "set grey life" of middle-aged women who walk through it alone; is not our eternal life already begun? Grief and inactivity belong to Death: we can, indeed, suffer ourselves to be buried in the dying things of a dying world, to remain for a length of time sleeping for sorrow; but this is *not* the lot appointed to us by our Father; not this the peace to which we were called by Him who has overcome the world, and therefore bids us to be of good cheer.

Surely those who do not rejoice are ill able to advance with humble intrepidity against those enemies of His and ours that encompass every earthly position: for how can we show forth His glory, or testify of His goodness, unless we feel that to *us* He has been very gracious; and how can she feel this to whom every day is a burden borne wearily without use or joy? I can never forget the untold misery of an uninteresting existence, but if I can persuade you to believe what appears to me to be truth, you will see that no part of our existence need be uninteresting.

CHAPTER III.

" Poi che voi ed io più volte abbiam provato,
Come 'l nostro sperar torna fallace ;
Dietr' a quel sommo ben, che mai non spiace,
Levate 'l core a più felice stato." PETRARCA.

" Parmi udire : O stolto e pien d' obbligo,
Dal pigro suono omai
Destati, e di corregger t' apparecchia
Il folle error che già teco s' invecchia.
Fors' è presso a l' occaso, e tu nol sai
Il sol ch' esser ti par sul mezzo giorno :
Onde più vaneggiar ti si disdice." CASTIGLIONE.

THE thoughtful heart that has survived many of its dearest hopes cannot fail to notice a manifest intention of the Divine mind to destroy or abate every hope of man, except those which wait for eternal satisfaction. Let even those who have tasted hope's perfect fulfilment say whether there is not generally some alloy, some surprising flaw or rapid decay, in that rare bliss, which justifies the poet's accusation of hope as

“ A cloud that gilt and painted now appears,
But must drop presently in tears.”

And as for disappointment, from the least thing to the greatest, we are incessantly taught its bitter but wholesome lessons.

In our greatest prosperity we cannot avoid coming to these conclusions;—that happiness is seldom intended to reach us by any expected means; and that, if sanguine anticipations are a help to cheerfulness, it is not previous instances of success that keep them alive, but the obstinate strength of a natural instinct. We learn, at last, that happiness is the gift of God, independent of the means we employ for securing it; and that it is oftener given when it seems improbable, than when it is reckoned upon as a certainty. Whether this lesson is taught by reiterated disappointments, or by the success that enables us to see the “end of all perfection,” it is equally powerful to disenchant; but not always salutary, not always producing in undeceived hearts the resignation to which it points.

In some there is deep resentment against what is

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called Fate, or "the state of things," in order to avoid the obvious sin of resisting the Disposer of every fate; a resentment that vents itself in words hopelessly sad, or in confessions of a universal distrust; so trying to ease

"The mocking heart, that scarcely dares confess
E'en to itself the strength of its own bitterness:"

—in others, a sullen and cold reserve, the effort so utterly to condemn the sources of past delusion, as to think them unworthy of mention, or even of inward regret:—in others, studied frivolity, a determination to ignore anything deeper than the light impulses which the world understands, and the transient affections which no reverse can wound:—while in another cast of nature we see all former interests condemned as having been ties to earth; even natural taste thwarted as a rebel: and the whole being surrendered to a minute observance of religious discipline, and the exactions of bigotry mistaken for the best aids of godliness.

But these are not the necessary fruits of "the cer-

tainty that struck hope dead." There are those who, better understanding what the will of the Lord is, meekly accept the pains of gradual mortification. They know that they *must* be detached from every earthly object that in the least degree separates from God; and yet they do not turn away from these objects altogether, because they are His gifts. They know that God smites their pleasant things, and leaves them lonely in a desert land, in order that they may better hear His voice, and desire His love, and feel that He is indeed *their* God; and therefore they thank Him for the emptiness of their present life, confessing that only thus could the hungry soul be urged to satisfy itself with things that shall endure.

When first recovering from a great affliction, this appears difficult, almost impossible; and, after recent excitements of passion, the utmost stretch of piety seems as if it would still leave a great void and silence in the heart; but it is not found to be so by those who in the desert have trusted God.

A great and wonderful work is to be wrought in

every one who will submit to be guided by Infinite Wisdom; the feeble creature is to will what God wills; to be raised from all its little perishing interests; and to seek the glory of God, and the good of His creatures (not excluding itself) as a portion of that glory.

Whatever sorrow or bereavement befalls is a fresh proof that this exaltation is still designed for us: do any reject it, and set their hearts upon a lower good, still God is strong and patient; still He waits to be gracious.

Observe, I entreat you, in how many ways He gently strives with our foolish propensity to go down lower. Mental pursuits, noble and good though they be, cannot console you, and will not prosper, if you begin to treat them as ultimate ends; nor will the objects of your most self-sacrificing love flourish, if you idolize them: even plans for doing good to other people will be frustrated, if every purpose and wish is not subordinated, without reserve, to the faithful service of your Master.

To most of us it is, I hope, less difficult than it

once was, to believe that *mercy* imposes hard and sorrowful service. At an early age many souls are shaken by the surmise that the Christian religion may be only a temporary system adapted to the discipline of childish intellects; later in life we have learned that it is securely based on eternal truths, which *cannot* be altered, though Heaven and earth should pass away; and belief in these truths, growing as we grow, establishes in us a calming persuasion that they so essentially belong to our peace, that to neglect them is to cast ourselves adrift from the only anchor we have in a stormy and dangerous sea.

Again, how often, in the surprise of grief, the young are tempted to doubt the goodness of God; but each year that has taught us more and more of our natural wretchedness has added new evidence of His love; and, having known this love to support us during many severe trials, we are surely able to dismiss, as futile, any train of ideas that would suggest the *possibility* of our peculiar need being overlooked or unprovided for now.

And though we cannot at all times *feel* this love,

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nor always discern the tenderness of a father, it is none the less certain to our faith; we *cannot* doubt it now: as well might people recently blinded doubt that there is a glorious sun shedding light on all the world.

Yet, in spite of unshaken confidence in the merciful designs of God, there remains much blindness to the *present* advantage of the means by which they are carried out. Doubtless the time will come when, looking back upon the scene of our probation, we shall say with astonishment at our past ingratitude: "What could have been done more for us that He has not done? how could our eternal welfare have been better secured?"

But now our spiritual perceptions are dull, and God's pitiful chastisements coming to us in the disguise of our own infirmity, or by the instrumentality of other second causes, we too often forget that each one is sent for healing, that each one is profitable to us, and indispensably needed for our cure.

This barrenness of interest in our daily life, how hurtful! What a sad pity and waste of power we

should think it in a world of our own arranging! I once thought it so, but now it appears to me a pause in the headlong rush of human propensities which we could ill spare. At the age of thirty-five or forty, with few exceptions, the half of life is gone; those who have got so far in it know that they can have but a short time left for the completion of their earthly course: forty years more, or fifty, in all probability, at the longest, and their eternal state will be unalterable (woe to them, if they *reckon* on even four or five); yet what a crowd of temporal interests will beset them in those few years! how eager and occupying will be the world around them! how heavy the pressure of body upon spirit! how increasing the infirmities of both! Do they not really *need* a short space of leisure and rest from external distractions, before they press forward again on the thronged road which leads so certainly to an unchangeable condition? Surely it is a mercy if, at any time, it is granted to us to see where we stand, and whither we tend, without the blinding light of hope or the limited views of intense anxiety. We can then look

back and observe what faults have most nearly worked our ruin, what natural abilities we have misused, and what habits need reform; past experience, if honestly consulted, will be an emphatic witness on all these points. "We are" then "very sensible how hardly teaching years do learn what roots old age contracteth unto errors, and how such as are but acorns in our younger brows grow oaks in our elder heads, and become inflexible unto the powerfulllest arm of reason;" for we are then conscious of follies which have gained the privilege of habit, and we know that we often most readily commit the sin for which we grieve most bitterly. But these oaks are not yet matured by *old* age: strong and inflexible though they be, it is yet in our power to cut down some and root out others; the plague of our bosom sins may yet be stayed. Let us not waste one hour in fruitless lamentation, for it is still day, and the time for successful work. That night, the hour of death, which surely cometh, "when no man can work," will make us sigh for a time as rich in possibilities as this.

"Time flows from instants, and of these each one
Should be esteem'd as if it were alone.
The shortest space, which we so lightly prize
When it is coming, and before our eyes,
Let it but slide into the eternal main,
No realms, no worlds, can purchase it again."

In youth we know little of the worth of present time; probably it was valued mainly with regard to some future, or occupied by the thoughts of some regretted past; but now, the many deceits of hope, and the bitters occasionally offered by memory to the reverted mind, shut us up into the present more frequently, and from single-hearted attention to the husbandry of *present* things, we may derive a permanent vigor, which no previous feeling could have enabled us to anticipate.

When the mind is no longer absorbed in *one* interest, when an engrossing object is removed even from the ken of hope, multitudes of lesser interests and unexciting joys are often discovered; for, as

"Things of delicate and tenderest worth
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth
By one consuming flame,"

so one predominant desire will cause you to pass by without notice many springs of happiness. Life has more affluence of joy than you can imagine when you see that all you once promised yourself is evidently *not* to be found in *your* life; and it is at those times when you think you are come to the end of all illusions, and *therefore* suppose life to be empty of enduring interests, that you are most completely deluded. For this world *has* many and great pleasures, as well as many and cruel pains; and, when we are joyless, it is from our own deficiencies that we suffer, and not, as melancholy minds are ready to believe, from being able wisely to see through and disdain all that once pleased: perhaps we lose vivid perceptions, and imagination, and keen feeling, while we gain experience and the knowledge of the world that increases sorrow; but I think one may say, without presumption, that every thought which *terminates* in sorrow owes its plausible semblance of wisdom to ignorance and imperfect faith.

You may naturally think, when looking on to a future that *cannot* hold the happiness for which you

have hoped hitherto, that it must necessarily be a wearisome continuation of the present. It may be so in its external features (though that is not often likely); but you know little of the infinite resources of Providence, and the expansive faculties of an immortal spirit, if you think that years can pass by without causing a renovation of its activity, and a plentiful growth of new interests, and perhaps new pleasures.

A short time may bring more of both than you well know what to do with; you may come to feel that the varied occupations of every day are sometimes too interesting, and offer too many distractions for the mind that you would fain keep in settled composure; thinking that the hurry of external proceedings defrauds you of the leisure necessary for your soul's health, you may be inclined to say,

“Still might I keep this mind, there were enough
 Within myself (beside that cumbrous stuff
 We seek without) which husbanded aright
 Would make me rich in all the world's despite.”

At such a time, should you attain it, you will find

your temptations very different from those which now trouble you.

Even if you correctly anticipate the *circumstances* of your life, if it is to be continued on a dead level of unbroken sameness, you cannot possibly foresee, what is of much greater consequence than its external course, the thoughts and feelings that may affect you, you know not how soon. And though it is true that to a very wonderful degree we make our own fate, and see, and hear, and notice only those things in the outer world which in some way accord with our private experience, yet God *can* at any moment effect the most sudden spiritual revolutions. You may not yet know them, but there are thoughts which once entering the heart can quicken it with new energy, fire every noble impulse, and leave no room for the sorrows that have been brooded over so long in sullen hopelessness. I do *not* mean earthly hopes in disguise, or love, or anything that has a worldly apparatus for the formation of its spells, but an idea, a truth which may be as a mighty lever for raising the soul to heights never imagined before ; and may touch it with a force

as unexpected as the sudden rise of wind after a dead calm, a wind that sweeps the sky clear of every cloud, and makes every leaf to dance, and every rain-drop to glitter at its glad awakening.

These influences could quickly change the atmosphere of your mind, and make you to live indeed; no longer existing only, uncertain of any advantage in this life except the discipline by which it prepares you for another.

Now in this limitation of the worth of life lies, as I think, the great danger of many pious hearts. Because those who do not fear God, too highly prize earthly blessings, those who would be holy are apt to underrate them: though to "love life and to see good days" does not seem to have been thought an unworthy desire by King David, and though we are told by St. Paul that "God giveth us richly all things to enjoy," yet how seldom is enjoyment regarded by us as a real part of our duty. How many seek for no better attitude of mind than that of entire resignation! but in the lives of most people, true gratitude and a lively faith can add *joy* to resignation. All

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that I have set before you in this chapter is so commonplace, that it would be absurd to offer it to any strong-hearted reader. In depression we often need to be reminded of undoubted and self-evident truths—be this my excuse.

CHAPTER IV.

"The government of the soul must be altered from the rule of popular opinions, and the tyranny of fancies and imaginations, to the sole command of Christian reason. In this great alteration let us command all our powers."—SIMON PATRICK'S *Heartsease*.

"Les occupations mécaniques calment la pensée en l'étouffant; l'étude, en dirigeant l'esprit vers des objets intellectuels, distrait de même des idées qui dévorent. Le travail, de quelque nature qu'il soit, affranchit l'âme des passions dont les chimères se placent au milieu des loisirs de la vie. . . . L'amour de l'étude, loin de priver la vie de l'intérêt dont elle a besoin, a tous les caractères de la passion, excepté celui qui cause tous ses malheurs, la dépendance du sort et des hommes."—MADAME DE STAEL, *Sur l'Influence des Passions sur le Bonheur*.

It would be difficult to persuade those who conceive themselves to be "arrivés à cet âge où l'on retrouve le calme dans le découragement accepté, où l'on congédie toutes les chimères séduisantes de la vie," that they have as yet no right to apply to themselves the conclusion of the sentence, and to designate *their* age as that also "où l'on s'assied sur le seuil de sa porte, comme l'ouvrier à la fin du jour pour voir passer les

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autres, pensant à tous ceux qui sont déjà passés, et à Dieu qui ne passe pas."* It would be very difficult to arouse them from their passive state to an active employment of life, but it is their right to accept the soothing opiates of discouragement which I am eager to dispute.

What seductive chimeras have they dismissed, except those of vain hope, vain glory, and unhappy love? These being overcome, and a better chance of gaining truth, a wider field for doing good before them, will they be so cowardly as to resign themselves to meditative *inaction*? Are they so benumbed with the frost that killed their own tree of hope, so stunned by the blow that overthrew their own towers of pride, that thenceforward they will risk no efforts, but sit down and think of past loss, till death makes effort here impossible? Let it not be so, let us busy ourselves in a diligent use of the blessings that remain.

You who have wearied your hearts among the vanities of life do well to turn from them; but because you have scattered your powers among things

* Lamartine.

that do not profit, it does not follow as a reasonable consequence, that they can only be well applied by reducing them all to *one* mode of action. The unreasonable instincts of reaction would prompt you to attempt this, and you would thereby run into new errors. One thing, indeed, is needful, and that one thing demands single-hearted devotion; but if life was intended by our Creator to be spent solely in those religious duties to which you would now attach an undue, because it is an *exclusive*, degree of importance, what would be the use of the various riches of His creation, the various powers of mind with which He has endowed us? for what would they avail in a life that rejected every object not immediately connected with religion?

If you intend to enter upon such a life, leave happiness out of your calculation; for an unnatural state of things—contrary, I mean, to the nature God gave us before sin depraved it—must be an unhappy one. Unless we had entered into the counsel of the Most High, we could not understand *why* it must be so; it is enough for me to know that He

gave, and redeemed, and will restore and glorify, this very human nature from which I derive a *multiplicity* of interests and affections; and though I press towards a mark higher than any of the transient joys to which they impel me, I *dare* not tread *them* down even if I would.

When speaking of entire dedication to the work of advancing the glory of God, and the good of His creatures, I observed incidentally that from this desired good we must not exclude *ourselves*; and, when trying to find out means of good, I see no reasonable escape from the prevailing opinion, that cultivation of intellect is extremely good for the individual as well as for society, a means of receiving as well as of imparting very great benefits.

After all that has been said and written about intellectual development (not only by the wise), it is natural that we should feel a distaste for the subject, a secret inclination to dispute the pretensions with which the advocates of learning have so imperiously wearied our attention: and besides, in these days people live so fast, that we often see an interest in some

study, or a keen delight in some science or art, ominously survived; so that both by the words and the deeds of their upholders we are led to mistrust the excess of patronage that is now given to learning, and to wish for at least twenty years' rest from the word *intellectual*.

Yet we should be in danger of slighting *many* important truths, if their popularity, and the number of triflers who gave it voice, lessened their value in our minds. Coin that has had a wide currency cannot look so bright and so worthy of being treasured up as it did when fresh from the mint, but it is quite as valuable for common use; and brain coinage, we may be sure, cannot gain this currency without having considerable intrinsic worth.

As I have frequently noticed that those whose minds have the widest range and the deepest insight are generally in favor of high mental culture, I do not allow myself to doubt its advantages because I find a great deal of nonsense is said about it also; but believe with entire conviction that it is every way good for a woman to cultivate her mind to any

degree, and in every direction which does not incapacitate her for more immediate usefulness, usefulness of that sort which being seen, and susceptible of tangible proof, is often called active service, in contradistinction to that which is felt and seldom seen, but which is none the less service for others because it calls into effective action every spiritual energy.

How many common errors are admitted from the habit of unconscious antithesis! Because needle-work and pudding-making are active work for the hands, study and earnest discipline of the mind are not unfrequently called dreamy and theoretic work for the convenience of stirring people, who, if they sometimes tried what sort of work this soundless industry was, would not be so ready to call it "sitting idle over a book."

But to you who have before you this difficult problem—how to make life happy as well as useful, without some of the chief ingredients of woman's happiness,—I need not say that the disposal of many still hours, unclaimed for any visible activity, is often the very hardest part of your daily tasks. Be sure that it is worthy of your best endeavors; and whatever

misgivings may at first disquiet you, think it no form of disguised selfishness which prompts you (no other duty being neglected) to diligent study and careful self-improvement; for, if you have strong intellectual abilities, with *them* you will be able to honor God and serve man.

If you have strong intellectual abilities,—this is the question on which many of your time expenses must depend. Perhaps you cannot answer it for yourself, and would be piqued if any one else decided it for you in the negative: yet what a relieving clearance it might make in your life if you would be brave enough to pronounce on yourself, or humble enough to accept from the mouth of another, one of those summary verdicts with which you hear the pretensions of other people dismissed; such as—"She ought to let music alone, she has no natural taste for it." "Literature is not at all in her way, why will she attempt to persuade herself that it is?" "Why will such a one profess artistic tastes? they are *not* her forte by any means." Could you endure these abrupt assertions of the truth manifest to your

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intimates, though only now and then suspected by yourself, what a vexatious waste of time and trouble it would save! You might then quietly stimulate every taste which nature *had* implanted, undisturbed by fruitless efforts to cherish those that will never thrive, because the soil is unsuitable: you would be spared the repeated mortifications of failure and discouraging comparisons; you would have, as I think, a healthier mind, and be a much happier woman.

Do not, however, take difficulty in cultivating talents as a proof of their absence, for that would be a mistake fatal to perseverance. The most indubitable natural talent needs industrious cultivation to bring it into easy exercise; and especially in any kind of study or accomplishment which is new to us, or has been long neglected, do we need an obstinate determination to proceed in spite of defeat; for in all beginnings of work there are preliminary discomfitures that threaten its complete overthrow, and a darkening chill of hope which I can only compare to the slowly diminishing brightness of a candle just after it is lit; we wait for a few minutes, and the dim

flame reaches its fuel; so we may toil on for a few months unrefreshed by any sign of success, but by degrees the subject of our study takes hold of the mind, and, kindling all its powers, liberally rewards the patience of our application.

Setting aside those acquirements for which natural talent may or may not dispose you, I should *unconditionally* recommend a steady and patient habit of learning; not only for the sake of knowledge (though for all that you learn in a thorough way time will surely bring a use), but also for the invaluable discipline that such a habit gives to the whole character, so long as the mind will

“know her place,”

and that among the objects of a Christian's anxiety

“She is the second, not the first;”

for then will it grow

“not alone in power

And knowledge, but from hour to hour

In reverence and in charity.”

The self-idolised intellect is necessarily infatuated.

Lay in ample stores of sound knowledge, as much as you can gain of real information; it is precious gain: for many years you may not see its use, it may seem to you a make-believe interest, an aimless accumulation, by means of which you distract your thoughts lest they listen to the heart, or wound it with old sorrows; but it is impossible for you *then* to appreciate the advantage of a well furnished mind. Afterwards, when some great truth begins to touch it upon any point, you will be astonished at the degrees of light and ardent force communicated to you through those unvalued treasures.

Take it also as a certain rule, that in the proportion that your nature is enriched by cultivation will your means for giving help and comfort to others be increased.

The same power of mind which keeps your attention fixed while reading the dry historic detail of a long campaign, will enable you resolutely to persist in carrying on some dull work for the assistance of another person. Therefore, if when sitting down to the abstracted tasks of self-teaching your mind is

harassed by the thought, "Is not this a selfish way of spending time?" allow *some* weight to my assertion, that, if it is self-pleasing, it certainly is not necessarily self-ended.

Pride, or vanity, or the neglect of more obvious duties, may give such employment a bad character; but its own, uncombined with these faults, is *very* beneficent.

Look around you, consult your own remembrance, if you wish for proof of this; see the *positive* evils, the sin and the misery caused by folly: observe the self-betrayal and worldliness of an undisciplined intellect, and judge whether it can ever be right to regard mental training with indifference, or to mistrust it as a questionable advantage.

I think we too often speak of good powers of mind, as if they were so much over and above the wants of daily life, a luxury not needed nor always desirable. Is not this an error? The greatest force of human intellect is but weak, compared with what we were originally intended to possess: it is sin that has made folly so common, and wisdom so rare; and

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wisdom and goodness are so closely connected, that a serious attention to the dictates of reason could not fail to insure a more perfect compliance with those of conscience. Now we all know that, in order to hear the voice of reason, we must bring our lower impulses into subjection and temporary silence; and who that has reached the age of thirty does not know the exceeding difficulty of doing this?

Who among us has not felt the terrible energy with which the passions will sometimes oppose reason? and even when the storms of feeling are all at rest, is any woman ignorant of the strange power that a fixed idea may obtain in her mind, often occupying it with an intensity of feeling that one strives vainly to abate? "There is no need of fetters, he shall go bound and chained by an idea," said Cecil, when speaking of the mysteries of man's self-tormenting spirit.

By unrelaxing diligence in study, we *can* often withdraw the mind from the secret thralldom; and every hour that we are unconscious of this sort of slavery, we are gaining strength for the recovery of our freedom. It is one of the great evils of single life

(though not confined to any state), that so much time is left for head and heart to foster their own especial foibles: the life of the most commonplace matron raises her perforce from a variety of little harassing annoyances, from the thick crop of self-sown thorns which many a lonely heart is mournfully harvesting. The mistress of a household cannot, in most cases, stop to notice the trifles that often distress an *unoccupied* single woman,—she generally has not time to be chagrined at slights from without, and fancies from within; but the other has too often leisure for them all.

These are bubbles of vanity that the close-pressed business of an active life could leave no room for. Within the solitary heart a sadly unreasonable throng of girlish perplexities and girlish fears will often arise also, and the agitation they cause will be miserably intensified by shame for what is ridiculous, and alarm at what long experience has proved potent.

Perhaps few suffer more acutely than those whose refined self-respect is outraged by needless and inexpli-

cable embarrassment. Dwelling on the circumstances that occasion it, or analysing the emotions that accompany this painful nervous seizure, is worse than useless: you may ponder all day upon something that has disturbed your equilibrium, with the most determined honesty of purpose, and yet never be able to decide how much of vanity, or pride, or self-seeking was at work among the other elements of *flutter*; such, for instance, as partial monomania from long seclusion, excessive influence from powerful natures, or merely bodily weakness. One thing you may be sure of, that there was enough of sin (not perhaps at the time, but past sin that acted as a preparatory train of combustibles,) and of folly also, past or present, to need pardon; why not ask for it in simple, childlike regret for even unconscious faults, and leave to your all-knowing Judge the examination which your very nature precludes you from carrying on fairly? It is for you to watch, lest you enter into temptation, and, as I truly believe that a long musing upon past defects makes the mind incapable of present vigilance, let me entreat you to be more

economical in your expenditure of thoughts than women usually are. We all practically underrate their importance, and yet an allowed thought is the *deed* of the spirit. Could we see all the calamity brought upon ourselves and on other people, by entertaining thoughts that are foolish and wrong, we should be more careful to keep them in a right channel.

I call it a foolish thought which *consciously* reverts to an irremediable sorrow, for no other purpose than self-pity. Why are we not in this respect, at least, as considerate of our own peace, as we are of the peace of any other heart? By common politeness we are used to avoid subjects that are painful to our companions, when no good is to be gained by alluding to them; might we not advantageously practise the same sort of tact with ourselves, and avoid all profitless self-annoyance, all meditation on sorrowful questions which admit of no answer but the "so be it" of sighing resignation?

"He," says Jeremy Taylor, "who reflects upon all disturbances, switches and spurs his passion, and

strives to overtake sin, and to be tied unto infelicity." While we spare so little time in the hurry of life for thankfulness,—all the blessings that surround us being carelessly accepted as things of course,—unless we guard against it, abundance of time will be given to every detail of discontent.

Though the perversity and ingratitude of the human heart is notorious, I often marvel at this, and picture to myself the pitiful surprise of angels, the remorseful envy of lost spirits, if *they* witness this common spectacle, a self-tormented murmurer.

Pray think for a few moments upon our daily neglect of the duty of rejoicing ; think of the glad reception and hearty enjoyment of common mercies which gratitude would require ; of the *many* pleasures open to the feeling, thoughtful mind ; remember how boundless are the resources of nature and art for the gratification of *every* innocent taste ; and then try to calculate how long *you* are in the habit of dwelling on these pleasures, compared to your frequent cogitations on what is "so provoking, so *very* annoying, so unfortunate."

Think of the hours wasted in feeble fretting over inevitable trials, and ask yourself if it might not be worth while to abstain from this sort of occupation more than you do; resolutely to turn away the mind's eye from distasteful objects to which no *duty* leads, and to fix it on things that offer increasing delight the longer and the more closely we study them.

It is very natural for a woman to be plaintive, but the self-love which yields itself to perpetual brooding over daily trials, is as cruel a love as that of parents who ruin children by their weak indulgence.

If we are careful as to what acquaintance we make in the outer world, and would exclude from intimacy an undesirable associate, much more should we be on our guard as to what thoughts we converse with in the wide world within; for in the labyrinths of the heart are fellow-conspirators for any evil fancy; and darkness enough to hide their workings until discontent, or envy, or hate, or unreasonable love, is invested with all the powers of imagination, and can assume imperious sway. And besides, the human

mind has such infinite capacities, that unless it is fed with a rich supply of interests, it must in part be left vacant, and become more and more prone to sin from the admission of legionary vanities; therefore (the transition sounds odd, but it is not inconsequent,) I counsel you to get as much familiarity with any science, or art, or history, or even with any one period of history, as you possibly can. It is well to have a refuge for your thoughts in the wonders of the microscope, the astonishments of chemistry, the ancient secrets of geology, in France, or America, or any other place, so that the refuge be worthy, and remote from personal interests.

Our home sunshine must often be dimmed by clouds of petty chagrins; it is then of the greatest service, to other people as well as to ourselves, to be able to change the climate of our thoughts.

The dissensions and slow struggles you read of, such as the long, often renewed wars of Lombardy, seem to have nothing to do with you or your earthly fate, but they have often quite as much to do with it as the worrying trifles that would vainly disturb the

unoccupied mind. To speculate upon the designs of popes and cardinals long ago dead would be, I think, at least as useful as to balance probabilities upon the question of whether so and so was surprised and hurt, or secretly admiring something that occurred previously.

Some hearts would recover a priceless freedom if for them by-gones could be by-gones indeed.

Whoever has any taste or talent to cultivate may provide herself with the most efficacious weapons against futile thoughts; and the very effort to give the mind a determined direction will be a valuable precaution against the tumult of feeling to which we are so often exposed. Even our best feelings need a firm restraint; without it they will quickly become passions: take, as the commonest instance, the unlimited fears to which so many women are a prey. To what lengths of ridiculous folly will these not go unless they are under the check of a well-exercised reason!

While speaking of the advantage of continuous study in the foregoing pages, I have had in view

minds of *average* ability ; where there is an uncommon strength of intellect, it is even more essential that it should be taxed with adequate exertion : sweetness of temper is rarely to be found with a brain habitually *under-fed* and imperfectly exercised. “ Un penchant qui n’a pas trouvé à s’appliquer donne pourtant quelques signes d’existence ; il tourmente d’un certain malaise celui qui l’éprouve, et nuit au développement harmonieux de ses facultés. L’âme qui n’exerce pas toutes ses forces subit un appauvrissement partiel, sans pouvoir se figurer ce qui lui manque.” *

I must again remind you that it is not the degree of consequence you *now* attach to any branch of knowledge which will give you a fair notion of its worth, or its good effect upon your future life ; for, until we have gone some little way in any pursuit, we cannot guess its value aright. Let the testimony of those who have carried it out weigh with you more than any distaste that may be only sloth-born.

* Mde. Necker de Saussure.



CHAPTER V.

"But when God so changes thy estate that thou art fallen into accidents to which thou art no otherwise disposed but by grace and a holy spirit, and yet thou canst pass through them with quietness, and do the work of suffering as well as the works of prosperous employment, this is an argument of a great grace and an extraordinary spirit."—JEREMY TAYLOR.

IN the last chapter I have spoken of the usefulness of a well-cultivated mind. Many people would have much to tell of its happiness, for it often brings *great* joys into the heart; but, when weighing them against the every-day pleasures of happy married life, I am disinclined to boast of these silent unparticipated joys. It is enough to praise them as a blessing which insures real and calm satisfaction to a contented spirit; but let no one hope, by the toil of the intellect, to appease the hunger of the heart,* for, however well-disciplined

* Coleridge's testimony of what he felt when listening to a "linked lay of truth, of truth profound a sweet continuous lay,"

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both may be, trust in such means will surely be disappointed.

The happiness of loving, and all the thousand little cares of unselfish affection, are woman's greatest happiness. I think no one will ever cheat herself into a contrary belief for many days together ; and a woman who has fully tried a variety of other interests, who has excelled in many accomplishments, and ripened in the light of much knowledge, will often be the first to own that in all these there is nothing so sweet as the joy she feels in some trifling service of love. She sees, with regard to happy love,

“ That when all's done, all tried, all counted here,
All great arts, and all good philosophies,
This love just puts its hand out in a dream,
And straight outreaches all things.”

is touching, and too true an echo of what is felt by many, both men and women, to be omitted here.

“ Ah! as I listened with a heart forlorn,
The pulses of my being beat anew:
And e'en as life returns upon the drown'd,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
Keen pangs of love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart.”

It is curious to observe the emphasis of the heart on some little matter, too slight for the notice of another, which as a representative of feeling becomes more important, and, for the time, far more engrossing than any intellectual effort. Time, so jealously guarded by the busy mind, is gladly lavished when needed for any purpose that touches the heart, and has to do with love, either past, present, or future; for feeling fills the soul more entirely than thought ever can, and there is a degree of *rest* in love which the loveless cannot know. Love seems to be an end for our whole being; all besides is but secondary, means through which we hurry, unpausing and unsatisfied. Many subjects interest us deeply; but let the heart speak, and that alone seems worth attending to. Alas! the solitary heart is apt to speak in a suffocated voice when no one listens for its sighs.

I think few things are more affecting to minds of any delicacy, than the convulsive efforts sometimes made by the love-hungry and unloved to appropriate affection; often as futile and contrary to reason as the wish to warm chill hands in the sunshine of a

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setting sun, but none the less pathetic. In some cases of this description there has been no heart-warming sunshine; thick clouds and cold airs all through the earlier part of life, and when the sky became clearer it was then *too late*.

“Should some malignant planet bring
 A barren drought, or ceaseless shower,
Upon the autumn or the spring,
 And spare us neither fruit or flower,
 Winter would not stay an hour!”

In other instances, happy love had been brought near enough to thrill with a short delirium of joy, and then ceased, leaving the afternoon of life cold, and dull, and grey; but in all these is a distempered state of feeling, which, whether it takes the form of fluttering anticipations or self-loathing timidity, infallibly dooms the unhappy sufferer to the manifold evils of disproportionate emotion. The proud and happily ignorant will laugh at all this as mere vanity. May they never know what anguish of mind such hapless vanity involves, and yet may they soon learn the womanly grace of pity!

Do not think that a woman's instinctive wish to please, to love, and be loved, can ever die before she dies: it may sleep, long crushed by overwhelming disadvantages; but it will often rouse too late, and move again as the sap moves in the trunk of a fallen tree, and clothes it with the piteous ornaments of an unseasonable, hopeless spring. And therefore those who speak of it as impossible, or with a tone of mockery, may unconsciously inflict pain; they speak of that which is alive to every chance touch, as if it was dead and insensible; as if that which *ought not* to be, necessarily *was not*,—a cruel error, and most unsuitable to the purpose for the sake of which it is sometimes defended. One folly was never successfully treated by another; and to ridicule that obstinate tenacity of hope is quite as unwise as allowing it in one's own heart.

Perhaps we can all look back to a time when the sombre serenity of elderly spinsters has caused us a pitiful surprise; we have wondered how they were able to survive hopes, without which life *then* seemed nothing worth; we have puzzled ourselves to imagine

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what joy they found in their quiet days, what interest in their dull employments. Their quiet, their seeming dulness, may now be *our* portion ; and yet we find no lack of excitements underneath that seeming. So it is with many who appear to all observers at rest in a long winter ; for sometimes, though reason has dismissed them, the ghosts of old feelings may haunt

“ the desolated heart
Which should have learn'd repose.”

Underneath earth's frost-bound surface lie many germs undestroyed. Should a warm week in December make them to push upwards, as if the smile of spring summoned them to beautiful life, it is not an inclination to *ridicule* that we feel.

Do not let us ever forget that we may all be liable to unseasonable emotion, and if we perceive any trace of it in ourselves, or in other people, let us meet it with respectful compassion ; and let us endeavor constantly to bear in mind that, for self-admiring love, this is indeed a winter time, intended for its utter extinction ; but that every impulse of kindness and

tender pity is now to grow and flourish in the bracing atmosphere of self-abnegation, being thus trained for full expansion in the light of an *eternal* spring.

There are, unhappily, very many who have to learn in middle age all the complicated sorrow of exile from the home of their childhood; only those who have been so rooted up can tell what this sorrow is. It is not simple grief; it is a revolution that painfully affects every habit of thought and action. Only they who are

"great in faith,
And strong against the grief of circumstance,"

can endure such complete change, such variety of loss, without repining. Not to speak of heart-anguish from bereavements, the mere fact of being removed to an entirely new locality causes many kinds of trial. We owe so much of our delight in nature's loveliness to our ever-growing store of associations; bitter and sweet, they all add a mellowing tint to each object on which the eye is wont to rest; and, when we are about to leave them, the writhed stem of an apple-

tree, the whiteness of a winding road, and emerald-green of home meadows have a language, vague and unemphatic ten years before, but now so piercing that, in order to avoid some measure of the pain it awakens, it would be well if in days of undisturbed prosperity we could attach our hearts to what is common in *all* country places—to the universal bounties of nature, the tender green tracery of April leaves, the shimmer of evening light on cornfields, the glowing clearness of a winter's horizon, and the like,—valuing every beauty of earth and sky that meets us *everywhere*, as the common furniture of our wide earthly home, the gifts of an ever-present Father, from whom neither life nor death can separate us if we steadfastly cleave to Him.

Again, many of our virtues are so far the result of our position and surroundings, that it is sometimes the saddest part of a change of home in middle age, that it occasions a new sense of inferiority. You may lose, so to speak, those who were as a sounding-board to the best parts of your character; and, by removal from the neighborhood that was rich in proofs of

your kindness and benevolent exertion, you may feel placed among aliens, and begin insensibly to share the same doubts of your powers of usefulness which ignorance of your character may cause in the minds of strangers.

To lose character with oneself in any way is very dejecting; but this dejection will be of use if it enables you to detect faults and weaknesses that had become so privileged in a friendly circle as to escape censure, and evade your own observation.

In any distant removal we lose weight of personal influence; we have, as it were, no capital of social respect to depend upon, and for tributes to our self-love we are thrown upon the immediate gains of personal prestige, at a time when we are least inclined to exert ourselves to win favor. It seems hard to her who knows she has capacity for exerting strong influence, and the spells by which passions are stirred, love kindled, and anger restrained at pleasure; it seems cruel for her to be confined to a circle where her powers are not recognised, and her influence hardly felt.

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To learn to hold peculiar powers in abeyance, and find pleasure from a sameness of petty duties and unexciting successes; to learn to rejoice in the effects of her needle, and to triumph over the stubbornness of calico and silk, instead of the secret joys of noble influence and the flush of conscious attractions, is a great change, but a change for which she should thank God, for it leads to humility.

The talents necessary for command, which are often endured in all their restless vehemence without any scope for command, once *wholly* submitted to the direction of the All-wise, will be powerful instruments for His service; can higher honor await them? And it is to be observed, that we are quite unable to measure the limits of personal influence: the obscure duties that now remain to one who was once allowed to discharge duties of *evident* importance, may be no less useful in their remote effects.

The world is like a wide whispering gallery: the report of every little deed, good or bad, often sounds afar off; it reaches many of whom the doer knows nothing, and may plant either an evil seed, or a

glorious hope and glad encouragement, in many distant hearts. No one can act in the most secluded life without helping or harming others; and it is beyond human power to calculate *how* much.

If you have ever had the dearest love, you know the frequent wish when absent from the one who loved you, that he could see your best deeds, your sweetness of temper in trial, your charity and right activities; and you have felt in time of trouble, that could he know all your efforts to bear it cheerfully it would be great consolation; if it is now granted to you to love God with your whole heart, you will remember that you *have* an ever-watchful friend who loves you with patient enduring mercy, by whom *nothing* of right intention or good work is overlooked, for

“Heaven’s king keeps register of everything;”

and though bitterly feeling the loss of supporting love, that would have smiled on each little success, and approved each little struggle against evil, you must not forget that we do not only hope for the

approbation of the Most High, when virtue is severely exercised; *everything* done or said aright, and in harmony with the laws He has prescribed and the nature He has given, we may believe to be pleasing to Him, and in its measure acceptable service.

I suppose that a woman's surest instinct is *obedience*, however closely she may mask it now and then by her wilfulness, because every woman has an innate longing to rest her weakness by yielding to superior power: in the isolation of unmarried life, as well as under the yoke of an ill-assorted marriage, this instinct is often miserably thwarted, for it is not all who are blessed with objects of affectionate reverence when the father of a family is removed; yet when *no* such support seems left to you, even then in your utmost grief remember that "the Comforter that should relieve your soul" is never, *can* never, be far from you.

God removes every prop on which you rested, in order that you may cling for ever, with unchanging faith, to the "Rock of Ages."

"My God! if Thou shalt not exclude
Thy comfort thence;
What place can seem to troubled sense
So melancholy, dark, and rude,
To be esteem'd a solitude?"

CHAPTER VI.

'Be admonished by the misfortunes and calamities that thou beholdest, and be not deceived by the world and its beauty, and its falsity and calumny, and its fallacy and finery; for it is a flatterer, a cheat, and a traitor. Its things are borrowed, and it will take the loan from the borrower; and it is like the confused visions of the sleeper, as though it were the sarab of the plain, which the thirsty imagineth to be water; the devil adorneth it for man until death.'—*Arabian Epitaph.*

"Those that are the best men of warr against all the vanities and fooleries of the world, do always keep the strongest guards against themselves."—SIR W. RALEIGH'S *History of the World.*

WHEN we have given up all early hopes of what society can do for our happiness, we often too much forget what it is still our duty to do for society. Even if sorrow does not make us selfish, indifference makes us very regardless of social claims; and when it appears that on us will devolve all their burden without any of their rewards; that without the depths of home happiness, which give a warm hue to every trifling incident, we shall have to keep up a polite semblance

of interest where we feel none, of pleasure where we only find weariness, of amusement where not a word or look dissipates the irksome restraint of *seemings*, then we feel that social life is imposed upon us under hard conditions, and that for the imagination it has no kind of allurements. And yet a woman in elder years possesses a decided advantage which in youth she could not have: she has more liberty, not only spiritual freedom from the too strong influence of another, which the heart obtains with a great price; but the liberty allowed by conventional usage to those who have, unhappily, no one about them that cares to accept their tributes of deference; and sad as it may seem sometimes,

"Liberté est délectable,
Belle et bonne, et bien profitable,"

compared with a *possible* alternative that *has* been known by some, the unmanly tyranny which, if it had the power to do so, would even keep the *conscience* of a wife in life-long subjection. But it is as true now as in the days of Petrarch, that "*libertà*,

dolce e desiato bene," will ever be "*mal conosciuto a chi talor nol perde.*"

It is curious to observe the contrast of manner in holding opinions, in the same person at different ages: with a young woman, there is not only diffidence and hesitation from being still little conversant with the world, but very often an unconscious reference to the standards of another mind; from a woman who is old, either in years or in resignation,—being reconciled to a single combat with the difficulties of life,—a careless tone of rapid decision, or an emphatic announcement of fixed principles, tells us that she who so speaks expects no other champion than her own resolved mind, no other welcome for her thoughts than that to which they are entitled by intrinsic worth.

If she *has* a resolved mind, she will have cleared it once for all of the absurd notion, that in the fact of being unmarried there is anything to wound a woman's pride or self-love: she will leave that folly to under-bred women and rude boys, for she will hold it to be against truth, as well as against self-

respect, to feel in the least degree lowered in society because she is content to live alone. And if she is a singularly gifted mortal she may even be consistent, and remain untroubled by finding that other people think of her, as she thinks of herself, as no longer an *ornamental* member of society, however useful and beloved she may be in her own circle. A great step has been made in the education of a woman who *looks* past forty, when she fully understands that *beauty* of appearance is no more expected from her; and she will be, I think, wise and happy in the proportion that she ceases to require and look for it in herself. But there is an undying charm which is not expected in all women only because it is so rarely met with that we are willing to believe it more of a fortunate grace than a common result of essential virtues, it is simplicity. How rare, we know from the delightful surprise it gives us when seen in any high degree. Nervousness, the hydra-headed evil of modern constitutions, militates against this, perhaps as much as any positive fault; and yet I am persuaded that, in spite of the most cruel suffocations

that feminine nature can endure from a nervous mood, real simplicity of heart will yet prove that *within* the trembling creature still wears "l'usbergo del sentirsi puro," that she is pure from foolish fancies, and the insatiable greediness of vainglory.

If any who read these lines have lost this priceless charm among the false and wearying services of a frivolous world, let me say to them in the words of Behmen, "*Come with me into the centre, there is rest;*" come back to realities; come back to your imperishable spirits; turn from this ceaseless attention to what is *outside* the life of the soul, and take heed to what is going on *there*. Simplicity *may* be regained, at least in a measure; be sure of that: if at all it must be by a slow and painful process of external and internal mortifications, but if by the grace of God given, and the human reason exercised, it may be won back, who would not rather regain it by suffering, than continue under a cloud of falsities that will thicken and grow darker, until the terrible daylight of eternity "shall sweep away the refuge of lies?" It would be difficult to put into words a

method for endeavoring to recover simplicity, yet some things that conduce to it may be mentioned without risk of misapprehension.

To refrain from the "*calor commandato dal capo*," which so much offended Alfieri, and will offend every honest mind whenever it is seen; to avoid putting on an appearance of great amusement, or great regret, or lively joy, when only a slight tincture of these feelings is in the heart, might enable us to converse with something more of absolute sincerity: to abstain from any turn of expression that brings oneself into an honorable or picturesque light, would be worth an effort for the same purpose. The stronger the mind that makes it, the more successfully will it be done; for to see what is false and overstrained, and instantly to reject every movement and word and look that is so, to be rigorously true to oneself under all temptations to exaggerate, demands an effort of which perhaps only a powerful mind is capable, and certainly it is one that only a religious mind can make with hopeful perseverance.

Do I calumniate my sex by my fears, when I tax

them generally with a deplorable want of simplicity? If so, how is it that many people whose hearts are set on doing right, whose *intentions* are guileless as an infant's, whose tempers are habitually even, have faces so dim and embarrassed by the shifting expression which disturbs implicit trust; what has robbed them of the look of innocence, if it is not vanity? Alas! have not the restless intricate workings of social ambition stamped on many faded features an anxiety that is more wearing than any other, because it is ignoble and unconfessed? And some will say: "It may be so, but it is *inevitable*; in the present state of society there is every incitement to womanly vanity, and little rest for the heart." I can believe this; I know that the spells by which the world bewitches souls are stronger, as the cultivation of mental powers and the refinements of luxury are raised to a higher pitch, but I am sure that the power given us to resist them is stronger also.

We hear complaints on all sides of our slavery to conventional error; do we mean to join in making these complaints, and yet to do nothing in our own

lives to remedy the evil? Let us seriously consider whether any branch of the family of Adam is intended to be driven through life like irrational helpless sheep, bleating protests as they go against the thorny ditch which only their own folly in trusting to a foolish leader causes them to approach? Though the main body of sheep-like human beings persist in going in a bad way *because* their fellows do, *must* we? Cannot we turn aside and make a new and wiser lead, and prove that if all the world lends itself to deceit we will yet be true?

Now to be true in anything, however small, is very wholesome; it puts new life into what would be otherwise a dead and burdensome form. To give an example of this, would it not be a reviving return to true feeling from mere heartless expression, really to have a kind and earnest wish for each person's good, when you verbally wish one a good morning or good night?

I know it will be thought too much to expect that feeling should always accompany the phrase expressing it, but would it not be well to endeavor to bring the two a little more into harmony? Being a matter

of *feeling* only, the change would not be within reach of censure or praise, and, however singular, no one could be blamed for eccentricity, because her wish was as kind as her words.

We want heartiness; and I think every woman, married and unmarried, might do her best to be hearty and genial, whenever she may be so without giving rise to misapprehensions. While our climate continually endangers temper by its long-lasting gloom, its sudden chills, and gusty fits of baffling weather, *must* we have coldness and gloom in our manners also?

An agreeable American writer has lately described England as "the country which is loved by its people with such pugnacious patriotism, while they are always running away from its taxes, its sea-coal fires, and the grim exclusiveness of its society." *

Might not every sensible Englishwoman do *something* towards removing this last deduction from England's happiness? The fervent patriotism that times of trouble would surely elicit might, I think, be exercised nobly, though without the inconvenience of

* Hillard's *Six Months in Italy*.

renown, in our secluded drawing-rooms. I do not believe that patriotism is so faint a feeling in any true-hearted Englishwoman, as to be awakened by misfortune and opposing influences only; but, in the long prosperity of our country, we have willingly succumbed to an enemy more prevailing than any from whom our watery bulwarks divide us; and true patriotism can never animate the heart that is content to be enslaved. Our intestine foe has many names; by some, still vigilant over their spiritual freedom, it is called *worldliness*, and feared; by others, *respectability*, and studiously honored; and by the weaker class of minds, *etiquette*, and *fashion*; but by *all* it is served. Those who grumble at its yoke, those who affect to despise it, those who resist it as antichristian, those who reverence it as the only authority for taste, and those who love it as a support to their pride, *all* agree in this, that they feel it to be a *great* power. And perhaps this is partly attributable to the indefiniteness of its authority; when the imagination of a proud and self-respecting nation determines its claims, no wonder if they are at all times exorbitant. Yet

it is sad to reflect on the consequences of this tyranny, and to suspect, in our saner moments, that the despot in whose service many a face grows wrinkled, and many a heart becomes heavy and vile, is after all little better than a phantom. Only righteous hearts, strong in their simplicity and good sense, can ever annihilate its sway.

“ He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever
 Can be between the cradle and the grave,
 Crown'd him the king of life. Oh, vain endeavor !
 If on his own high will, a willing slave,
 He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.”

This is what most women do : being by nature and education nervously sensitive to the opinion of others, and fully aware of the worth of appearances in causing credit or discredit, they unfortunately cherish *every* habit that can intensify this susceptibility ; and, both by practice and precept, succeed in transferring to all whom they influence the same inordinate deference to an *external* and unauthorised rule of conduct, which cripples and debases their own. Indeed, the rule of fashion and of “*what-is-expected*,” is not only foreign to conscience, but very frequently in direct

opposition to its mandates. Would that some wise man* might be given to England, able to teach her, with the force of *temperate* eloquence, what a flood of evils is rising up from our devoted idolatry of appearances! For luxury too often deadens *every* spiritual sense. When warned of the dangers of worldliness, what plausible half-true arguments we can bring forward in defence of those things which Jeremy Taylor had the courage to denounce as "*accursed superinduced necessities!*" "Without some degree of conformity, there would be no means of good influence,"—"No possibility of acting in combination with those who expect such and such things." *Some* degree! but let us be honest, and ask ourselves if by far the greater part of our country's busy population do not manifestly *overpass* that degree of conformity (to what *rich* people choose to expect) which justice and charity would warrant?

* Because, if a woman touches on a question that is complicated with matters of which she can know little or nothing, she is apt to write, as I do, with warm feeling, but no competent knowledge of the best means for remedy.

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Let any reflective mind consider this subject in London, in our fearfully opulent metropolis; will it not there confess that luxury has reached a very dangerous height? It may be that my apprehensions are excessive, but I own that this sign of national prosperity gives me more alarm than satisfaction. I see, that for things and persons *to look well*, has become a need urgent as nature's craving for sustenance; that this desire for fair appearance is intensified to a fierce passion by the increased susceptibility of modern character; so that now, to dress and live among those that are rich, in a style betraying narrow means, is often a real agony,—a state which, to endure serenely, requires something of a martyr's boldness and fortitude.

See the countless rows of new houses springing up around London. Are they also to be filled with a struggling and unhappy race, more and more liable to be maddened by the growing lust for ornament and bodily advantages? Is there no reasonable hope of a really God-fearing generation filling those new homes with the peace and contentment of religious lives?

I need not remind any of my readers that in a heart ever goaded by the fear of the *world's* requisitions, the fear of God *cannot prevail*; but let me be pardoned if I suppose that we may too often forget how gradually the curse of slavery to the world overcomes conscience, how, little by little, it enthrals every thought and action.

We do not always begin by doing or not doing a thing for fear of appearances; at first this is a secondary consideration, but in course of time, if habitually swayed by worldly motives, we think first and longest of appearances, last and least carefully of the real nature of our doings; and then the enemy will secure that.

And if in one single heart the world obtains this disproportionate homage, how far more potent is its authority among numbers! Such strange credit has the majority, even with the wise, that what is *usual* soon becomes recognised as *necessary*; and thus we combine to load each other with fetters, because we see them worn by slaves equally infatuated.

The young, instinctively taking their bias from

those about them, cannot avoid regarding appearances as all-important while they witness on all sides the sleepless anxiety about externals, by which modern life is corrupted.

I shall be thought too ridiculous if I express fully my objections to the very general use of looking-glasses on *many* sides of our rooms; it does, of course, heighten the bright effect of light and color, but can it fail to rivet attention more and more upon the body—upon its beauties or its defects?

In the luxury of our tables every one who has had a first-hand acquaintance with the sufferings of the poor, must, I think, be eager for reform; for if the poor are doomed by their position in life to insufficient nourishment, it seems that the rich are in danger even more fatal of superabundance; by which I mean only a measure of eating and drinking that exceeds the real demands of a healthy appetite, and to this I fear many of us may be addicted without any conscious greediness. The very shape of our days, in many rich households, brings the temptation; one meal served with profuse liberality is followed by

another so soon, that people *cannot* always acquire a suitable appetite by the time the next appears. Do you say,—“True; but this is only a precaution of hospitality, not by any means a constraining invitation to eat?” I answer, that in design it is so, but that in practice we are frequently betrayed into taking *little*, yet many superfluities, enough to make piteous contrast to the half-satisfied cravings of many a hard-working laborer.

If in our own eyes *any* excess in eating seems a very vile and hurtful one, how must it appear to those who see their little ones crying for bread, of which they *cannot* give them enough? how to servants,—the link between the two classes,—who must often hear their employers say,—“We cannot afford to help” such and such a petitioner? how to Him who has told us what shall be the manner of His judgment when we are brought before Him to give account of the deeds done in the body?

No one is less inclined than I to advocate ascetic mortifications of the body or the mind; for I believe we are to receive and enjoy the good things given to

us with thankfulness; and in order to do so we must be careful to make them *good* things by a watchful temperance.

It is not asking you to put a rigid check upon your enjoyments to ask for a close attention to the fine limits of *enough*; for beyond these I defy any one to find real enjoyment. Sensuous pleasure for a few moments they may find who go on eating nice food, when nourishing food has already been taken in sufficient quantity; but *how* heavy a dulness of spirit comes with an habitual excess of this transient pleasure! what frivolity of mind! what suspicions of degradation! what irritating pleas for self-contempt! Satiety can never give us satisfaction. I have spoken plainly on this ugly subject because I believe every one, with or without a household of her own, may be of great use in helping to redress this wrong to human nature; and the means, for which I wish to tax every educated woman, is agreeable conversation.

There is much in our social system besides hospitality and ostentation, and doing as others do, that is apt to induce excessive gratification of the palate.

Even high cultivation of mind contributes sometimes to strengthen the temptation; for the person who naturally aspires to a pure and earnest life, often checked by dull companionship, will find in society a kind of compensation for the thwarting of high aspirations in the over-indulgence of childish tastes; it is thus that in the dire stagnation of thought and feeling which reigns round many dinner-tables, a conscientious person may be led into the small excesses which act most perniciously on the finest spirits.

If, as I think, a simpler, heartier tone in conversation would tend to obviate these declensions of natures grievously bored, it is surely worth while to relax some of those needlessly "icy precepts of respect" that make so many women content themselves with manners inaccessibly smooth and vapid. From every woman, moderately endowed with tact, warm kindness and lively sympathy might surely flow unrebuked: these could hardly be misunderstood if they were habitual. Why then should it be considered ladylike to intrench a feeling heart in the appearance of unwomanly coldness?

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I believe that a sensible unmarried woman may be of real service to her sex by showing a modest independence of thought and feeling ; for when it is shown agreeably to *good taste* and the law of kindness, it is always welcomed even by those who are themselves enslaved to conventional usage. Anything which proves that principles have still a force which *can* burst the stiff crust of our social formality is pleasant, because it emboldens us to hope that subservience to the world's code of proprieties (translated freely by mere suspicions of "What will be said of us?") is *not* an inevitable doom.

I do not say that this practical protest against social dangers is possible to all ; some minds, however sincere in the wish to do good, and pure from the contaminations of worldly vanity, may yet shrink from every manifestation of unexpected singularity as from an intolerable exposure of inmost feelings ; and even should they resolve now and then to go against the tide of opinion, it would be so painful an effort that the strength of their principles could scarcely be detected among contradictory symptoms of embarrassment.

Delicacy of nature and constitutional reserve may thus limit *their* mode of resisting evil to passive measures; and what they cannot actively oppose, they may discountenance by the gentleness of silent non-approval;—which is, you will remember, widely different from censorious condemning silence; this last being, according to my ideas, one of the strongest means we can employ for perpetuating evil, both in our own hearts and in the conduct of others.

The most retiring woman may also avoid the danger of cowardly compromise, into which so many run in middle age, partly from weariness and despair of doing any good by persisting in antagonism with society as they found it when their faith in the power of truth was unshaken, when human nature was not distrusted, nor the prizes of social success despised,—as they still find it when scanned with sadder eyes,—as they will probably leave it when called to a better life; and partly from the allurements of *any* sympathy that is possible, and the enticing pleasure of being everywhere welcome; but *chiefly* from the ease with which we yield to any

prevalent custom, however foolish and bad. Look back for a moment; did not the young heart once abhor gossip; scorn "tittle tattle" about other people's sayings and doings; reject flattery, and disdain to acquiesce in sentiments which it felt to be either false or debasing? Did not the young girl often sit among her elders wondering that people who had lived so long could think so little, and busy themselves with trifles so infinitely disproportioned to their faculties? How often has she turned flashing eyes from a bevy of whispering talkers to the page of some book, urgent in its eloquence or profound in thought, fancying in her proud ignorance that only folly stirred those agitated heads by the fireside, and that when she was a grown-up woman she would set a better example; she would not condescend to the degradation of frivolous small-talk! Many think so in youth; but—

"The unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose."

And it will sometimes happen that the same girl,

whose lofty ideal once betrayed her into the folly of contempt, will now as a middle-aged woman take no small share in the gossip and trifling excitements of her own circle.

It has *now* too strong a hold upon her self-love and personal interests to appear trifling to herself; or if it does, "there is no help for it; it is no use setting oneself up to be unlike the rest of the world; nothing so unpleasant, so universally disliked as eccentricity in women; and after all you cannot always be in earnest, you must take people as you find them."

And thus if she had a young friend, resembling her former self, who was inclined to think it possible to "tread custom down in the high march of truth," the advice she would be likely to give would be similar to Benvenuto Cellini's—"Dissi a quelle parole, che gli uomini che volevano fare a lor modo, bisognava che si faccessino un mondo a lor modo, perchè in questa non si usava così;" and, with some important qualifications, such counsel would be worth attending to. But oh, let not the older mind long chastened in the school of this uneasy world

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forget the noble instincts of youth, and the pure hopes which once seemed so indestructible. Excitement may be at an end, but why should enthusiasm die out? Must every one be carried as far in an opposite extreme as once they used to go in another? Do not believe it. The standard of excellence held so high in youth need not sink, ought not to be lowered in cowardly despondency, must not be snatched away from us in the turmoil of battle; but it must be more carefully guarded, more closely beset with able defences, never again must arrogancy vaunt of its glory, or intemperate zeal place it on untenable ground.

CHAPTER VII.

"I love wisdom and honour it; but when slights and crynks are joined therewith, as I am sorrye sometymes to see, commonly thereof followeth infinite incommodities both to the party that useth them, and to them also that are therewith advised."—*Cecil, Lord Burleigh.*

ONE of our many clever novelists* has characterised the transition of a hero in his tale from boyhood to man's estate by this feature, that having as a boy thought of himself with reference to other people, as a young man he began to think of them in reference to himself. It is a very marked difference, particularly in the life of any sensitive heart; but an alteration that is made so gradually is often little noticed, until, observing in the manners of some one else traces of the feelings we have outgrown, we are suddenly reminded that there is a great change in ourselves. It is to this change, of which I suppose every grown-up woman is

*L. S. Lavenue in *Erlesmere*.

more or less aware, that I would now call your attention in behalf of your younger friends. Perhaps the lips that have received the seal of long endurance will smile at a demand for pity in the case of those whom they often think of as enviable; and stern spectators of the sentimental fashions of the day may naturally object to any fresh disturbance about the trials of youth. "We have already heard so much of them," they may say, "such an inordinate fuss is now made about these young people; everything is to be subservient to their highest development; and the interesting process of soul-culture cannot, it seems, be carried on now in old-fashioned retirement; in the broadest sunlight, obtruded in the midst of all other concerns, however important, these precious young people must be cultivated, improved, stimulated, talked at, or talked of, till we poor unfortunate elders can seldom find any rest from the subject of education; and being considered as little better than implements of culture for our juniors, we are thrown aside like other tools and neglected, if unable or unwilling to advance the all-absorbing work."

There may be overmuch bitterness in the tone of such assertions, because it is evident that they proceed in great measure from the resentment of self-love, but I confess that I cannot dissent from them. I think that even such an excellent thing as education can be, and often is, carried much too far; and when this is the case, it seems to me a schooling that will result in the most deeply rooted selfishness.

Intelligent children quickly see that their good is the main object in view, and this coincidence with the tendency of self-love is not so much disturbed by differences of opinion in the teacher and the taught about the *nature* of good, as to slacken the efforts of self-will, or impede the growth of a very subtle and comprehensive vanity.

In discharging our duties towards younger people, as in so many other cases, we find the penalty equal and *apparently* often *more* than equal to the good gained by an increased sense of responsibility; for children (like servants and poor people) sometimes know more of the *feelings* that weigh on our hearts than they could if they were able to share in our

modes of action ; also they see results of feeling, and tendencies, all the more clearly from their perfect unconsciousness of practical difficulties, for with a knowledge of *these* the wholeness of their attention to symptomatic appearances would be at an end ; and thus, perceiving how much we feel it our duty to give them every possible advantage, they draw their own conclusions as to what they have a right to expect from us, and make sure that the consideration of *their* good must be uppermost in every older mind. This, however, is a question apart from my present purpose, and only entered upon so far as a pledge of entire sympathy with those among my readers who believe that we might help our young friends quite as much and rather more, if we did not give to their early interests a prominence and an emphasis of solicitude which is inevitably withdrawn from later struggles and later success. And yet I want to enlist your kindest feelings for certain *sufferers* in this much considered class ; to point out symptoms of real affliction among them, which I think older minds are very likely to forget. .

If I could fully waken your memory, and prevail on you to compare what you once were and all that you once suffered from what other people were towards you, with that which you *now* are, and that which young people may now suffer from *your* present character, I should have done enough. Allow me to be an honest friend, and to remind you that while each year has insensibly added to your powers of giving pain or pleasure,—and in lessening some degrees of susceptibility, has greatly increased your means of affecting other natures,—the impulse of self-love has not *naturally* been repressed; and unless your vanity and your pride are under the continual check of Divine grace, their demands will be more exacting as time goes on; and thus (unless true piety has kept your heart both tender and vigilant) you will be too much occupied with yourself to observe what effect you have upon younger companions, too careful of your own immunity from annoyance to notice how far *they* are protected from keen sorrows.

It is a deplorable abuse of blessings dearly won when thus the vantage ground secured to us by time,

and necessarily unattainable for those who are much younger, is used for selfish ease, or occupied as a commanding height on which all the weapons of feminine irritability can be exercised safe from proportionate resistance. If anything short of Divine help could preserve one from the blindness of egotism, we might trust to common generosity for saving a woman from this sort of unfairness; but unhappily we do all pity ourselves so deeply under the least provocation of temper or pride, that it is possible to make another person perfectly miserable for several days together and yet to feel ourselves the only objects of pity—victims without a suspicion of being tormentors.

And without at all deserving so harsh a name, I am afraid we may often cause in young hearts a great deal more pain than we are aware of, but of which we may form some guess if we can recall the formidable meaning that was once found in severe looks and abrupt or short answers, and how we shrunk from anything caustic in speech, or rough and displeased in manner. In reaching mature age we have probably lost sight of its comparative dignity, as utterly as we

may lose the feeling of elevation when arrived at the top of a gradually sloped ascent; but to those below us it still appears an elevation, and the light mist that rests there is noticed from the far off valley; it seems a cloud from a distant point of view. It would be well-judged kindness sometimes to make allowance for these effects of distance on a younger mind, and always to keep in memory that it is as easy as breathing to *inflict* what younger companions find it very hard to bear. From the want of sympathy, these suffer more than is often imagined, even with the aid of reflection: it may be true .

“That a young child’s woe or mirth,
Is the loneliest thing on earth,”

but certainly the young girl’s melancholy is very lonely too. She is expected to be so happy; she hears so much of the joy of girlhood, she often feels so little! and just when first conscious of immense capacities for love, and action, and vivid enjoyment, she may look around her on either side of a narrow and secluded path, and find little or none answerable

to the expectations that have been raised within: add to these deficiencies, real or imaginary, the surprise and condemnation of those to whom she tries to open the burden of her grief and disappointment, and I think you will not treat her complaints with the slighting airs of incredulous superiority.

Hunger for the excitements of imaginative feelings is not *always* the sickly growth of young-ladyish indolence; it is an instinct which in some natures ceases not to clamor for satisfaction, or for even the semblance of it, from earliest childhood to the confines of apathetic age: occupation, ever the best earthly friend to such natures, may silence it for long intervals, but now and then, as long as the heart beats, it will sigh for some individual object worthy of self-devotion.

How much this life-long impulse may agitate even a child I can myself testify, exposing myself willingly to any degree of ridicule which such an admission may invite. I do not know whether the memory of *other* people who played alone during rather a solitary childhood will illustrate my meaning; certainly the nineteenth-century child, whom *Punch* describes as

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weeping because her doll was made of bran, might once have found a responsive whine in my heart.

I remember that, as a child of ten and eleven years old, a game of dolls has given me many a true heart-ache; for, having striven to make the poor puppets the objects of deep affection, and seeing them still motionless, and still mimicking an unrealised life, looking like companionship, but standing silent as furniture, I have impatiently turned from my toys, sighing with momentary wretchedness. Such an account of child's play has so much the air of exaggeration, that I do not expect it to be believed: it is true nevertheless.

If such a case is exceptional, as I believe, and morbid,—proof of an ill-regulated mind, and deserving blame more than pity on the score of discontent,—it is not the less important that it should be wisely and tenderly treated.

Each person is accountable for the use she makes of her own experience. What I have known and witnessed of languid disappointment in the very beginning of a long pursuit of shadows, has inclined me to

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great commiseration for those who at any age undergo the same: and were there but two or three in our country who feel as I felt in girlhood, for those two or three I would speak at the risk of being called very fanciful, and very injudicious, by happier souls.

Now in using the expression *a pursuit of shadows*, I speak of the witch "Falsehope" in a way that I should not think it wise or kind to speak if my remarks were addressed to the young.

It appears to me rather worse than useless to meet a craving for happiness by earnest assurances that it is never to be found in the direction where it is instinctively sought: for if this was without exception true, (which it is not,) it is a truth which only the teaching of God's word, and the manifestation of God's will *can* prepare the human mind to receive.

To *moderate* hope, not to quench it; to lead the heart gently towards its only stable rest, not to raise an outcry at its folly in trying to find a solace elsewhere; is surely more humane, and more in accordance with the mild patience of our Lord's instructions.

The hopes of this world may have cheated some of us too often to be able to cheat us again ; but,

“ Puisque la menteuse espérance
N'a plus de conte à nous conter,”

let us not forget that, however dull and flat life in its uncolored realities may now appear to us, it is in the highest degree interesting to younger beings.

These very hours that slide along so sluggishly in the even current of our lives are critical to them, even now they may be encountering the first storms of passion, and it is also too *possible*—the darkness of a cruel despair.

Oh ! turn awhile from older troubles, forget the penury of an unhopeful heart, and do all a woman can to soothe and guide and encourage these poor unhappy children. But when drawing arguments of comfort from your own experience, beware lest you allow yourself the expression of pent-in murmurs. If the bitterness of unappeased wishes steals in, how will you be able to persuade the passionate heart that the consolations of God are *not* small with you ? Will they

think your submission anything more than nominal, if there is an accent of exasperation in your tone, or the traces of unsleeping regret in your sad recital?

Owing to the weakness of our faith, regrets cannot always die with hope; they may struggle within till death quiets them, but let them be prisoners for life, and only known to God.

Against an opposite danger people of firmer mould, or less versed in sorrow, will have to guard, if they mean their dealings with a distempered spirit to be as serviceable as they are well meant. These advisers must refrain from making too hot a charge against melancholy, on the ground of its being sentimental and delusive: they must not for a moment forget that in regard to feelings, actual truth is weak compared to what *seems* truth; and in combating false appearances, they must try skill and tenderness rather than energetic declamation, *for suffering is not the less real because it originates in error*. But it requires some stretch of imagination to act as if we believed this, when trying to refute the errors of another, and that a younger mind.

"A wretched soul bruised with adversity
We bid be quiet when we hear it cry."

And all the more naturally from not seeing the adversity that makes the young soul plaintive. When a young girl is suspected of making miseries, it is very usual strictly to prohibit books that paint similar sorrow either in prose or verse, with the notion that such reading fosters the morbid tendency. I think that this is a plausible error of which we should do well to disabuse ourselves. "Unglück," says Börne, "ist Dunkelheit. Wem man die Gestalt seiner Schmerzen zeigt, dem zeigt man deren Grenzen." (Unhappiness is darkness. To whomsoever one shows the image of his pain, to him one shows its limits.) To find a delineation of our own sorrows in the words of a fellow-sufferer is, I believe, at any age a cordial. Timid rulers, timid advisers, and compromising friends, are too apt to fancy that evil and sorrow can be silenced into forgetfulness. Dickens has not unfairly represented the effects of this fancy in his *Little Dorrit*: there are many kind and excellent people in the world who, with some modifications,

adopt Mrs. General's line of action* as the best and safest they know. History tells us how this opinion affects nations; biography how vain and calamitous it sometimes proves; and our own experience may possibly give similar witness to its inefficacy; why then persist in the shortsighted plan of non-recognition? It is, perhaps, easier than any other to carry out; so is almost every bad thing. The real friend ventures to undergo much in order to gain a little confidence, a little heart intercourse with a troubled spirit, knowing that, without sympathy, advice is only another source of pain.

I think that all middle-aged people should be very careful how they apply ridicule to what seems absurd,

* "Her way of forming a mind was to prevent it from forming opinions. . . . Even her propriety could not dispute that there was impropriety in the world; but Mrs. General's way of getting rid of it was to put it out of sight, and make believe that there was no such thing. This was another of her ways of forming a mind;—to cram all articles of difficulty into cupboards, lock them up, and say they had no existence; it was the easiest way, and beyond all comparison the properest."—*Little Dorrit*, bk. II. ch. II.

excessive, and overstrained in the feelings and expressions of the young; nothing more natural than to feel amusement at the exhibition of follies, which we have ourselves outlived; we smile to see the completeness of pleasing delusions, and the magnanimous exaltation of thought, that arises from contemplating principles as they appear in theory, unalloyed by the incongruities of practical experiments; nor is our amusement without some mixture of regret and self-aversion; an involuntary comparison of one's present self, cold suspicions, calculating upon failure, with the confident creature it once was, when flushed by early hope and untried energy.

This gives to our conversation "some relish of the saltiness of time," a little bitterness to our tone of remark; and the slight sarcasm which escapes us, though fully as much aimed at the beings we once were, as at what our hearers now are, touches them with a stinging sharpness. Now they cannot possibly sympathise with us by anticipation, but by memory we can retrace the effects on ourselves of anything like a sarcastic or sneering observation, when we were

too young to defend the object assailed with due composure.

We can surely remember how extremely annoying it was to be hurled from some lofty castle in the air; that we had joyfully built up, by a few cutting words of irresistible good sense. It was probably a useful fall, but it may have left a bruise even to this day.

And again, can any one forget the blank disconsolate feeling with which we then heard our cherished schemes for doing good laughed at as too Quixotic to be for a moment entertained? How cold the world seemed, with all its boasted prudence! How undesirable the process of "a little reasonable reflection," if it ended in so many negations! Nor should we in fairness overlook the possibility of age being ridiculously inactive and unhopeful, and youth not *always* so far wrong in its urgency and ambition.

When any one's tone of mind, in middle age, is continually adapted to lower hope and discourage confidence, I suspect that its own deficiency is sadder and of worse tendency than the excess of youthful enthusiasm. A useful hint has been lately thrown

out, with regard to a nation now far advanced in progressive civilisation: "The unheroic character of most men's minds, with their consequent intolerance of that heroic which they cannot understand, is constantly at work, and not seldom with success, in taking down works of nobleness from their high pitch; and, as the most effectual way of doing this, in casting an air of mock-heroic about them." The only comment I shall venture to make is this; are women generally inclined to an heroic turn of thought between thirty and fifty? Are they not too much given, in many cases, to a mocking and bantering style of conversation, which must often amaze the young, and wound susceptibilities not yet acclimatised to this world's atmosphere? Let them take care what they do: unawares they may help to quench a fire, which nothing will again re-kindle: they may blight many a germ of good promise; and make the world poorer than it is already in hope and love and fervent zeal, because they refuse to believe in the remedial force of these rare and heavenly gifts. Let us attend to this vehement and accusing cry against *opinion*,

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and ask ourselves if we have never added our hand-
ful of highway dust to the aspirations of another mind?

‘ Ah! who can tell
How vast a sum of good thou hast blown away
With thy fool’s breath; how oft, when souls have yearned
To do some good which reason prompted it,
Opinion hath looked cold upon that warmth,
Blighting it in the bud; or else hath worn
So very a ‘withering devil in its sneer,’
That virtue hath shrunk back from manly intent
To silly childhood; fearing to do well,
Lest men should construe it ill; taking for judge,
‘Stead of its proper conscience that knows all,
The vulgar who know nothing.

“ Yea, poverty
‘Of money and means, of knowledge and of will,
Hath chilled some souls; hundreds, thousands perhaps,
Their lofty aspirations to forego;
But thou hast stifled many millions;
Stifled them with the common highway dust,
Flinging it in their eyes, and mouths, and ears,
That they should neither see, nor hear, nor speak,
Save thy own stuff.”

Ernest, bk. VIII.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Rien n'étouffe plus la doctrine que de mettre à toutes les choses une robe de docteur. Les gens qui veulent toujours enseigner empêchent beaucoup d'apprendre." — MONTESQUIEU'S *Défense de l'Esprit des Loix*.

YOUR position in the esteem of young people is of so great importance, that I shall still farther tax your patience, by prolonging inquiry into the best means of securing to *them* the advantage to be derived from older companions, and to *you* the blessedness of giving help at a time when, though it is most needed, it is most unlikely to be sought.

Towards the vanity of your younger friends, I should expect you to be particularly severe, if you were once as vain, because there is nothing more displeasing to us than the sin which has stamped its lines of fruitless care on our own brow ; we regard it with loathing.

There is too much of it in our hearts even now,

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and to meet it in smiling favor elsewhere rouses both pity and indignation. But how shall we turn these to helpful account? Surely not by a sharp onset of admonition; much less by strong reprobation of particular instances of vanity; for thus encountered, the enemy would only retreat to unapproachable fastnesses, and very probably cover itself with artifice also. Neither can I think that an unceasing vigilance over the words and looks and manners of another will serve as any check upon dangerous emotions; for not only is "*le regard scrutateur*" in the highest degree injurious and paralysing, but it is quite possible to intensify vanity by too strict a system of repression: indeed, it is very commonly done; and girlish folly, that might have taken its natural course and soon exhausted itself without much harm to anything but momentary dignity, has been often so powerfully opposed and thrown back into the constitution, as to keep up a regular supply of poisonous influence for life. I should therefore crave, for every young girl, a certain allowance of toleration for the little weaknesses and vanities that are as natural to

her as playing at horses and soldiers is to a boy ; and I should petition, if I were able, for an absolute silence on the part of older companions, about these same little vanities ; such, for example, as wishing to wear a prettier dress than usual, when some pleasant visitor was expected. Again, it is not wicked, but *very* natural for a girl to be a little impressed by the common polite attentions of one who she thinks may possibly turn out to be the all-important hero of her life : if we who look on do not think as she does about him and his little civilities, that is not surely any reason for severe animadversions on her folly. It is not any proof that she will always think people are occupied with her, when they are sufficiently indifferent to be extremely ingratiating ; and if she mistakes manner now, and is weaving a romance out of meaningless incidents at an evening party, might we not find in our hearts some better means for enlightening guileless innocence, than vexatious strictures, and sour chilling looks ? I am persuaded that many do find the wisest and most gentle mode of giving help in this particular, and I think

that they are probably the humblest minded women, who have learned practically to mistrust themselves when reproving; who think it possible that asperity of rebuke *may* arise from some of

“ that indignant fuss
Hypocrite pride stirs up in us
To bully out another's guilt.”

They remember also their own first suspicions of being singled out for admiration or for love,—they know that though they call themselves old and laid by, the possibility of accepting love or admiration did not die out as soon as some would suppose; nor would they be angered with the candid admission of a graceful German novelist, who allows the wisest man in her story to say, “ Ah! do not teach me to understand women! a little worship they all take in very easily; they have always a little throne in readiness, which they draw out at once, and mount in such cases quickly enough.”

But those who would be most skilful in dealing with vanity, might not treat the intellectual errors of

the young with equal success. I allude to those errors which cannot *directly* affect conduct, and are only mischievous in their remote consequences; only blamable when supported by pride and a love of opposition.

Perceiving habits of thought of equivocal or even hurtful nature, we are often too much alarmed to set about meeting them in the most advisable manner; and yet, perhaps, in nine cases out of ten, this alarm is itself an error of judgment which may lead to serious mistakes; for, be it never forgotten, in early life an energetic mind must be a questioning and a restless mind.

It is the season of conflict when principles and opinions vehemently contend in a spirit very little acquainted with itself. If now and then a false principle, or an undesirable opinion seems to gain the mastery, let by-standers have a little patience before they step in to complicate difficulties, by drawing pride and obstinacy into action among the other elements of discord; for with very rare exceptions, aberrations from the line of thought, prescribed by a care-

ful religious teaching, are seldom of long continuance, and, like many other internal commotions, the ferment of thought will subside if not kept up by external interference. And this temporary ferment is often a sign of health,—a proof of strong powers which will hold truth with a firmer grasp after the exercise of wrestling with shadows. Perhaps few of us can *see* the full verification of Schiller's assertion, "We but seldom arrive at truth otherwise than through extremes; we must first exhaust error, and often nonsense, before we work up to the fair mark of peaceful wisdom;" but it does not escape the observation of some thoughtful minds, devotedly valiant for orthodox truth: and if I do not mistake, such observers would justify my dislike to a frequent use of restrictive measures, when it is our object to bring back a young thinker from an unsafe track.

In these days of undaunted inquiry, restrictions imposed on thought seem to me even more useless than dogmatic rules for right feeling; for to *forbid* any train of thought, any subject of speculation, is to give it a hold on the attention which nothing else could.

The most docile mind knows this—much more will one headstrong with new acquisitions of truth refuse to attempt a suspension of thought on subjects that interest it deeply.

To say reading such a book, or cherishing such a peculiarity of opinion *has* certain dangers, and if exclusively dwelt upon it will hazard your soul's health, is at all times safe: but rigidly to refuse a hearing to doubts, to try and draw down the blinds of another intellect at the approach of every opinion apparently hostile to faith, is to awaken in any vigorous thinker the uncomfortable suspicion that this much honored faith is an invalid, not far from a precarious state of weakness; for, if it were strong, and pure, and constantly nourished with the dew of heavenly grace, how could it need this apprehensive care, this complete shelter from every breath that may be inimical? If the slightest acquaintance with the pretensions of "vain doctrine" would so much endanger our religion, can it be really of Divine origin?

Is "the certainty of the words of truth" only to be maintained by shutting out everything whereby we

may test their powers? This is what passes in the minds of many young men, and some young women too, when they are striving to attain absolute truth. I suppose it is certain that young people in the present day are more given to abstract thought than the majority of educated minds in an older generation. This should make us very cautious in our attempts to put down erroneous opinions; for, on our side, a strong and settled faith is not most wisely evinced by the incessant warnings off from debateable ground to which anxious affection often inclines us; and, seeing that there is so much positive sin from which the young Christian must be urged to flee, it appears to me highly imprudent to restrain, exclude, and forbid, where the error is intellectual and the danger theoretic. I am not overlooking the fact, that hardly any error in belief is entertained without hurtfully affecting conduct *in the long run*; but, when inquiring for the best method of dislodging error, I learn that it is not found in the use of perpetual remonstrance; this heats the temper long before it convinces the mind.

It is a humiliating consideration, that in all our

efforts to aid other people, unless we are very watchful against self-deceit, we may be gratifying our pride at their expense. "L'âme goûte tant de délices à dominer les autres âmes ; ceux mêmes qui aiment le bien aiment si fort eux-mêmes, qu'il n'y a personne qui ne soit assez malheureux pour avoir encore à se défier de ses bonnes intentions, et en vérité nos actions tiennent à tant de choses qu'il est mille fois plus aisé de faire le bien que de le bien faire."* This is what all should bear in mind when they wish to help younger aspirants for truth and goodness. The convictions of mature age seem very well based, and have often a compactness of symmetry (partly owing to the rejection of unmanageable difficulties) which gives them respectability and weight in our own minds ; and we are surprised, sometimes horrified, to find them disputed : but pray let us remember that we are at all ages alike scholars in a school immeasurably vast, all taught by an Infinite Mind ; and, as we still sit in a class very low compared with that which we hope to reach hereafter, how do we know that to dis-

* Montesquieu's *Esprit des Loix*.

ciples in a class but a little lower the Omniscient Teacher may not vouchsafe some communications of light that *cannot* reach *our* eyes, just because we are blinded by proud presumption, and say in our hearts, "We see."

If the younger mind is more conscious of its own ignorance, more open to receive undetermined truths, and more eager to catch every intimation of the marvels of spiritual life, it is better prepared for the secret influx of that light which is to spread and grow through eternity; such a mind will not, I think, be deficient in reverence, nor so far from entertaining Elihu's notion, that "multitude of years should teach wisdom," as the *majority* of our juniors seem to be.

Judging by the tone of manners in the present day, these new-comers into society feel no fear that can restrain them from showing *their* opinion among those who are much older, and possibly much wiser, than they; indeed, the only scruple which seems to trouble some of them in conversation with their seniors is a doubt whether they do *enough* to set these prejudiced old people right. It must be confessed that there is

often a striking want of humility in the young learner ; but, even when it is lacking to an absurd extent, I believe time will do more to teach it than any exposure of shallowness which a superior mind might effect. For humility is sometimes best learned by contact with humble long-suffering gentleness ; and to disturb the intellect by any *unnecessary* trial of temper greatly retards its progress towards a healthy condition ; with humility and love for your counsellors you may be of incalculable service ; not only may you help to abate presumption and rectify false estimates, but also, when faults or sufferings arise from a different cause, you may be able to detect in the wayward or petulant mood of a young friend the true source of disquiet ; and, having discovered it without remark, may find out the way to soothe and give it remedy. Perhaps some form of superstitious observance in religious matters, self-imposed and carefully concealed, is at the bottom of much that appears so contrary to religion ; some harassing scruple may be there corroding peace ; even the intellect may have turned against itself, and may be at this time

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"all manacled,
Halt, wither'd, blind, perplex'd with chafing doubts,
Haggard with fears, hoodwink'd from Heaven's free light."

You feel powerless to relieve such trouble, but pity and attempted sympathy will be of some avail; perhaps you can introduce the sufferer to "a good probable doctor," either amongst books or living acquaintance; it may be given to you to speak a word in due season, and, better than all these uncertainties, you will have a cause to bring before a compassionate Intercessor, and with earnest prayer you can beseech Him to grant His peace to the disturbed and wavering mind.

"It is a glorious thing to have been the repairer of a decayed intellect, and a sub-worker to grace;" may you find it to be so according to your measure of ability!

Now in order to secure an approach to the confidence of younger people, it is necessary to practise no little denial of our own tastes, to give no slight attention to theirs. To speak plainly, there is something very distasteful in the conceit of inexperienced

people, and calling it natural to them does not make impatience of its effects less natural to us: but even our selfishness should suffice to check any caustic expression of this impatience; for if one thing more than another fortifies pride and establishes conceit, it is an evident solicitude on the part of another person to take them down; a systematic process of snubbing may crush their out-growth; but, unless I am much deceived, it will never subdue, or even lessen, their pretensions in the heart of an adolescent. I have taken it for granted that you would wish to affect the inner life *favorably*; of course, if you should prefer to distance the offender by fear or dislike, nothing is easier; you have but to speak or look with habitual contempt on the anxious vanities and transparent vainglory of youth; you need only forget that young people have not yet been able to take their true measure, and to establish their just claims in society, and must naturally wish to do so, and you will be saved from too much intimacy with them.

Kinder hearts do not always restrict their good intentions to making improvements *within*, they may be eager to soften and equalise manners also; on

this point I refrain from saying much, so strongly does my own way of thinking oppose general custom. Believing that nearly all which is good in ladylike manners must arise from within, I deplore the minute and fretting attention commonly bestowed on superficial politeness. A good carriage and suitable deportment may be taught, but *manners* in a wider sense should surely be the true expression of a disciplined *nature*, not its veil, nor its fetters, as in so many well-bred women we know it to be. As to the politeness of individuals, its conditions are the same as those Custine has described as requisite for the politeness of a nation. "In order," he says, "to be polite, it is necessary to have something to give. Politeness is the art of doing to others the honors of the advantages we possess, whether of our minds, our riches, our rank, or our standing. To be polite is to know how to offer and accept with grace, but when a person has nothing certain of his own, he cannot give anything."

When we complain of imperfection in the politeness of youth, let us in fairness allow that their social advantages, if not few, are at least ill-ascertained.

CHAPTER IX.

"If what we do or suffer be not with relation to the common good, we forget our interest and lose our thanks; and if, in our undertakings, we find a certain self stand in the way of our public ends, he must be shouldered out or trampled upon if ever we expect a comfortable issue."—BISHOP HALL'S *Peace-Maker*.

I HAVE not yet done with the social interests of an unmarried woman, though while considering her chances of doing good service in counteracting excessive luxury, and in lessening the various perplexities of early life, I have rambled far from her own peculiar trials. This diversion of thought is not, I trust, only incident to a writer's brain. I persuade myself that if once any woman of average selfishness saw that she could *certainly* do good, she would gladly set aside all melancholy measurements of her own privation; and, from my point of view, her opportunities of doing good seem so certain and so manifold, that I am embarrassed by the wealth of means from which I

must choose, when trying to prove the happiness of spinsterhood.

"I wish," says Lavater, "*to make you feel what happiness and glory there is in being what we are.*"

These words will not sound like pride to those who share my notions of woman's happiness and woman's glory; who think with me that her happiness is in the power of loving, her glory in ability to serve. I do not deny that a woman forfeits *great* happiness while she remains lonely in heart, and in the aims of her life; she must often feel the dreariness of isolation, when there is no one "to occupy the place which the whole world leaves empty, and the greatest wealth of one's own cannot fill up." There may be anguish in the thought, and sometimes a passion of regret, not—let the world say what it will—that married life had been refused or never offered, but that none could have been accepted with any probability of finding that perfect union without which it would be, to many hearts, most perfect misery. But while women who feel this are shedding bitter tears for their own loss, *souls* are being ruined for whom they might grieve

with better reason, and care with some beneficial result; and, for any of us who would win a glorious reward hereafter, there is not time to mourn over transient troubles; the evils against which we must make head need the full power of an undivided mind. When we see the sad faces that gaze out of every crowd of human beings, we feel that there is indeed a want of enlarged sympathies, a use for reservoirs of kindness, and tender pity, and consequent prayer, not exclusively claimed by several united hearts. The calm life of every single woman, undisturbed by the inevitable anxieties of married people, might afford a contribution to this desirable fund of catholic love. Not unfrequently it is found that the sorrow which has entirely broken down all the embankments of a woman's private happiness leads to a great enlargement of heart, giving her instead of a few strong affections, a few absorbing personal interests, love and interest as wide and lasting as her country and her race. The self which was bereaved of its own dearest hopes often adopts, and by degrees delights in adopting, the hope of public good; but, since this is only

possible where there is native greatness of mind, we must not *expect* such blessed consequences of trial from other people, and should be very thankful if we find them in ourselves.

Yet I can believe that an increasing desire to do good and to relieve unhappiness will cause some women to suffer almost as acutely as they ever did from their own peculiar cross ; nay more so, in so far as this, that personal suffering has the limits of personal feeling, and sympathetic distress has no such boundary, and is often heightened by the darkest tints of imagination. If sympathetic grief were not necessarily short-lived, and transient in proportion to its intensity, I doubt if its force could be always equalled by the sorrow that presses on oneself alone, though perhaps there is *some* balm from inward self-complacency, when grief is unselfish.

“ Ohè, quando deriva
Da nobile affetto,
Ha qualche diletto
Lo stesso dolor.”

Among the most trying disquietudes of a single

life, I reckon the necessity of being often a witness of evils that from your irresponsible position you cannot even try to remove; evils which it is possibly your duty to ignore, your kindest effort to overlook; and yet the reflective leisure of your life has caused you both to measure these evils and their results with lively apprehension, and to perceive the line of conduct that would probably lead to their removal or mitigation, if wisely carried out by those most nearly concerned.

It is sometimes very difficult to remain passive, when every impulse prompts you to activity, and when the resolve not to interfere is shaken by the thought, that those who are blind to their best interests will suffer from non-interference. And yet this non-interference is often a more certain duty than any volunteered help for which it would be sacrificed; and I hardly need remind you that, in this as in *every* other contingency,

“Because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence:”

no one being able to count upon consequent advan-

tages, when the least part of *known* duty is neglected, and *duty*, not consequences, being all that concerns a faithful servant.

On the other hand, we may thankfully remember that the unmarried spectator of domestic troubles has some decided advantages which she may turn to good account for their relief, if she does not pervert them to means of giving annoyance: she has a cool disengaged eye for what passes around her, and the little flaws that she may criticise with minute attention are often those which the mistress of the household regrets quite as much as her fastidious companion, but which she has been hurried into allowing by a press of small cares, and by the continual embarrassments of her previous designs. When this is the case, the single woman should study how to give the gentlest and most unobtrusive help, for then to entrench herself and her disapproval in unbending non-interference is nothing less than cruel.

The anxieties of married life are many and great; a kind-hearted woman will consider that the happiest wife, the most healthy mother, is not without some

claims upon the solicitude of her friends, and perhaps upon their pity too.

Knowing the probability of these claims, I think that a merciful woman will be watchful to discover, and ready to use, many little opportunities of giving assistance to the busy matron: in times of trouble she will feel for her tenderly, but not with that useless kind of sympathy which it is so natural for gentle people to yield themselves up to, that of being thoroughly uncomfortable, merely because they cannot in any *other* way take part in the trials they witness.

There is always some unrelished occupation that may devolve upon a willing coadjutor; in default of every other, the duller branch of family correspondence will often be gladly conceded. (I do not apologise to you for such an unwelcome hint, because I now speak of women whose joy is placed far above selfish gratification.) If these uncoveted parts of family business are pleasantly accepted, and if, when done, no thanks or gratitude is expected, because such aid is too frequently and too quietly given to be

honored as a rare benefit, I will answer for it that they will help to make the doer happy, simply because she can thus promote happiness or lessen difficulties.

On the ground of self-preservation, it behoves every unmarried woman to find some harmless mode of doing active service; for, if she is without it, she inevitably becomes the prey of her own egotism, especially if she is exposed to the pernicious influence of a very secluded life, as certainly dangerous to spiritual health, as the miasma of standing water to health of the body.

Almost all faults of manner in an amiable person unused to much variety of life are the result of her powers being but half awakened; a woman who is torpid and chilling, and full of herself in general, will often become another creature if once her energies are fairly roused.

When we say of any one, "She is equal to any emergency," do we not unconsciously imply that a life which rarely offers any occasion for strenuous action is sadly unequal to her abilities? and when

this is so, must not languishing and sorrow be frequent if not habitual? I believe it is not saying too much for my sex to say that most women are found in times of need equal to any exertion to which womanly duty can call them; but, without that stimulus, alas! how aimless, how drooping and embittered, is the life of many women! A piteous but an instructing spectacle is often before us in such unhappy lives; we see the efforts of each soul to make up for deficiency, felt if not acknowledged, by some excess of virtuous activity: for, as a tree will stretch out long branches on one sheltered side when harsh winds have dwarfed it on the other, so the nature that is cramped in one direction, and fails in the performance of one sort of duty, frequently exaggerates the importance of another, and therefore overdoes it; this appears to me to be the cause of much that we lament as inconsistency in the conduct of women to whom fate has assigned more leisure than married people can often command. In slight characters we may find aged vanity trying to deceive itself with dreams, drawn from an unfaithful memory, of

triumphs never tasted, but desired still ; while at the same time, piety is sincere, and resignation complete : for the inner life is hallowed by pure religion, though all that bears upon social habits is enfeebled by life-long frivolity ; and when frivolity becomes, so to speak, out of date, there is of necessity much mortification for it in society, and the poor creature flies back from her follies to devotional strongholds, with the painful conviction that she is rejected and humiliated by people who do not know the depth of her piety. Well for her, if by this means she is not driven to that state of unbalanced religious excitement which (whatever party it adheres to) is, in her own opinion, a renouncing of the world ; in the opinion of calmer minds, folly combining with religious aspirations, a state which the holiest spirits would deplore ; for assuredly, “*être au dessus de soi-même en l’oraison, et au dessous de soi en la vie et l’opération,*” does no good to the soul, and no little harm to the cause of religion.

In another kind of character there is sometimes the commoner inconsistency of fine talking and feeble

acting ; talking, I mean, from theory without regard to practical hindrances, and from theory unrealised in daily life.

Could those whose energies thus run into disproportion find some object for *active* service, it would bring their thoughts and feelings, as well as their deeds, into a more wholesome condition. "How beautiful is noble sentiment, like gossamer gauze, beautiful and cheap, which will stand no wear and tear ! Beautiful cheap gossamer gauze, thou film of a raw material of virtue, which art not woven, nor likely to be, into duty ; thou art better than nothing and also worse !" This is Carlyle's rough warning, to which he adds a practical advice : "Not by outbursts of noble sentiment, but with far other ammunition shall a man front the world. But how wise in all cases to husband your fire, to keep it down rather as genial, radical heat !"

Perhaps woman's energy now runs to waste most commonly by devoting *overmuch* time and talk to the interests of literature, and too little to her own : whereas, to speak honestly, both would be better

served if she gave herself more often the pleasure of an hour or two of gardening, or a wood ramble, or a canter for several miles, solely for the sake of air and exercise, and the good-humor that naturally accompanies a prosperous *physique*. It is surely unnecessary for *all* women to be literary, "weil es nicht jedermann's Sache ist sich zu Ideen zu erheben," (because it is not every one's business to raise himself to ideas,) and certainly not every woman's, however great the number of books she reads; "for many heads that undertake it were never squared nor timbered for it." And even those women whose heads are "squared and timbered" for great mental exertion must not, *for the sake of those heads*, subject them to any prolonged strain.

I shall not be suspected of underrating the advantage of women's minds being cultivated, but, considering that the softer virtues are avowedly *indispensable*, let me be pardoned for repeating to women the question that Bacon addressed to men:—"Is there not a caution likewise to be given of the doctrine of moralists themselves, some kinds of them, lest they make men too precise, arrogant, and incompatible?"

In some shape or other the question of social reform now meets us at every turn. From the abyss of misery ever deepening beneath the respectable classes of society, terrible facts drift in sight of the most indifferent observer; and the heart which is not painfully affected by them must indeed be callous, callous and insanely selfish too. If, after the lessons of the last century, any European can doubt that the prosperity of the highest classes is inseparably related to the welfare of the lowest, it is another striking proof that sin is spiritual blindness; that sinning either by omission or commission we walk in darkness, and know not whither we are going.

Thank heaven! an indolent neglect of the poor is no longer the common crime of England's wealthy people; with humble desires for increasing charity, I think we may gratefully acknowledge that the rich and powerful are now for the most part fully awakened to a sense of their great responsibilities; and are earnestly endeavoring to afford both spiritual and temporal relief to the needy and ignorant.

The zeal for doing good that now prevails, where

once luxury and self-indulgence corrupted society without any check from public opinion, may almost be called a fashion among us; and English liberality and English vigor have promoted means of doing good that a century ago were probably as unimagined as our submarine telegraphs and Leviathan steamer. But fashion, however well disposed, is not always wise or far-sighted; and it appears to me that in some favorite modes of beneficence there has been more proof of benevolence than of the wisdom which insures success.

I refer, as one instance of this, to the various attempts at sisterhoods which have been made, in defiance of national prejudices that are too strongly rooted in our national temperament to be prudently or successfully withstood: before I go further, I should admit that, in spite of all the good which I gratefully admit these sisterhoods may have effected, I am strongly prejudiced against sisterhoods of any description. I am aware that, like Ludwig Börne, "*Ich hasse jede Gesellschaft die kleiner ist als die Menschliche*" (I hate every society that is more limited

than human society). An assertion which must of course be taken for hyperbole, not in its precise sense. Supposing it to be allowed as a fact that for *public* benefit sisterhoods may *sometimes* be useful ; that here individual advantage ought to be sacrificed to the good of the common wealth : still, with regard to the unmarried women themselves who have money and leisure for the service of their fellow-creatures, I do not see how they *can* employ their abilities better than among those of their own relations or friends who stand in need of help, or comfort, or companionship. Nor (with the exception of a few singularly unfortunate in their natural position) can I imagine any woman in the best-ordered sisterhood so advantageously placed as she who keeps to *home* duties ; or who, in the possible default of these, devotes herself to those who have the strongest claim upon her in private life.

For self-denying exercise probably nothing will equal this, though such an uncourteous suspicion may only be recognised in the depths of the heart. Is it to be supposed that adopting particular habits

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of dress and daily routine, irksome duty at stated times, and the inflexible, worrying discipline of a female lawgiver, would secure as much variety of self-sacrifice as a home where the most teasing kinds of duty cannot be foreseen, nor self-chosen, nor agreed upon; and where the very fact of relationship or friendship makes mutual agreement to depend upon good feeling, and not upon the fulfilment of stipulated terms? The degree of trial resulting from either position would of course be different to different characters; the affectionate nature would prefer all sorts of rubs from privileged offenders whoever they may be, to the cold regularity of a society of unconnected ladies; and the temper of mind that made home life burdensome, and home associates as pitiable as they were provoking, would lead its owner to rejoice in the restraints that keep impetuosity within bounds, and pride behind a screen. And am I very uncharitable because I fear that those who are most ready to find new duties in a sisterhood, are too often leaving a sphere in which old ones have been grievously

neglected? To judge by the conduct of some of our young contemporaries, one would think that in choosing this form of self-dedication they had applied to their own case the profane sanction of Bourdaloue, when he says: "et parce qu'une telle résolution est quelquefois sujette, ou par une considération de fortune, ou par une affection naturelle, à de grande contradiction de la part d'une famille, c'est là que lui est non seulement permise mais en quelque sorte ordonnée une pieuse dureté, pour voir sans se troubler le trouble d'un père et sans s'attendrir les larmes d'une mère." One would hope that every *English* heart must see how impiously such words contradict the tenor of the fifth commandment.

Utterly incredulous as I am of society deriving any permanent advantage from the efforts at reform made by bands of women who act on a system of their own inventing, I still believe that in women as they are placed by Providence, the chief instrument of social amelioration may be found. I believe that this must begin in the centre of our own homes,

and not in penitentiaries and well-organised sister-hoods.

Hasty thinkers may fancy that the manners and habits of quiet home circles can have but a slight effect upon the mass of evil livers so far removed from them; but is there not reason for thinking that in many cases stronger attractions to the home where purity and peace spread invisible charms would raise the general standard of moral conduct, and diminish greatly the number of those who now ruin, betray, or in any way encourage vice among their sinful and unfortunate fellow-creatures? Now if the purity of our homes is beyond doubt, how do we find them as regards *peace*? Is peace possible among fretful tempers, austere monitors, silent contemners of all that is blamable and weak? Can peace be where worldliness and bitterness of mind expose the temper to an endless variety of vexation? We know it is impossible. Yet every woman is able in some degree to reduce the power of these enemies to peace, and thereby to increase the strength of virtuous influence beyond human calculation; and for women with all

their susceptibilities of pain to be consistently calm, and forbearing, and tender, with open minds and lenient judgments, would be, I suppose, quite as arduous an exercise of Christian principles, as any that may be found in the combined action of a charitable sisterhood.

I hope I do not underrate the good that has actually been done by those women who have given themselves to works of self-denying mercy; much has been done for love's sake or for conscience' sake, that but for them would probably never have been done at all; I only say, why go into a separate house to do these things? why not let these good works emanate from the house of father, husband, or brother, or from one's own, and spring from a continual sense of the duty of doing, each of us, with Prudence for our handmaid, *our very utmost* to diminish evil in *any* class to which Providence gives us access; to soothe, aid, and cheer all who suffer within reach of our help and love; and this not as the fit of compassion may seize us, not from feelings however amiable towards our fellow-creatures

only, but from gratitude and obedience towards God, from the constraining love of that Good Samaritan who had pity on us in our tremendous need.

Surely with such motives there would be no necessity for other vows, other circumstances, self-imposed and self-chosen, to make our good works serviceable in the highest degree to man, and acceptable to God, on whose blessing the effect of all our best actions must depend.

CHAPTER X.

"Freedom, in other lands scarce known to shine,
Pours out a flood of splendor upon thine ;
Thou hast as bright an int'rest in her rays
As ever Romans had in Rome's best days.
True freedom is where no restraint is known
That Scripture, justice, and good sense disown ;
Where only vice and injury are tied,
And all, from shore to shore, is free beside.

"Oh think, if chargeable with deep arrears
For such indulgence gilding all thy years,
How much, though long neglected, shining yet
The beams of heav'nly truth have swell'd the debt."

COWPER'S *Expostulation*.

"It is not denied, but gladly confessed, we are to send our thanks and vows to Heaven louder than most of nations for that great measure of truth which we enjoy."—MILTON'S *Areopagitica*.

It is beyond all expression important that those who love God should themselves be lovable: some natures, in order to be so, require a very deep and wide cultivation, and for this reason principally I again urge that there is need of mental diligence, need of fitting oneself for being at all times a pleasant, and if possible

an exhilarating companion ; great advantage in exercising all the skilful graces of conversation, and above all, that most indispensable charm of a good converser, timely and intelligent silence.

A woman who talks fluently and well is too apt to feel as if conversation must languish if she lets her tongue rest five minutes at a time, which is a great mistake ; silence being often far more eloquent than words, and very commonly more agreeable.

It appears to me that there is a fear prevalent among some people (wise in other respects) of being too pleasant in a general way ; now and then, while still candidates for peculiar affection, or by some means made unusually sensible of the amiability of those they love, they are roused to open more fully the sweetness and beauty of their minds, but only now and then. Pleasantness is regarded by such people as something like a best dress, too fine for every-day wear ; as if love, kindness, and merry wit could ever be impaired by frequent use, when in truth they are every way bettered by exercise.

Let me whisper to those who thus withhold their

best properties ; you thought once to bestow all your heart's wealth on *one*, and you found that treasure either undesired, or denied by fate to the one you deemed worthy of it; *but it is still a treasure*. Believe now that the Giver of all good would have you spend yours in a way far better than you intended ; He would have you divide among many of His creatures what you wished to consecrate to one, almost idolised. Therefore let every one with whom you live have a share in the treasure left so sadly at your own disposal ; give love, though it may be with an aching heart ; give it tenderly on all sides, and God who sees will accept the sacrifice. This catholic spirit of benevolence in heart, word, and deed, would save many lonely lives from running into what is now a common danger. It is when a woman expects to receive no head for her earthly being, when her heart seems to stand alone in life, that works of mercy performed under the guidance of a *recognised leader* will have strongest attraction. Let her pause and consider if she might not find a safer channel for zeal under the Head and Ruler over all, in the Christian fel-

lowship to which she is already pledged by vows of matchless solemnity.

It may be known hereafter—it would be shocking to know *now*—how much the piety of those around us is checked by little insincerities, by formulary expressions of religion, accompanied by practical neglects of faith, hope, and charity, of all which we may be more or less guilty. One soul watches for the evidence of another soul's faith with unabating interest; and if in any way our religious professions are disproved by our habitual practice, there is always a dimness added to the faith of the witness, an unallowed suspicion that either religion does *not* exact uttermost truth, or that its requirements may be slighted with impunity in *some* matters, if the main tenor of life is agreeable to its commands. Fatal delusion, to which our fallen nature so constantly inclines! Whereas, if in *everything* any evil which exists is seen, and bravely confessed to be evil, and evidently eschewed as such, all who see that it is so regarded, whether religious or irreligious themselves, *must* feel the compelling force of truth, must

be swayed more or less by such manifestations of a soul that, loving God, hates sin in *any* shape because it is hateful to God.

It may be said all this is only the old truism that without consistency good professions are comparatively powerless; it is nothing more than this; but in *every* way that is possible we must convince ourselves that sin, even in the most trifling concerns, is baneful and contagious. Such bad effects do I attribute to the inconsistency of religious people, that when I hear of the recklessness, the ill-grounded confidence, or the despair of irreligious minds, I generally fear that the *Christian* companions of such minds may be implicated in their guilt by evil influence.

We cannot too often remember that the action of human influence is rapid and subtle; as invisible and as unlimited, and far less within reach of analysis, than the air we breathe. Every spirit that comes near to another spirit may thus unconsciously affect the fate of many more:—

“ We scatter seeds with careless hand,
And dream we ne’er shall see them more;

But for a thousand years
 Their fruit appears
 In weeds that mar the land,
 Or healthful store.

"The deeds we do, the words we say,
 Into still air they seem to fleet,
 We count them ever past ;
 But they shall last,
 In the dread judgment they
 And we shall meet!"

In vain should we weary and perplex our minds by trying to detect *how* and *when* this fateful influence may proceed from ourselves or our companions, for, even with regard to the *human* spirit, we cannot know whence its power cometh or whither it goeth, being often wholly ignorant as to what is the measure of power in one, or the weakness of susceptibility in another mind.

This we do know, that we may *all* be "fellow-helpers to the truth" if we live in truth ; and every Christian who believes this, whether man or woman, will do well to strengthen the intellect by all possible means, that so it may be evident to unbelievers that

the principles of our religion prevail with us from the irresistible potency of Divine truth, and *not* from the weakness of the minds in which they are engrafted.

It is much to be desired that every Englishwoman should prove the *happiness*, as well as the purity, of her faith by cheerful equanimity in daily life. I think we do not sufficiently understand what in this respect we owe to our country. This dear England, is it not worthy of our love? and ought we not gratefully to *enjoy* the light and liberty for which our fathers have fought, and our martyrs bled, with the unrepining magnanimity of true patriots? We are not called to prove our love for our country in fiery trials, but I think we should be more careful than we are to rouse it from the torpor incident to *all* feelings that are considered so much a matter of course as to be hardly felt; surely it should burn in thankful hearts, increasing with every year's experience of the incalculable blessings of English life; second only to our love for Him who gave us homes in such a country, and consuming many petty habits of thought in the steady glow of public-minded affections. Far be it from us,

so to remember hopes of heaven as to forget those of a land so blest as ours! This affectation of spiritual cosmopolitanism which induces coldness to the peculiar interests of one's own country would have been the shame of our ancestors, and it is no less a shame to us, though colored by the excuse of religious pre-occupation.

Seldom, however, is sleeping patriotism justified on this plea; indifference and inattention to advantages for which other nations have long striven in vain, make us stare when told that every reasonable creature born on English soil has cause for life-long gratitude. Languid Englishwomen may smile, and say "How enthusiastic!" in answer to words like these, and they may think it very *importun* to be called to attend more closely to the concerns of their country: but they are childish or cold-hearted sisters who will not take the trouble to inform themselves about the deeds and aspirations of their brothers; nobler-hearted women rejoice in their goodness or their glory, and if they can do nothing else they pray for it, and try to be worthy of their relationship to heroes.

And England is full of heroes : in every class heroic qualities exist, only waiting for the pressure of circumstance to shine before the world. Unhappy are they who doubt this. We are very fond of money, very miserably devoted to our commercial interests, but still, thank Heaven, there are many who will lavish all they possess for the glory of Englishmen—the simple fulfilment of duty however arduous and however obscure.

“The spacious liberty of generalities” is peculiarly delightful when we dwell upon our national virtues, yet it is well to check one’s pace in that “champaign region,” for *there* pride may boast without opposition of untried powers. Let us, therefore, pause in some of the “enclosures of particularity,” let us examine actual duty in one of the most quiet departments of social life, in the home circle of an unnoticeable English gentlewoman. I wish we could have a little more public-mindedness wise and wakeful *there*.

Hooker, when speaking of women, has observed the “singular delight which they take in giving very large and particular intelligence how all near them

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stand affected,"—but if their acute faculties had a more extended range of interest than the immediate neighborhood that surrounds them, how much better they might be fitted for being the helpmates of man !

I know that when there is a great deal of needlework to be got through, or a number of notes to be written, or many indispensable arrangements to be made previous to an impending visit, a woman feels it comparatively unimportant for her to know what change has been made in the Sardinian ministry, what measures carried in the cabinet of Vienna, or even who the Americans will choose for their President; and she would think it hard to be obliged to spend an hour or half an hour in reading or hearing about these public affairs; indeed, if able to speak frankly, she would say that it was much more necessary for her to see the dressmaker, and fold the notes, and do the shopping. An opinion that is very natural, and perfectly correct; but must we not confess that *habitual* interest in poplins and silks, eagerness about invitations, and extreme solicitude for drawing-

room ornaments, are justly accused as frivolous, if brothers and gentleman friends find us utterly regardless of matters that affect nations, and cannot prevail on us to give as much attention to a change of dynasty in a European state, as we hasten to devote to a new kind of embroidery, or a revolution in the make of sleeves?

If it were possible to stretch imagination beyond our own little world, we might see through the dust raised by our own petty movements into more extensive regions, and might *feel* the assent that we so impatiently give, when reminded that an edict more or less hazardous to liberty in a distant state is at least quite as worthy of consideration as the prospect of an evening party, or a change of household servants. For we should then have learned to believe that the interests of individuals are *really* bound up with those of a nation, and that the fate of one European people cannot fail indirectly to affect the happiness of another, though often by means so inscrutable that they are not discerned until a whole generation of men has expiated the selfishness and folly of its predecessors.

I am sorry to say that I now speak theoretically,—my own heart being generally so filled with present and personal concerns that it greatly needs the reform I advocate.

As a part of its curative regimen I find History very useful. Virtually, whatever we say of our interest in historic characters, it is slight compared with what we feel about the least portion of our own lives; and in the heart of selfish women egotism is so predominant, that to believe in the existence of other people's perplexed life dramas is as much as they *can* do; to imagine any part of a burden unfelt, or passions unshared, is not in them.

And how often do we all huddle up our notions of an historic past in a confused tangle of thought, of which the most distinguished thread is naturally something answering to our own experience, or something that can be recognised as a cause of effects now seen or felt in our present life; as if those who lived before us were chiefly concerned, and most especially destined to effect such and such results bearing upon our own lifetime. A childish, yet a very common

way of studying the past; going backwards and saying, we have this and the other advantage because that king was foolish, and that turn of a revolution decisive, without at all weighing the importance of those bygone events to the actors and sufferers who lived through them.

History is often burdensome to women for this very reason, that while it seldom recognises the lives of past generations as being subordinated to the prosperity of our own, it gravely insists upon the full and independent weight of foregone actions, and shows that men suffered and enjoyed and strove with intense feelings,—with an interest as absorbing as any to which our egotism now gives the epithet of important.

As an indirect means of repressing selfishness I know none so successful as prevailing on the mind to attend to facts and feelings quite unrelated to its own. If you can bring yourself to a state of perception in which the issue of a battle or treaty some centuries ago appears as truly momentous as the treatment you receive from some contemporary,—awful, either from your great love, or great timidity—you have gained

immense advantage ; your heart as well as your head will be the better for the process.

I sometimes fear that even the too common neglect of religion in early manhood may be in part attributable to the trifling conversation of women ; for is it not a great additional temptation to an unstable mind to perceive that the claims of religion are supported with vehemence by those whose toilsome frivolity is practically unaltered ; who are still engrossed with the vanities they profess to renounce ? I do not wish that women should talk or feel as if they were politicians ; but as members of the great human family, I think they should try by all means to keep heart and mind open and alive to all subjects which materially affect human happiness. For this purpose careful attention to newspapers is almost always necessary ; since she who takes all her notions of public affairs from private hearsay, is more likely to become an eager partisan than a quiet and well-informed observer.

Without any malicious meaning, I must notice what seems to give practical contradiction to all I may advance in favor of women being well disci-

plined for mental exercise, *as much*, at least, as their *nature* is prepared for. I allude to the remarkable fact, that by their choice in marriage, very clever men frequently prove Talleyrand to have been anything but singular in preferring a wife "la plus nulle" in point of mental endowments, to one whose concentrated affections (according to a popular superstition) might be disturbed by activity of brain. In matters of taste like this, one cannot but believe that people know what conduces to their own happiness better than the abstract thinker ever can; yet it is a fact no less certain and quite as remarkable, that in any relation except that of a wife, a man appears to be as glad of superior powers of mind in a feminine companion, as she is of an unselfish consideration for other people, whenever that rare and distinguishing grace is to be found in a manly character. Now those for whom I write are single women.

CHAPTER XI.

"This world is full of beauty, like other worlds above;
And, if we did our duty, it might be full of love."

GERALD MASSEY.

"The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer night collected still to make
The morning precious: Beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake?"—KEATS.

WHO among us sufficiently understands the use of a love of beauty? The instinctive affection for beauty is seldom wanting in any woman, but there are comparatively few who exercise that affection with the diligence which goes so far towards making home happy. A beautifying spirit is a blessing which no thwarting circumstances can altogether exclude; we often feel its charms in the poorest cottage, we often miss them in homes where there is no lack either of money or leisure, and where we hardly know what is wrong, feeling only that vague sort of disquiet that arises from an aggrieved taste.

The degree of uneasiness felt among tasteless arrangements varies, of course, according to original temperament and occasional moods; yet, I think, it is felt by all more or less; not always distinctly, for strong feelings, eager pursuits, and imperious habits of self-indulgence, frequently deaden all perceptions except those which lead immediately to the object of desire; though even then it is uncertain how much is perceived and felt of what the mind takes no notice *consciously*. But if we except all times of preoccupation from the possible sway of taste, how many hours remain in every day during which we must be influenced by it! If the eye, raised ever and anon from engrossing work, takes no heed of a good engraving, dwells not one moment upon the vase of lilies on an opposite table, can it escape the pleasant vision during the intervals of relaxation, and the slow diversions of a morning call? I think not;—and though many people, men not women, will assert that they scarcely know what is in the room besides their business, I am unable to believe this, till I have seen them tested by being placed in a room where the

paper is hideous, the paint dirty, the pictures glaring and bad, and the carpet violently colored. If, after enduring this ordeal for several days, they could still say that they were indifferent to appearances, I might indeed credit their report, but it would be with a pity not unlike what we feel for the blind.

Every work of the Creator, which man has not sullied, is marked with consummate beauty; and as it is a blessing most lavishly bestowed in a world where many other advantages, apparently *more* desirable, are but sparingly given, and often withheld, it is hardly possible to doubt that for us Beauty is very good; and that, therefore, it is right to cherish a taste for what is beautiful, and to use every innocent means for its gratification.

Now, if the exercise of a beautifying spirit is fairly classed among woman's duties,—and I think it ought to be,—it must be carried out into every detail of life which it can affect, without disturbing other duties.

This is the condition on which there is so much difference of opinion among the wise and good, that I

should think it very presumptuous to draw a line for any practice but my own, between what is excess and what deficiency in the attention due to ornament.

Indeed, I think it admits of no demarcation by mere prudence, and though it is most unwise to seek from conscience a decision upon points that *cannot* be reduced to a question of right or wrong—where only prudence can call one mode of dealing right, and only taste accuse another of being wrong, yet nothing short of conscience,—and conscience enlightened by habitual prayer and habitual self-discipline,—can decide how much time and money may be given by a devout person to external adornments. And I believe that without the irreverence of asking for especial revelations of God's will, in matters which He has given us the task of regulating by what we call *natural* powers of mind, we may refer these and all other perplexities to Him, as to the judge before whose tribunal we shall stand to give account for the use made of *every* power, and of taste among the rest. For unless we seek His *im-perceptible* guidance, even in those little matters for

which it may seem too trifling to ask the advice of friends, I think we shall ever waver between the two extremes of vain expenditure and undesirable singularity.

We have need scrupulously to watch against any over-indulgence of "the sixth insatiable sense (of vanity)," for it is insatiable. We have no less need to be on our guard against an unwise adherence to *one* kind of duty, (as, for instance, the duty of checking luxurious habits,) which, however binding as duty, becomes faulty when it stands in the way of another equally important, and such, I suppose, is the duty of being, and making things around you as agreeable as nature, and means, and position will allow. English women will be slow to believe that there can be any duty in what is so naturally pleasant to womanly feelings; for the English are apt to think *unpleasantness* a necessary ingredient of virtue; and if this is wanting, suspicions arise that it is a fallacious virtue; witness the common error of believing that no one can be so sincere as those who are disagreeably rough and blunt in manner. I shall

therefore select an example of the duty I now recommend, which requires self-denial enough to give it some credit, even in England. *Keeping the room neat*; or as people often say with some precipitation in the moment between a visitor's knock and a servant's announcement, "making the room look a little comfortable." A phrase I have often reflected upon with some surprise that they who wish a room to look comfortable for guests, should not have liked it to look so to their own eyes, and retained a little of this sort of charity for home use. But what does that sort of discomfort amount to which it is unsuitable for visitors to see? Some heavy work being cut out, perhaps, or an array of butchers' and bakers' books being "settled" beside a great ledger? Seldom does anything so business-like encumber a drawing-room at the time of day when callers impend: but one busy worker plants her basket on the floor and her box on the table, and being (it is a common fault) more anxious to finish the work than to make the room comfortable, she has hastily snatched out of the basket the wools she wanted, and in so doing, has

left a tangled heap half-falling from its edge. Another inmate of the same room comes down after luncheon with all her drawing apparatus, and without a thought of looks, she clears one-half of a table by loading the other with uneven piles, one or two of which being roofed with pamphlets and periodicals, scatter a strew of papers on the carpet when the opening door makes a draught from the window.

Some hole-work lies on the window-sill; for she who rises from the piano as the visitors enter, had suddenly wished to try a piece of music, long forgotten at the bottom of a music-box, and without pausing to put by her work, or to remove a bundle of umbelliferous plants thrown on a chair after botanical dissection, she dived among heaps of music for the sonata she wanted, and was so pleased to find it and play it off at once that she did not notice that the box was left jammed open with music half drawn out. She does notice it, perhaps, when she sits down by a smiling neighbor to comment upon the fineness of the day; and as she glances over the disordered room,

probably wonders how it is that they always are in such a litter when Mrs. ——— calls.

Remark that in this picture of a room made uncomfortable I have admitted no masculine agency; no books thrown down on their faces on the sofas where they were read, no writing-book pushed as far as convenience prompted against a flower-glass which it threatens to overturn; no unmanageable litter of papers and reports, all which we so gladly allow in consideration of the energetic habits of the nobler sex; I speak of feminine omissions only. It is, however, very noticeable, that a man of average perfection seems to claim from woman both his own and her share of neatness; perhaps it is more arduous to him to put things away than it can be to her; at any rate let us be happy to do it where we can, and never flatter ourselves that a friend or brother, whose presence in a drawing-room ensures a degree of disarrangement, will be at all less conscious of it when the untidy appearance is caused by any one but himself. I will answer for it that a man of ordinary habits feels something like a sigh in his heart, if, on

returning to the general sitting-room, he finds things still out of place, still without the quiet adjustments of a woman's hand; and if he finds evidence of it having pushed things out of the way here and there without any regard to public comfort,—if habitually he sees the place where she sits marked, like the form of an animal, by the untidy clearance which *shoving* things aside always makes, is he not to be pardoned for a slight movement of impatience? Is a shade of gloom on his face and of sullenness in his manner unlikely then? I fear it is often to be observed by those who are not so narrowly shut up in their own occupations as to be only aware of the quantity of time still left for the quantity of work still undone. For the state of a room chills the heart of a spectator if selfishness seems to have made forethought drowsy and sympathy impossible. I do not say that selfishness is the most usual cause of untidy habits, for experience strongly contradicts such a notion; nor that selfishness, where it exists, is recognised in household disorders, even when they are of every-day occurrence, but I am sure that it is often obscurely

felt; and one would fear that graver duties than that of keeping a room neat must be endangered by a woman's total absorption in her own employment; one would suspect that the eye which overlooked many little discords in outward things, could not be quick to detect those slight indications of temper, or dejection, or pre-occupation of mind, on which a woman's tact must depend if she means to be what her Maker formed her to be, a help meet for man. The woman who does not feel herself to be so, whether a young girl, or a wife, or an elderly maiden, knows not what happiness belongs to her by right of nature, apart from all conditions of character and circumstance; the thousand fine intuitions of wisdom, which only a delicate organisation would be sufficiently passive to retain, giving her a more real power than they who talk about the *rights* of women are ever likely to possess.

That word power may sound like mockery to those who are weary of continual dependence at an age when it seems to keep them in a false position. It is certainly very dispiriting to feel yourself a mere

appendage in any household, particularly if you think your character was formed for unfettered activity; if you feel that its best impulses are thwarted by your position, and believe—in spite of religious faith—that with happy freedom

“ the right life had been liv'd,
And justice done to divers faculties
Shut in that brow.”

Yet you should be aware of the pride that often lurks under the disguise of regret at being a burden, and hampered by dependence in your schemes for doing good (as if good was only to be done by recognised and definite means); not only pride, but oversensitiveness may make this a source of poignant chagrin. I am, therefore, very desirous that all who are not indispensable members of a family should clearly see and constantly remember that if—though without appointed service—they are not serviceable, it is generally from fault in themselves, and not from their position. No one is necessarily exempted from public service; and because a woman's service must

be quietly given and altogether unobserved, it is not less valuable for the public weal.

If you had really no other means of doing good than keeping a room in pleasant looks, and your manners in a sociable key, such service is not to be despised; for the minds we soothe and cheer, or sadden and exasperate at home, go out into the busy world; and little do we think how great a difference may be made in public affairs by the humors of men when they come in contact with their subordinates or superiors; we well know how great a difference may be made in their moods by ours. Is yours dejected? It seems to you hardly worth while to feign a joyousness you cannot feel; yes, joyousness—that grace most rare in highly cultivated circles—cannot, indeed, be put on; nothing so saddening as an artificial gaiety; but serenity, kindliness, hopeful words, and encouraging looks are all within the reach of prayer. Pray that you may never be without these.

And, however much you feel the dulness and irksomeness of your circumstances, do not lessen your efforts to give to all things about you the greatest

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charm you can ; it is, perhaps, the most heroic effort that can be made by a person whose good humor is failing under the impression that she is herself the ugliest or least interesting object in any room where she happens to be.

A beautifying spirit may survive every hope of a bright or picturesque life of one's own, and wherever it exists, the present moment will be treated with more care than is usually given to it by the hopeful. For in resigning our younger expectations, *we do not give up all*; still is happiness in this world, and by sharp experience we may learn to enjoy it calmly as it comes, knowing that it comes at uncertain times, and lasts but for a season. A season as short and interrupted as our gladness in "spring's delightful weather," when the green flames*

* An expression borrowed from Ludwig Tieck, the sweetest poet of spring that I know. In one of his lovely poems on the return of spring he says,

"Dann sucht er sein Spielzeug wieder zusammen,
Dass der alte Winter zusammen zerstört;
Er putzt den Wald mit grünen Flammen,
Der Nachtigall er die Lieder lehrt."

of tender foliage rise on all sides of our view, and the snow-white blossoms of our orchards, seen from "the windows of diligence," make us yearn to go out and meet the beauty that smiles all around; but we only look at it for a few minutes, either our cares, or our sorrows and vanities distract us from the still contemplation of beauty, and as we sit with our neighbors we often speak of it, sighing inwardly because we are too busy and eager to be glad with nature; we think we shall find time for it on a more quiet day, perhaps to-morrow; and it may be that when to-morrow comes the face of nature is changed, and a keen east wind is warping to one side each batwing chesnut leaf, and the sun hides among hard-looking clouds, as many

Then seeks he again his playthings out
That old Winter has crushed with his icy nail;
He spreads green flames the woods about,
He teaches her song to the nightingale.

Shelley has noticed the same appearance with a similar term:

"In the April prime,
When all the forest tips began to burn
With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young year's dawn."

and as dim as the thoughts which thronged our hearts yesterday.

However, in country life beauty is generally a more constant companion than happiness; but when I wish to speak of beauty I hesitate, for it is a great mystery. Only little birds, high up in their leafy homes, seem able to speak aright of beauty and of love, for in *their* measure of both is perfectness and full possession; when *we* talk of them it is either of what is hoped for and not possessed, or of what *seems* to belong to us for awhile, and is therefore held with so much anxiety, that the joyfulness of possession is mixed with fear of loss, and the sweetest rapture has its sighing. Besides which, with regard to beauty, there is this capital flaw in the Anglo-Saxon nature; *pursuit* is a necessary part of its enjoyment, and beauty is scarcely felt by a stirring, restless mind. In the quiet spirit that can surrender itself to external impressions, and, without slothful apathy, calm itself by deep contemplation,—in such a spirit beauty finds a grateful response, and the Creator an adoring witness of His works. For beauty is one of the few

things in life that affect us as being in themselves *ultimate objects*, and not a means for farther attainment; if it is regarded as a means, it is not truly felt. Wherever it is, it stays pursuit and arrests thought with sweet emotion,—with emotion more pure from egotism than any of which we are susceptible, because it gains no impetus from personal interest.

I speak, of course, of natural beauty, and of its effects upon those who do not wait to admire color till it is lodged in a precious stone or costly fabric, but who truly delight in color and form such as they are found in the brilliant mosaic of a meadow—

“eyed with blooms

Minute yet beautiful.”

A little child's estimate of beauty is in this respect more grateful, and more just to the intrinsic loveliness of things than the admiration of their world-taught elders; and it would be no small service to the rising generation, if every woman who has to do with children could foster the disinterested taste for beauty that enraptures so many little souls; if, for

example, she could support and justify the baby's eagerness for a bright red leaf in a girl who, by force of conventional habits, would soon learn to pass it by without observation, while she very earnestly admired a bit of red ribbon!

If you think my notions of beauty are correct, you will see why I turned from the sorrows of a dependent or detached life to enlarge upon this magic power which can give sweetness and tranquillity to hours of unrelieved solitude, and affluence of pleasures to the poor;

"If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter, robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs,"

have been dear to you; if you already thank God for giving you a perception of beauty, and innumerable forms of beauty to perceive, you may learn to think them no slight compensation for the blessings of which you are deprived. In downcast moods, when you feel that your spirit

"hath no wings

To raise it to the truth and light of things,"

I wish you would give it, *if possible*, the cordial refreshment of beauty, either in nature or picture, in music or in poem. Think it no trifling remedy, no derogation of Christian dignity, to do so when it would better suit your ideal of self-discipline and piety to condemn yourself for discontent, and pray till your heart was lightened. Fail not to pray, but beware of neglecting all other appliances of happiness because prayer is enjoined, and pleasure is not; for diligence and prudence, and rejoicing in our work, have all promises of Scripture to certify that they shall be blessed.

To those who from difference of nature can scarcely understand what I have here said about beauty, and therefore dismiss it from attention with the convenient title of nonsense, one would be tempted to say—

"Is Beauty then a dream, because the glooms
Of Dulness hang too heavy on thy sense
To let her shine upon thee?"

Yet without any dulness, it must be confessed that many people are very insensible to beauty, and can hardly avoid suspecting that half that is said about it by admirers is overstrained; I, for one, have under-said what I feel.

I believe people are more capable of receiving joy from beauty in middle age than they were in adolescence, the heart always snatching first at pleasures which begin and end in self, and being taught slowly, and with pain, that it is to have no share in the joy of the loveliness it sees, except by disinterested admiration; and it is certain that whatever we lose of self-interest we may gain in some other interest far more rejoicing, and freer from alloy. I doubt if any one adequately values the common gifts of nature, moonlight and clouds, sunrises and sunsets, song of birds, and wealth of flowers, until strong afflictions have broken down self-will, and made the heart as meek as a little child's.

But at first, in times of extreme suffering, beauty gives no pleasure, gains no attention; it is powerless; and *sometimes* it is "terrible to the broken.

heart ;" * but afterwards, when grief has spent its force, and passion is silenced, and every wish speaks low and timidly, then we are glad that the unconscious world around us is fair and calm, that it still dreams of paradise, and prophesies of a future world where there shall be no more sighing, or pain, or death ; and then we thank our Father for having "garnished the heavens," and made everything beautiful in its season on the earth.

* It is not every poet in our versifying days who gives any proof of knowing what these words, "*a broken heart*," mean ; I therefore take from the rough and fiery poem from which I quoted them the passage that follows, though *few*, I hope, have been so unhappy as to be able to appreciate its beauty :—

"Beautiful light ! yet sleep upon
Some flower loved by an angel gone.
Horrible light ! how does it lower !
Turn'd to a flashing sword ;—how rake
The heart it enter'd as a lake !
The sheep bell, and the small night-flower
Twinkling and breathing in the fading
Landscape—oh ! then strange natures take
Like tollings and faint ghosts upbraiding !
Envenom'd with the *past*, spring's breath
Of violets languishes to death ;
With her wild song one mountain girl
Sings the heart sick."

J DOWNES'S *Proud Shepherd's Tragedy*.

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Finding in all visible beauty a revelation of His love, we more patiently endure the discords of our present being, and more confidently anticipate the perfect harmony of eternal life.

CHAPTER XII.

"It is an immutable law of God, that all rational beings should act reasonably in all their actions; not at this time, or in that place, or upon this occasion, or in the use of some particular thing, but at all times, in all places, on all occasions, and in the use of all things. This is a law as unchangeable as God, and can no more cease to be than God can cease to be a God of wisdom and order. When, therefore, any being that is endued with reason does an unreasonable thing at any time, or in any place, or in the use of anything, it sins against the great law of its nature, abuses itself, and sins against God, the author of that nature."—LAW's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, chap. v.

It will not be forgotten that though a due enjoyment of beauty is as rare as sufficient culture of the imagination, it is equally liable to be carried to excess wherever it is possible that it should predominate. A prudent mind will guard incessantly against any strong feeling that can disturb the balance of character which is necessary for spiritual health.

We have already considered several ways of making single life useful: at the risk of wearying by further detail, I shall, in the two next chapters, notice some

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habits of mind which frequently hinder us from being happy-hearted, and which *therefore* withhold from our companions those unconscious services that result from the mere presence of a good and cheerful woman.

As these bad habits must often affect our intercourse with other people, directly as well as indirectly, I shall not be able to avoid occasional recurrence to points of social conduct on which I have already enlarged; but if I am as wearisome as I fear to be, let it be remembered that I speak of a phase of human life most uninteresting to the world at large; and that a grave subject, inexhaustible in dulness, makes no claim on the attention of an idle reader.

If I had to single out among all the foibles of a well-meaning person the one which worked most mischief in life, I think I should not hesitate to name *inattention*, a mild name for an incalculable evil. The child will not attend to its lesson,—until it does it cannot learn, and consequently *must* suffer: this is one of the first and most useful things we are taught; and in after life, when our hearts are set upon learning, we force ourselves with more or less effort to

attend; but in a general way few minds are thoroughly attentive. Early habit, distractions within and without, obscure feelings, and unsettled principles of action, combine to keep us in a state of *partial* attention, which exposes us to annoyance on all sides, and suffers neither wisdom nor refreshment to reach us from any, without such confusion of thought as must necessarily diminish their effects. And it is to be feared that this evil grows upon us; higher civilisation, as it is called, greatly increases the variety of our stimulants; higher culture of mind opens to us larger fields for intellectual exercise, and goads us forward at a quicker rate; but it makes single purposes, and an entire concentration of thought far more difficult than it could have been to our less enlightened forefathers; and with all our enticements to thought, and all the vast range of speculation to which modern literature invites us, I cannot flatter myself that thoughtfulness is more common than it was in times when there was less said and written about it: in truth, I think it impossible that it should be.

The human mind is a strong engine; but its ca-

capacity is finite, and its limits narrow, compared to all that is now offered for its acceptance; and if you divide the operations of the mind in nine or ten kinds of research, you must inevitably give less attention to nine or ten than you could if four or five were all you aimed at. Of course exercise increases strength; but excessive exercise, either of mind or body, leads to prostration of strength; and of this I think we may find abundant proof in the present day.

Coleridge spoke, in his *Aids to Reflection*, of "the indisposition, nay, the angry aversion to think, even in persons who are most willing to attend, and on the subjects to which they are giving the most studious attention;" are we not grown even more indolent in this respect since his day? Is not even *attention* wanting now? Who can deny the charge which one of our ablest Reviews has lately admitted, that at the present time there is an "*almost savage repugnance to, and incapacity for, attention?*" I do not wonder at it. To judge by the general tone of conversation, an inexperienced person might suppose

modern intellects to be gifted with superhuman powers. "Have you read?" preceding, and either "Yes," or "No, I am going to read," following, the names of a number of books that would have lasted our ancestors for years as many as the days during which they cumber our drawing-room tables, waiting to be looked at, looked through, talked about, and secretly groaned over in the appointed fortnight or ten days that they remain there, while flitting through the affluent book-club. Let us be honest, and allow that all these books cannot be read, much less thought about. You may say, they are not all intended to be read carefully, but only a few of them, or a bit here and there. . Ah, that bit-reading! that hasty snatch-ing at unripe thought, and sketchy narrative, what does it avail us? At dinner-time, in general conversation. Is it then so pleasant to say, or to be told, "Oh! you should read that charming story; and, let me see, somebody's travels in Egypt, *Bayard Taylor's* they were; *very* clever; quite worth reading;—we had it for a few weeks; but I could not read it through, unluckily, for that last work of Sir David

Brewster's came with it, and had to be read too, and now I am getting through Bain's *Senses and the Intellect*." Unhappy intellect! if you are not in these days hurried, halting, and impatient, a real instrument of self-torture, it is no thanks to the customs of the nineteenth century. But a woman, with her amazing versatility and quickness of perception, accommodates herself to this sort of scrap diet very cheerfully: it is when she is importuned to *study*, to read something in a thorough way, that her powers begin to fail, and sometimes her temper. If she is of an active mind she will often, of her own accord, set herself too hard a task, and expect in too short a time to gain much information, seeking it probably in too many directions at once. For, take the number of books such a woman tries to read and get instruction from, is it *possible* to crowd into one memory so great a medley of facts and notions without time for meditation, or any desire more pressing than that which animates a hasty reader to *get through* the chapter, and reach the *Finis* of one book before she begins to devour another? If it *is* possible, and if your

memory can retain all you mercilessly thrust upon it, still it is but a feverish sort of life that is squandered in passing quickly through the painted scenes of other lives; it must rob you of many pleasures that can only be tasted in tranquillity.

You have had, I doubt not, many suspicions of this, but it was difficult, in the clamor that has been raised about culture of the mind, to choose and carry out a moderate line of study; to restrict yourself to a few books, and steadily to devote to this selection all the attention and all the time allotted to reading. Here, as in most other subjects of this nature, Emerson has aimed at folly with a direct and keen stroke. "How dare I read Washington's campaigns when I have not answered the letters of my own correspondents? Is not that a just objection to much of our reading? It is a pusillanimous desertion of our work to gaze after our neighbor's. . . . I can think of nothing to fill my time with, and I find the life of Brant. It is a very extravagant compliment to pay to Brant, or to General Schuyler, or to General Washington. My time should be as good as their

time, my facts, my net of relations as good as theirs, or either of theirs." The advantage of having such a wealth of books as ours in the present day is too great to be innocently abused by the gasping haste with which we read them; and there is no doubt that it tends to lower the style of modern literature at a perceptible rate of deterioration. For, consciously or unconsciously, writers adapt themselves to the taste of the majority of their readers, and feel sure that if their thoughts are to be read they must be slight and shallow enough to be taken in at a glance; rather startling, to attract attention; and, if possible, humorous, because a witty sentence will be remembered and quoted when a serious one is passed over. I am not so ungrateful as to complain of all modern writers; all have not declined to these paltry conditions of popularity; but *many* have; and I grieve to see the light food on which hundreds of intellects diet themselves only because it is freshly prepared, while they neglect the solid treasures of older authors whose works have indeed gained a nominal immortality, but a position in our book-

shelves so quiescent that they are more like literary mummies than vivifying spiritual powers.* How new and welcome a sensation of repose would be felt by some readers, if they were no longer urging themselves to keep up with the literature of the day; a race about as exhausting as a continual run after a number of butterflies. For my part, I should prefer to know where an old stock of bees had hived the honey of a past season, and having found it, I would not be turned away from their well-filled combs.

* For the sake of those who may not know or remember them, I will again quote the verses that must have been many times quoted before:—

“O blessed letters! that combine in one
 All ages past, and make one live with all:
 By you we do confer with who are gone,
 And the dead-living unto counsel call:
 By you the unborn shall have communion
 Of what we feel, and what doth us befall.

“Since writings are the veins, the arteries,
 And undecaying life-strings of those hearts
 That still shall pant, and still shall exercise
 Their mightiest powers when nature none imparts:
 And shall with those alive so sympathise,
 As nourish'd with their powers, enjoy their parts.”

DANIEL'S *Defence of Learning*.

Confess to yourselves, do you not often find your reading time irksome because you cannot quite determine how it would be best spent, when there are so many books you wish to read; and because there is such a tumult in your mind from the variety of thoughts that are fighting for mastery?

A history, or an essay may be very interesting, but the least division of opinion in your mind as to whether it is worth while to go on with it inevitably deprives you of half your powers. It is from an uncertain estimate of *what is worth while* that in these days so many suffer and so many are enfeebled. For, however laudable our employment may be, until we are convinced that the very thing we attend to, be it little or great, is *worth* the application of our most entire attention, we are more or less distracted by thoughts of those things which, either from inclination or principle, have previously absorbed us; and the *present* work of mind or hand is *half* attended to, and therefore ill-done.

The belief that we can do things well enough with half attention, and the hope of helping ourselves by

“tricking short cuts, and little fallacious facilities,” are two delusions deeply laid in the human heart, and at the bottom of many faults that might yield to the instincts of reasonable self-love if the folly of such delusions could be exposed.

The procrastinator delays to act, with the hope that she may be able to make up for lost time *somehow*; for a distinct *how* reason cannot promise; the sloven, by a hasty throwing on of clothes snatched from the drawer, hopes to attain by a *coup de main* the same effect of personal neatness which careful dressers take some trouble to secure; the superficial converser on books and things imperfectly known, thinks that a slight acquaintance with both enables her to hold a social position quite as satisfactory as that which is gained by real knowledge or unaffected ignorance; the lax speaker, who would fain be thought fervent or affectionate, though feeling is not strong, hopes to fill up the blanks of indifference with vehement words; the apologist to make a lavish waste of excuses supply the place of deeds; the unrepentant, in a day, or week, or year, at all events *before death*,

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to make sure of eternal happiness, to prepare for which an omniscient Judge has appointed the *whole* of our earthly career. Most of these cut-short habits arise from a rooted disbelief in the necessities of the future being as pressing as those of the present. Though we know, by virtue of our reason, that we shall wish to be in time, in proper guise, in social esteem for sincerity, in trust and in safety, at any future epoch as much as now we do, yet the claims of *now* are settled by inclination, of *then* by reason; and in most people inclination, (which is more the result of our weakness than our will,) gains the present indulgence, for which it must ultimately suffer far more than it ever could from timely contradiction. No doubt those whom inclination guides are furnished with reasons strong enough to satisfy the mind, or at least to save it from any irksome degree of reflection; reasons about as valid as those which soothe the half-roused sleeper, who thinks, "it is no use to wake up yet, there will be plenty of time for dressing half an hour later, I may be comfortable a little longer; what folly to get up before one need!" The force of such

reasons is not felt by the once awakened mind, when it perceives that inclination carried its point beyond bounds, that *it is too late*.

I will not urge the comparison any further, though the frequent phenomena of a late riser's contending wishes might serve to remind us that a sleeping soul *must* be roused from its carelessness lest its cry of "*too late !*" should begin with everlasting woe.

When speaking of the folly of trying to get more than *is* possible done in a given time by dint of hurry, it is but fair to allow that in some cases it appears to succeed ; the powers of some people being seldom fully exerted without the spur of necessity ; and their directness and celerity, when this stimulates them, contrasting favorably with the hesitation and torpor of those whose tardy action brings into discredit the prudent method to which they adhere. Certainly, one may as easily spend too much time upon each business as too little, but it is quite certain too that as soon as we study how to get a thing done quickly, more than how to do it well, we do it ill just in proportion to the worth of the doing.

CHAPTER XIII.

"It is further very much to be remarked, that neglects from inconsiderateness, want of attention, not looking about us to see what we have to do, are often attended with consequences altogether as dreadful as any active misbehaviour from the most extravagant passion."—*BUTLER'S Analogy*, chap. ii. part I.

It is not from Bishop Butler that we first learn this fact, its sad truth is continually brought home to us. Who has not often bewailed great disasters occasioned by little inattentions; great offence given, and real sorrow caused, by a trifling oversight, or the heedlessness of a moment? It is not only in winding a skein of fine silk that one little slip leads to inextricable confusion. And, this being so well known, it is strange that we can be indifferent to any conscious failure in care and prudence. I think that even angels must be provoked to hear us say: "I know it is foolish not to do this or that, but I could not make up my mind to do it;" or, "By rights I should not say

or do so and so," even while the wrong is being done. Oh, I entreat you do not thus trifle with yourselves! Unless we could command the issues of fate, we should dread to omit the least good or commit the least ill which we know to be positively good or ill; for, however much chance or peculiarities of condition may hide their tendency, it cannot be doubted that on ourselves and on others good or ill will recoil according to the nature of our doings, and the exact measure of our responsibilities.

Now any increase of perception as to what is right increases responsibility; think, therefore, every time you say or feel "it is well to do so and so," that you are thenceforward pledged to do that good thing whenever the least opportunity for it arises; suffer no intentions that you have once fully approved to slip out of mind and die unacted amongst other wasted feelings; if an intention was once good, and has not since been opposed by resolves of superior weight, see that it reaches its mark as speedily as the proportion of duty allows. The *visible* results of each intention are not always of such value as to prove its

importance, but the results of *ineffective* resolves are so pernicious to the mind that they must by all means be avoided.

How can we expect any faculty to retain its healthy power when it is repeatedly baffled and made fruitless? When the judgment has in any matter, ever so small, clearly pronounced "this is desirable, this good to seek," we hurtfully frustrate its effects in things of greater moment if we do nothing in consequence of that decision. It may be a trifle, as far as outward circumstances go, to mean to do a thing and yet never do it; but, if habitual, a fatal infirmity thereby grows upon the soul, and a discord between will and deed begins, which may by degrees occasion fearful divisions between conscience and practice.

The lost soul of a Christian once *intended* to serve God, to deny its evil inclinations; but intention not closely followed by action passes over the spirit like a dream, and, except for the sting of regret, none would know that it had been there.

There is another consideration which is worth notice; whatever is evil and unwise produces evil

without being prompted by bad intention ; if this were not so, half the unhappiness of life would be removed, for carelessness and folly are (according to human apprehension) even more common than sin.

That it is so, let experience convince you. As a common instance of what I mean, take a fancy sketch of the consequences of a habit you or I may have of not doing things at the right time, nor putting things away in their right places.

I will take it from a home where wealth does not put the cares of a maid between a lady's neglect and her consequent discomfort. A paper of some importance is wanted, and you know you laid it by in a safe place, probably in your desk, or in a letter-drawer ; hurrying upstairs with the precipitation of uncertainty, some twenty minutes after you heard that the document would be needed, you see the carriage waiting to take you to a distance to see a lady about a servant for whom you are anxious to get a place : first the key is searched for, the papers turned over, very likely the ink is spilt, — a shout that "it

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is nearly post time" and "the ponies are frisky" startling your movements.

Happily the paper turns up, you run down, find him who waits for it vexed by delay;—rushing up again, you take out your bonnet; the strings came off out walking in yesterday's high wind, and you meant to put them right at once, but something hindered;—your other serviceable bonnet is at the top of a wardrobe, and takes time to put on, because in your hurry every sprig and loop catches in the hair. Your boots happen to be without laces too; and, oh! how tiresome! you find you have taken up two left-hand gloves just as you have got into the carriage; but never mind, drive on, the appointment was made for a fixed hour, and it is already ten minutes past the time for meeting. You reach your destination but not your object; the lady had waited in vain nearly an hour; she then left and went to a registering office, supposing your *protégée* had been engaged, and there heard of a servant whom she agrees to take, and lets you know of it by the next day's post. You are very sorry,—pity the poor

girl,—think yourself and her very unlucky,—and would laugh at me, perhaps, if I attributed all your annoyance to not doing right at the right time.

Bad habits of every sort seem to lie in wait like despised enemies, ready to break out upon you at any minute that weakness or disadvantage exposes you to temporary defeat. Little infirmities can bring upon us great troubles. The hole in your pocket, through which your purse slipped out so quietly while you were blandly talking of the weather in a railway carriage, is not a flaw much more trifling, or much less easily mended, than the little folly, the slight negligence, by which your peace has so often been ruined. The perversity of “things-in-general” causes us much vexation, but I think it is from our own perverse contempt for the details of good management that we suffer most.

With every *permitted* fault or folly you infect the moral atmosphere of all around you in a *certain* though unmeasured degree; and seeing the immense loss of good occasioned by folly and sin, the complicated misery entailed upon hundreds by the neglect

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or guilt of one,—seeing how not only sin and downright foolishness, but weakness, ignorance, mischance, disease, and insanity combine to cause affliction for the innocent as well as for the guilty,—one stands amazed, and asks oneself, “Is there nothing that I can do to put *some* check upon this multiplication of ills, so fearfully evident on all sides?” There is;—single woman, whoever you may be, however unhelpful Destiny may seem to make you, there is one way by which you can infallibly promote happiness, and retard the growth of misery. Make yourself as holy, as wise, as happy, and as calm as you can; and set this process before you as an object worth every kind of prudent self-discipline: particularly attend to the faintest whisper of Reason when it says within you: “Here you exaggerate,—you carry that feeling, this pursuit too far,—check this indulgence of a selfish whim, this reckless devotion to mere amusement, for each excess tends to disordered thoughts and unhealthy feeling.” And do not wait till you can adjust the warnings of Scripture to such trifling instances of folly; do not disregard the

inner voice because you hear no distinct accent of divine truth in its pleadings; whence can warning come, if reasonable, but from Him who beseeches men to follow after Wisdom, and take fast hold of her? Even the smallest intimations of prudence are His gifts, and at our peril we slight them. If in our daily conduct we do ever overbear instincts of what is right and wrong, wise and foolish, we do all that free-willed creatures can to invite towards us evil and ruin. It may sound like exaggeration to say so, or like the gloomy representations of a morbid conscience; it is not so—it is simple truth: if you will prove it, *study your own heart and your own life*, the comparison will bear me out in this assertion, and teach better than anything short of revelation.

On the other hand, she who in everything follows the guidance of conscience and reason, guards her moral sanity; a rare excellence, which is of incalculable service in society where hundreds blindly submit to the direction of chance influences and inclination,—appearing to the thoughtful eye as dangerous as so many combustibles strewn about:

any minute a spark of wrath or passion may kindle a wide blaze of mischief, which the clear, calm, self-governed soul is oftentimes able to arrest as surely as a fire-proof mass, upon which flames may burn harmlessly to slow annihilation.

At this point an impassioned spirit will probably feel inclined to dismiss me from its counsels as one who luxuriates in impracticable theories of virtue. It is what all are apt to do when looking at right and wrong in the abstract, but truly what I now recommend is a habit applicable to everybody's *practice*. You who do not doubt it may yet say, "This is altogether too laborious a system for me: I do not wish to fetter my good impulses by conscious control—

‘What, joyous and free, delights in the sport of the will,
In the fetters of duty bows drooping the flourishing head.’

I am weary of this ‘cold dispute of what is fit,’ and would rather trust myself a little more to the instincts of the heart: some souls seem to be smoothly wafted towards their haven by good inclinations, why should not mine?”

I understand that feeling; there is much in life to give it the color of wisdom. In some natures impulse does appear to be a good guide, and conscientious thoughtfulness often seems to mislead; but if there was even much more than there is to bring into suspicion the labors of spiritual watchfulness, if I was unable to detect the weakness of will or of reason which, now and then, exposes a person of scrupulous conscience to unfavorable comparison with the amiable creature of impulse, still I cannot grant it to be an open question *which* has chosen the best way; for no experience of my own could warrant me in refusing the way that has been chosen for us by God. In His word I find that righteousness, though spoken of as peace, is only to be obtained by hard effort and ceaseless perseverance, and this being expressly declared to us throughout the Holy Scriptures, it is, to say the least of it, highly improbable that any good habit should be attainable without exertion and steady pursuit. Now, if you assent to this with more than *verbal* belief, you will not shrink from the toil of ascertaining all that can be *safely* known of your

inner life. I say *safely*, not only with reference to self-consciousness (which is perhaps a greater hindrance to self-knowledge than any *external* distraction, inasmuch as it generally results from a partial attention to the instincts of egotism), but with an eye to error, far less common,—to that anatomising scrutiny of all that goes on within—that curious search into mysteries as much beyond human comprehension as the first process of creation, to which few women are addicted, but from which *all*, even those of strongest intellect, would refrain if they knew how hurtful it is to waste thought in depths where neither reason nor revelation offer any light. It is not self-analysis that will help us; it will only serve as an obstacle to wholesome action; and for entire self-knowledge who would dare to ask? Mercy suffers us not to know “what manner of spirit” we are of. But what we may safely know, and ought to strive to know, is the present state of thought and feeling to which we profess to give utterance; this is necessary for truth in dealing with other people; and the motives that lead us to such

and such expressions, and the way in which external objects stimulate these motives, must, if possible, be known for the sake of self-government. The peculiar weaknesses and evil tendencies of the heart must also be known, that we may watch against them, and seek especial assistance from Him who is our strength.

I mention these principal branches of self-knowledge, as an indication of the way in which it is *practically* useful; not at all pretending to grasp the subject with comprehension adequate to its importance. A woman needs but a little self-knowledge to convince her that in touching upon subjects like these, she is liable to the errors of a superficial thinker; but it is to the *surface* of our manners as truly expressing, or habitually misrepresenting the inmost life, that I would now draw your attention.

Pre-supposing that you have wisdom and tact enough to hide from common observation such states of feeling as you would think it undesirable to show, and that you are also too honest deliberately to

intend to deceive, I ask, how nearly do your words and manners agree with your real feelings? You say at once, "It is impossible that they should; society would be broken up if we attempted to make it a palace of truth." I quite agree with you; human nature could not stand that test; it needs a veil: but are you satisfied with society as it now is? do you never call it hollow, and feel sick of its deceits, and very weary of the perplexities of its masquerade? I do; and unless it was a common feeling, Dickens and Thackeray, and the many lesser satirists who follow in their wake, would not. I think, find so many delighted readers.

But I have an obstinate hope in my heart that we shall not always content ourselves with laughing at the follies which poison society; some people make a firm stand against them now, and surely the time must come when all that are true-hearted will dare to be as honest, as free from pretension, as straightforward and clear in their *outward* life, as they now *wish* they could be.

Fashion, the great tyrant of English society, has

been spoken of in a previous chapter;—the traitor that undoes some of the wisest hearts among us,—persuading them to surrender themselves to the service of this tyrant, goes by the name of shyness or nervousness. What it really is, by what magic one insignificant human being, in *no wise related* to the real interests of another, can subdue and paralyze that other by being present only, is still unknown. Much guessing, and reasoning, and speculative surprise has been spent in consideration of this phenomenon; the wonders of mesmerism come nearest, in my opinion, to the wonders of shyness; but I doubt if the most philosophical victim to shyness could ever account for it satisfactorily.

The intensity of this strange feeling must be remembered, when we calculate upon the chances of emancipation from the yoke of fear as to *what will be thought of us*. Any overt act of resistance is almost as impossible as it is undesirable for a well-bred woman; yet, as I have before tried to convince you, *every* gentlewoman can substitute truth for seeming, in great measure, if it is her constant endeavor to make the

heart right, and the manner a fair index of the heart. On this point, therefore, it is most important to fix attention; unless you are clearly informed of what is going on in the deep of your heart, you *cannot* be true or even tolerably exact in your report of it to those about you.

Could there be such a disease as affectation in the social life of one who distinctly observed the workings of her undisguised nature? If she gave herself the trouble to find out her own truth, could she so little respect it as to act and speak in defiance of its unappeasable murmurs? I doubt if counteracting influences of any sort would overbear sincerity where it had been a lifelong habit; and where its requirements have been much neglected they may still be rescued from complete abeyance. If they are *not*, the whole character must go to wreck. Unhappy indeed are they who thus forfeit their integrity, and even those who have avoided conscious deceits, who have only got into the habit of overstating their feelings, are sure to suffer cruelly in the long run for their disregard of the secret witness within: not having trusted to it for

adequate supplies of expression in a common way, at times when the heart's dictates would have been the *only* oracle for guiding them towards happiness, they are unable to catch its whispers; hastily execute the suggestions of a world-taught understanding; and then perhaps wonder that even by the world they are mistrusted as false and shallow and despicable. I pray you to listen attentively to the voice of your spirit at all times; but especially when any clamor *without* might make it inaudible or unimpressive. Listen reverently, though sin and folly pollute the heart, in its inmost recesses is the sanctuary of the Holy One: listen humbly, for then He may make you to understand wisdom secretly, and if it is in no way contrary to the written word, or to reason, let the conviction that comes from within be to you as an oracle.

CHAPTER XIV.

"A force de sagesse on peut être blamable ;
Il faut parmi le monde une vertu traitable."—MOLIÈRE.

"Time in its flight not only takes away
Field flowers, and the forest's ornament,
The brilliancy of youth, and its fresh power :
Her sorest theft touches the world of thought.
What fair and noble, rich and heavenly was,
The value of each work, each sacrifice,
She shows to us so colorless and void,
So small and nought, that we are nothing too.
Yet well for us if ashes faithfully
Cherish the sparks ; if the deceived heart
Retains yet pulse enough to glow anew."—UHLAND.

HOWEVER much I wander from one subject to another in my meditations upon spinsterhood, I have not once let go the clue by which I hope to emerge satisfactorily from among its various disadvantages. And the guiding line is this simple question, "How can an unmarried woman do most good?" Her happiness (being less certainly attainable, and less in her own power) is a secondary object, and must often be set

aside in theory, as it is in practice, until better things are secured: and if she reverses this order, and tries to make sure of her own happiness before she will attend to that of other people, she must inevitably lose the good she seeks for herself and the good she ought to procure for them. I do not pretend that to be tolerably happy a woman must be free from self-interest, and altogether indifferent to her own comfort, for that is a strain of charity seldom reached by human nature; but I think that unless her tendencies are unselfish, her chance of happiness is small.

Now unselfishness in act is quickly detected, and on every side you will meet with warnings against it: let us who closely look into silent evils, try to explore the selfishness which sometimes withdraws us more than is well from the world we live in, to the calmer world of thought. A very pleasant world it is to a lonely woman whose mind is richer than her heart: *there*, a soft haze of indefinite musings covers the waste places of her life; her own image moves there with gentle stateliness; her best nature is believed in; her opinions are uncontradicted; the love of the

departed shines around her tenderly ; the faults of the living cannot intrude, and the longer she stays in that quiet kingdom, the more reluctant she feels to leave it for the stirring world of reality. I might surprise her by asking, "What good do you do in that retirement of thought?" she would perhaps think it a cruel question, and say, "What other delight remains to me?" Alas! self-convicted of a similar aptness to forget life's duties while in search of some compensation for its pains, its vanities, and vexations, I am not able to speak of a cure for such slothful tendencies very hopefully ; but let us face the truth : we *must* get the victory over our selfishness *now* or we shall be slaves to it until we die. It is indeed, as Mdme. de Staël tells us, almost unconquerable late in life.

I know that sorrow does much to foster a dreary devotion to one's own comfort and gratification ; there are times miserably blank and cold when no motive is awake except the goading impulse of nature *to do something*, or a hard decree from a necessitous conscience. Yet even then, when heaven and earth seem loveless, is it not terrible to think that some

young, or sorrowful, or erring hearts may be plunging deeper and deeper into "labyrinths of temptation," because we are too much occupied with our own grief to give them the help of watchful compassion? If you say, "I know of none who want my help," I am inclined to take such an admission for proof that you have too much secluded yourself already; and I entreat you to leave your abstract meditations, sublime and hallowed though they be, for subjects that press more immediately upon living interests. It is good advice of Molière's, and we may accept it without offence at the terminus he assigns to thought, when he says that it would be as well, "*ne point aller chercher ce qu'on fait dans la lune, et vous mêler un peu de ce qu'on fait chez vous.*" To do this successfully we must enter heartily into the feelings of those around us, and break up a great many excellent theories of what *ought to be* for the sake of giving our whole, patient attention to *what is*: particularly with young companions, otherwise we may share his fate who

"became
 Considerably uninviting
 To those who meditation slighting,
 Were moulded in a different frame :
 . . .
 And he scorned them, and they scorned him,
 And he scorned all they did."

It is true that the strange disinclination for thought which prevails in many circles, the shyness of any question leading to spiritual depths, which is often exhibited by people who read almost everything that they can get at except the workings of their own minds, drives inwards much of our best energy; and it is undeniable that very few superior minds can take in general society their most natural position. Consciousness of this inability is apt to give an air of haughtiness and *intentional* reserve which is not only wrong and disagreeable, but proof positive (as it appears to me) of something very defective in this same shackled intellect; for if it had expanded a little farther it might have seen that it is from being still under the curse of Babel, as far as the language of *thoughts* is concerned, that we are so often obliged

to stoop to meet other minds, and not from there being necessarily any great inequality of mental power; which is often latent in those who sneer at it with a sense of deficiency; still oftener disguised by the impossibility of communicating ideas. We strive to make ourselves understood, and to speak forcibly, but what we say is to our neighbor "like a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong." We find no response to thoughts which seem to us of the greatest interest, and when our feelings kindle into rapture, we see the objects that excite them regarded with coldness and indifference; and we in our turn are equally cold to the excitements of our companions. Even among real friends this often happens; how much more frequently among those with whose modes of thought we are not familiar.

When this separation of spirit is painfully felt, it is natural that the most sensitive should take refuge in silence, or in talk about little commonplace matters which do not admit of misunderstanding; and thus it is often observed that those who, in common parlance, have "most in them," give least evidence of their

powers, and submit to the dullest exchange of trifling remarks with which conversation can be burdened.

Let this be remembered by all who suppose themselves in a position to look down on the minds of their associates; it is not impossible that many of these associates, suffering from the same mistake, imagine that they must condescend also.

Natural difference of ability is great and unmistakable, but it never makes such a wide severance between one mind and another as do our false estimates of comparative strength.

All things considered, it is perhaps well for general society that so few *can* put forth in it their full strength, (force in reserve is better than force overstrained,) and where companionship is attempted it is but justice that strong and quick-moving minds should curb vehemence and rapidity, and endeavor to keep pace with the weak and slow; for "it is a breach of the harmony of public conversation to take things in such a key as is above the common reach, puts others to silence, and robs them of their privilege of turn." Even when the calibre of intellects

is equal, temperamental reserve, shyness, and indolence go far towards hiding this equality, just as humility and apprehension will suppress any signs of holy joy and exalting aims, when it is possible that any one present could misconstrue them as hypocrisy. While we live in a world tainted by this vice, it is impossible that the devout soul should express itself in general society without some disguising restraint; and those who think it their duty to attempt to do without it, are continually driven back into silence by the sheer force of non-acceptance and disapproval among those who hear them.

I have dwelt upon this point with more stress than my main purpose absolutely required, because I think it essential to the happiness of single life to counteract any habit which increases the feeling of isolation. To a certain degree this feeling is inevitable, but at the same time it is very liable to encroach beyond the limits of necessity. Allow it to do so, nourish it with melancholy broodings, support it with sublime aspirations, and call it what you will, but do not doubt that its indulgence is unchristian. If it does not appear

to deserve so hard a name in your heart, judge rather by its evil influence on your conduct.

You do not greatly love those whom you regard as spiritual aliens; you think you pity them, but your pity is mingled with contempt, and seldom does any heart entertain contempt without being brought under the terrible retributive scourge of self-contempt, the least measure of which sours every thought; and then "*certes there behoveth grete corage agenst accidie, leste that it ne swallows the soule by the sinne of sorrow, or distroie it by wanhope.*"

Now before "*accidie*" brings us to this stage of despair, it destroys much good. "*Of accidie it cometh first that a manne is anoied and encombred to doe any godenesse.*" Will any one with the experience of middle age deny that there is much in every-day life calculated to produce *accidie*? The sweetest tempers, the most benevolent hearts, know that there is.

Nothing more likely to cause it than the disappointing issue of many youthful schemes for doing good. The uneasy remembrance of having been misled by the deceits of the poor throws an air of

doubtful advantage over works of charity, that, but for this, would appear urgently needful. Those to whom we have spoken of religion with sanguine frankness, from whom we have received satisfactory pledges of a virtuous disposition, have turned aside to paths of vice and shame; subordinates who once professed the warmest devotion to our service have betrayed trust, or allowed themselves, in the heat of domestic feuds, to utter ungrateful falsehood; and so, taught by these bitter lessons, we sometimes begin to doubt if it is of *any* use to try and make people good, or safe to trust them though apparently attached to us; we feel cold and suspicious when the voices of the young or ignorant tremble in earnest protestation; we fancy we see through the shallowness of untried constancy; it seems safest to give up all hope and keep on our own way, without sympathy or concern. Ah! a strong temptation; but the calmness which it offers is deadly. *This* is not the peace they have who love God's law; for in every effort of Christian love we base our hopes on immutable things; the word of God commanding us

to help and sympathise, gives the command constantly to *hope* also, with the promise of final, and glorious, and everlasting recompense. Though all things fail us here, if in the strength of the Lord we labor, and rely upon his love, no amount of disappointment can make us weary of well-doing. I think one of the disadvantages of middle-aged people is, that they have had time to accumulate so many secondary motives; every year experience puts before us more inducements for being cautious, considerate, and prudent; but at the same time it encumbers the mind with so many half-principles and measures of expediency, that the full force of a supreme motive, either for endurance or for action, is seldom felt. We are too likely to be unconsciously warped by conventional notions of charity, unless we frequently recur to the only infallible source of wisdom; and by substituting worldly wisdom for simple obedience to God's commands, we necessarily arrive at perplexities which prompt first to temporary, and then to habitual inaction. It is true that the decisions of worldly wisdom must *not* be slighted, but neither may they

be submitted to as authoritative: and I think it must be allowed that when we give both due attention to them, and willing obedience to the law of Christian charity, we still find many and serious perplexities from which there is no evident escape.

In the present day I believe it is often from weariness of vainly trying to dispose of these perplexities, that the poor are so often neglected by people of thoughtful minds. Must we not confess that in some moods we are as regardless of the lower orders as of the inhabitants of the stars; the needs and sufferings of the poor seeming almost as unlimited, and as far removed from our cognisance, as the nature of spirits in unknown worlds?

And when we hear of the extreme misery that lurks on all sides, it seems too boundless and too intricate for any human agency to relieve, we think—

“The judgment angel scarce could find his way
Through such a heap of generalised distress,
To the individual man with lips and eyes!”

Thus the little charity we have is deadened by the enormous demands made upon it; and just as the

brain becomes drowsy when overtasked, so the heart seems to grow torpid from excessive stimulus. But it ought not to affect us thus; if we sedulously attended to such good works as lay nearest to us, we should probably escape from any paralysing observation of infinite need, and as our labors increased with our insight, a patient zeal would also increase, and the heart be quieted by submissive love. Now as the widest range of beneficent exertions must begin from a narrow point, it greatly concerns every woman to know how she may best do her least kindnesses.

How well this is understood by the majority of those who give themselves to works of mercy we cannot fail to perceive; and I persuade myself that every one must know some women whose lives seem to be as bountiful and full of blessings as the sunlight which brings comfort alike to the stately mansion, and the cheerless, naked cottage.* The quiet mercy of

* "Since half the duty of a Christian in this life consists in the exercise of passive graces, and the infinite variety of Providence, and the perpetual adversity of chances, and the dissatisfaction and emptiness that are in things themselves, and the weariness and

such women is helping throughout England to knit together in kindly union the rich and the poor of all classes; but I am afraid we have also too many opportunities of learning that this is not the invariable result of well-intended charities.

anguish of our spirit, do call us to the trial and exercise of patience, even in the days of sunshine, and much more in the violent storms that shake our dwellings, and make our hearts tremble, God hath sent some angels into the world whose office it is to refresh the sorrows of the poor, and to lighten the eyes of the disconsolate; He hath made some creatures whose powers are chiefly ordained to comfort. . . . Certain it is that as nothing can better do it, so there is nothing greater, for which God made our tongues, next to reciting His praise, than to minister comfort to a weary soul. And what greater measure can we have than that we should bring joy to our brother, who with his dreary eyes looks to heaven and round about, and cannot find so much rest as to lay his eyelids close together; than that thy tongue should be tuned with heavenly accents, and make the weary soul to listen for light and ease, and when he perceives that there is such a thing in the world, and in the order of things, as comfort and joy, to begin to break out from the prison of his sorrow at the door of sighs and tears, and by little and little, melt into showers and refreshment? This is glory to thy voice, and employment fit for the brightest angel."—JER. TAYLOR'S *Sermon on the Duties of the Tongue*.

I suspect that there must be something amiss in our manner of mixing with poor people ; some unreasonable habit of appealing to sentiments not likely to influence the uneducated ; some mode of treating them which better suits our theories than their facts, or the laudable efforts of district visitors could *never* appear to be fruitless ; *very much* good is done by them, yet in some cases one has to regret the labors of well-meaning women as being most unfortunately misapplied, seeming to combine with "fussiness," love of power, and vanity, as readily as do the more frivolous exertions of skill in support of fancy bazaars, —which, *if* necessary at all, I cannot but regard as necessary evils.

I fear that we often fail in being of use among our poor friends from our ignorance of human nature allowing us to trample upon tendencies which we think useless, out of the question, or highly undesirable among poor people. Granting that they are all this,—pride and wilfulness, and the touchiness of dependants, for instance,—yet by ignoring such feelings you do not get rid of them, you only increase

them tenfold, and, perhaps, if you were in the place of those you wish to relieve, you might be so absurd as to prefer the enjoyment of uninjured self-respect to having a few shillings more, useful as they might be, —so singular as to think poverty an evil great enough without the additional plague of interference. “La charité,” says Victor Cousin, “est souvent le commencement et l’excuse, et toujours le prétexte des usurpations. Pour avoir le droit de s’abandonner aux mouvements de la charité, il faut s’être affermi contre soi-même dans un long exercice de la justice.” Again, as to gratitude, since it is notorious that gratitude is seldom found in any proportion to the good received, but always in proportion to the good feelings of the recipient, will it not be well to leave off expecting a due recognition of your benefits? “For the sake of the recipient,” you say, “I wish to see it.” Yes, truly, but remember that,

“Little can the rich man guess
The poor man’s utter poverty.”

Did you know it, you would not, perhaps, think your

benefits so striking, and I am sure you would not wonder that the poor creatures, who have often need of all things, seemed so apathetic when you proffered a little help. For your own sake it would be well that you should neither look nor care for gratitude: a good deed of any sort should be pure from selfish motive; and I think that if you *can* do good things judiciously, without verbally or tacitly expressing a demand for gratitude, or a sense of self-importance, you should by all means do them; but if not, it might be questioned whether it is not better to leave them alone; the good gained for other people can hardly be precious enough to outweigh the evil and temptation laid up for them, as well as for yourself, by exploits that nourish your own vain glory.

The giving of admonition is, perhaps, the most difficult sort of charity, but it is one in which a single woman ought to be particularly successful. Being, as I shall presume, seldom able to indulge the love of authority, (which, be it remembered, is attributed to *weak* characters,) she is in a position where the workings of human nature are far more easily learned than

they can be from a post of domestic government. An observant woman, without authority, sees many of the behind scenes of human nature, and if she does not know how to reach some of its most hidden springs she has abused a great privilege. Unfortunately, all are not observant; those who rush to give advice, or to rebuke without extreme caution, fail of course, and generally effect something worse than failure. When it is necessary to blame, it is strange what a great difference may be made by very trifling varieties of tone and manner. A touch of heartfelt tenderness, when duty extorts from us severe reproof, and a change of expression slightly different from that which rises to the lips when small defects must be commented upon, makes sometimes, to another heart, all the difference between resentment and meek acceptance. Instead of "What a pity you did so and so!" "You did quite wrong then," to say, "You might do this better," "I think you would be more satisfied with yourself if you made such and such an improvement," is a little thing; but what trifle is too small to irritate or soothe the delicate texture of self-love? One might

compare the mistakes often made in this direction to the blunder of a person, who, wishing to summon another from an upper room, repeatedly rings the bell which communicates with a lower one, and so calls up a very different character. We want to awaken conviction, or to call up industry; but if we speak in a tone that almost always rouses the temper, or stimulates fear, the appeal is mischievously vain. Let us try the right bell, and our transactions will be more successful. One more suggestion; when you give advice, be greatly on your guard against an implied sense of superior virtue and holiness, to which a life devoted to the Christian profession may possibly tempt you. Beware of thinking yourself necessarily so advanced in goodness, as that you may dictate on points of conscience, and arbitrate as to what is right or wrong for another soul. For this you can have no warrant.

CHAPTER XV.

"I am not so vain to think that in the matter of devotion, and the rules of justice and religion (which is the business of your life), I can add anything to your heap of excellent things: but I have known and felt comfort by reading, or hearing from other persons what I knew myself; and it was inactive upon my spirit till it was made vigorous and effective from without. And in this sense I thought I might not be useless and impertinent."

JER. TAYLOR'S *Dedication to the "Life of Christ."*

To add to your heap of excellent things is not my ambition, but what I have felt the need of myself I am very desirous to help you to find. I have often longed to be able to concentrate upon my own heart the various incentives to holiness which are so abundantly supplied by every religious book, and every example of a really Christian life; and I have found it difficult to do so; not so much because these incentives often seem to oppose one another from a wide difference of nature, but from their claims upon my conscience being apparently so equal, that I knew

not which it would be best to yield to with the assent of *habitual* application.

To free my remarks from the obscurity that always accompanies any abstract thought to which we are unused, I will give an instance of the difficulty in question. Suppose, that in some season of spiritual torpor, I recall a time when the interests of my soul occupied me more than now they do; when I knew myself to be more fervent in spirit than I now am, and that being thus roused by fears of backsliding, I set myself to search for means of grace. The bosom sin that has been allowed to gain ground must be fought against more vigorously; prayer must be more earnest, the reading of God's word more assiduous; all this is certain, but by what spring shall these instruments of grace be put in motion? By divine grace? No doubt; but it rests with us to "stir up" ourselves to "lay hold on righteousness," and my heart feels cold and dead. What my intellect inquires for is the most efficacious stimulants, and so long as the light of reason is vouchsafed to me I cannot believe that faith and prayer (though patient and

incessant) is all that devolves upon my ever-stirring spirit in the working out of salvation to which I am exhorted. Neither can I think it right to limit my attention to the teaching of inspired writers, though the Bible contains "all things necessary to salvation," because I see that the Almighty Will, ever working by the instrumentality of subordinate agents, suffers a wonderful degree of influence to be transmitted to us through human minds. I know, as an indisputable fact, that the spirit within us is gradually moulded and turned in this or in that direction by the permitted power of our fellow-creatures, and that I am, therefore, responsible for my choice of companions, whether those that speak in the body, or those who address me with the more careful eloquence of written language. To whom, then, shall I give a hearing, when it is all important that I should be guided aright? Here, in the book-shelves, are the select opinions of some of the wisest and most holy men; evidently they were as anxious to teach as I to learn what agrees with Revelation and does not contradict Reason.

But I find their counsels do not coincide, and even on material points their testimony is sometimes conflicting. For instance, here are some exhorting me vehemently to more entire dependence on a Saviour's mediation; these tell me that my declensions in holiness are caused by imperfect *faith*; that I am going about to establish my own righteousness, and forget that in the propitiation of Jesus is my only hope of acceptance. Alas! am I taking any care of my righteousness when I so often commit the sin which I feel to be exceeding sinful and abhorrent to the Holy One, whose forgiving mercy I dishonor by my broken promise and too ready assurance of *unconditional* pardon? I find a more suitable tone of advice in another volume; it speaks home to my heart, for it is full of a thrilling outcry against sin; yet, as I read, it strikes me that Christian contrition would hardly justify the expressions of joyless humiliation which I meet with here. The writer seems to think that a mournful, life-long penitence (and I suspect him of recommending penance too) is the state of being which it behoves us to desire; and, not having a melancholy tempera-

ment, I quickly shut the book ; and while several scripture promises cross my mind with sweet encouragement, I determine that a repentant sinner could not have written more despairingly, with regard to this life, had Christ *not* died.

Taking down a few more books, I put aside, as inapplicable to my need, those which lay so much stress upon moral discipline and intellectual development as the means of securing happiness, that one doubts if their authors ever seriously contemplated a deeper want than the want of happiness, or a darker fear than the dread of disordered impulse. They seem to have such a superficial acquaintance with the human heart as to be still ignorant of its inherent *apprehensions*, still regardless of the cry that arises ever and anon from a fallen creature, "What shall I do to be *saved*?" It is an excellent work to labor to bring every power of heart and mind to its destined perfection ; such writers as these can often help me in the difficult process, and at other times I study them with due respect ; just now it is not the development of what I *have*, that I so earnestly seek, but

the attainment, nay, the perception, of what I am miserably *without*. My spirit seems to stand aloof from its God, and I ask of those who have gone before, by what means were you enabled to cleave steadfastly unto Him? "By an obedient use of Church ordinances," some thoughtful and holy people would reply; "we once felt all you feel; we were uncertain and wavering between divers impulses, emotions, theories, all withdrawn from the direction of authoritative guides, and, therefore, we were wretched; we felt and thought as solitary individuals, and were, therefore, deprived of harmonious action in the fellowship of Christ's Church; we had no interpreter of God's Will—His word alone was insufficient; until the happy day came when we were awakened to the knowledge of privileges, already possessed, but abused by neglect, and therefore despised; *now*, precious to our souls, and securing a peace to which we could in no other way attain!"

With partial assent I read, or listen to declarations like this; I observe that the regular recurrence of appointed duties necessitates a degree of calm to the

obedient mind, which *self-imposed* rules could not establish;—there are few people who can altogether slight the support of “*the Comforter of all the weak, —Rule,*” and I cordially respond to expressions of gratitude for the admirable constitution of our English church, believing, as I do, that it is difficult adequately to value the blessings it has conveyed to us during many past centuries; which, by timely and gentle amendments may, I trust, be secured to our country for ages to come, in spite of all that now threatens. But unless I could also assert that attending daily service, and observing fast days, and keeping saints’ days holy, brought me consolation and rest, I should not satisfy those who would thank God for their church-membership more fervently than for any other mercy bestowed upon them. As I think it is obviously undesirable in these days to bring into comparison greater or less degrees of filial affection to our Church, I shall not *attempt* to satisfy a reader who may think that I ought to *excuse* the admission here made; but I will try to explain why I can give *only* a partial assent to those who say that obedience to

ecclesiastical regulations supplies unfailing stimulus and support to the soul. Without presuming to decide upon a question so much above my powers of judgment I may confess what I think to be true. I do not find this obedience enough for my soul's-need, because it is an obedience that may be external only, and therefore, unless the spirit is continually quickened by some other means, this obedience may deceive us; it may simulate religious life long after its vitality is extinct. But what power can suffice to preserve vitality? That to which the inspired writers so confidently appeal—*the power of Love*. This, and this alone, can meet my difficulties; it can touch me to the quick in every conceivable distress which does not rob me of faith. "*The Lord is loving unto every man.*" Here I find consolation in its simplest and most unconditional form; the heart that responds with the faintest gratitude to such an assurance cannot fail to observe the emphasis given throughout Scripture to the reiterated declarations of God's love. I need not quote passages in the Bible which must have been familiarised by your personal experience,

I shall take it for granted that at your age you can say from the heart, "We love Him because He first loved us;" and yet, while most fully believing that He does love us, we often fail in happiness, and linger in the race.

When speaking of the love of God, and of the communion with Him which results from love, I fear lest a tone of presumptuous confidence should mark my endeavors to rescue that exceeding honor from neglect. Let it be understood that with deepest reverence I speak of the transcendent mercy which enjoins us to feel such love, and delight in such communion.

Those oft-used words, "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," startle me sometimes as I use them; as if an *incredible* degree of condescension to human nature was implied;—and it is the irreverence of coldly passing over the amazing possibility of divine fellowship which I now seek to combat. If this possibility had not been distinctly revealed, few among us would dare to imagine it: but on that point God *has* uttered His voice, and we know that if indeed

we live unto Him, with Him we have communion. Greater honor and more inexhaustible comfort could not be offered to the creature; yet by how few among us is it so esteemed; a cold and barren belief of the *mind* only keeping up a recognition that this communion *may* be, side by side with these abatements,—“human nature is weak and can seldom attain to it,—enthusiasts have thought it essential, and in times of great excitement we may all know a supernatural kind of exaltation, but it would be absurd to expect this for a continuance in people of calm dispositions.”

Do not suffer yourselves to be beguiled by the plausible half-truths that are ever afloat in civilised society. Consult the Bible faithfully, and you will see that no child of God need be excluded from an almost unbroken consciousness of the presence of God. We think of the spiritual state of holy men of old as of that to which we cannot reach, but why may not every one of us “walk with God?” Are not *promises* vouchsafed to us of the indwelling spirit of God, which nothing but our own rebellions, our own paltry little idols, can render ineffective?

If you forfeit your hopes of this fellowship (especially you who, feeble and saddened by an isolated position, have only the prospects of lonely old age), you forfeit bliss, and leave the heart exposed to powerful and merciless assailants; you submit to miserable alienation from the pitiful God who is ever present; who is able to satiate the weary soul, and replenish every sorrowful soul.

And what deprives you of a comfortable sense of His presence? Is it want of faith—a half-belief in revealed truth? or a divided heart, an incomplete surrender of the will? Search, and spare no labor of self-examination till you can detect what secret sin or spiritual blindness accounts for this deprivation. It may be that curious mixture of sense and nonsense which we call worldliness; vanity it may be, or mere frivolity; a fluttering attention to insignificant things, an habitual dislike of whatever is serious, or some little flaw in conduct, such as daily excess in any one indulgence; for the least *habitual* sin may grow to a great hindrance. And when once you have found what unholy thing it is that separates your

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spirit from its God, implore Him for strength to put it away.

In temptation to sin, or in *definite* sorrow, we have immediate recourse to prayer; *these* troubles we are used to bring before the Most High; but in the disconsolate blanks of life, when the heart and mind yearn for closer sympathy than any their best earthly friends can offer, when beauty calls the heart away from works of daily routine, and in its rapture it perceives that this beauty, whether of cloud, or sunset, or flower, is more closely related to it than all the recognised interests of life; and that among these it is indeed a stranger often sighing for home,—in all the unexpected seizures of despair, when in a cheerful party, or among chosen friends, we are convinced by our own feelings of the impossibility of finding happiness in any other way than in the strict performance of duty,—in all these crises of being we feel too often as if we were utterly alone, as if the compassionate Father, who hears us when we ask for daily bread, would scorn or overlook the prayer of a perplexed soul for spiritual companionship,—for some foretaste

of its anticipated perfection,—for even the smallest measure of true joy. This trick of faithlessness is without warrant. Doubtless the Creator has respect to the hunger and thirst of our immortal spirits, and will give us even here a plenteousness of all they need, if we simply go to Him and ask in humble faith for *all* that can be granted to us during probation without lessening our hopes of future glory. A few words, a sigh, raised to the Saviour who has been vexed, and wearied, and saddened, in this same toilsome world; and a meek endeavor to rejoice because He would have us to do so, and because we have, written in our hearts, the tidings of great joy which He sent, surely to all these would a secret answer be given, and we should know that we have at all times (not only in trouble), a very present help. We should then cease to indulge in that aimless sentimentality of grief, which, addressing itself neither to God nor man, gains nothing but fresh bursts of self-pity, and puts farther from us the wholesome views of life by which we must frame our conduct if we would die in peace after a busy and well spent day.

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“Let us be hearty and of good courage therefore, and thoroughly comfort ourselves in the Lord.” If He hears us whensoever we cry to Him, He will be attentive to the voice of our hearts in times of cheerful enjoyment and active work: when we read, or write, or walk, or feed our sense of sight and of hearing with the delights of which He has made us capable. Why then do not our hearts continually talk with Him?

A young child can ill bear prolonged absence from those who cherish it; we altogether withdraw our thoughts for hours at a time from the Giver of all our good things; but it is only since the Fall that the love of God has been less natural in man than the clinging affection of a child to its parent; and we know that “the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father” is again granted to us; you must not therefore allow yourself to think that I have been proposing an *unnatural* state of feeling. “L’entière observation des commandemens de Dieu n’est pas dans l’enclos des forces humaines, mais elle est bien pourtant dans les confins de l’instinct de l’esprit humain,

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comme très-conforme à la raison et lumière naturelle ; de sorte que, vivant selon les commandemens de Dieu, nous ne sommes pas pour cela hors de notre inclination naturelle.”*

* François de Sales.

CHAPTER XVI.

" Ah, Lord! do not withdraw,
Lest want of awe
Make sin appear;
And, when Thou dost but shine less clear,
Say that Thou art not here.

" And then, what life I have
(While sin doth rave,
And falsely boast
That I may seek, but Thou art lost),
Thou, and alone Thou, know'st.

" Oh! what a deadly cold
Doth me infold!
I half believe
That Sin says true. But while I grieve,
Thou com'st, and dost relieve."

GEORGE HERBERT.

I DO not wish to keep out of sight those facts in our spiritual life which make it impossible to say that in *every* frame of mind such and such truths will afford unfailing comfort. It would be a very happy thing if we could honestly say so; if we could declare that the blessedness of communion with God surpasses

all other happiness ; that compared to this all other joys are cold : but if, as I think, we should thus speak more of our preconceived notions as to how we were intended to feel than of what we really do feel, would anything be gained by the exaggeration ? The cause of religion certainly loses much by any profession that can be called a mere figure of speech, for by such means it is brought into discredit with searching minds ; these naturally suspect every cause which is weak enough to need the aid of rhetoric. And so long as our belief is determined by the revelations of the Spirit of truth, no human testimony in its favor which goes beyond truth, either from folly or dis-tempered zeal, can be acceptable to that holy Spirit, or serviceable to erring man.

Now the assertion that divine influence, as mortals feel it, is more rejoicing than human love ; intercourse with an invisible God sweeter to the heart than fellowship with a beloved human being, is true under certain conditions, but it is hardly wise to put it forward as a truth to which every heart can bear witness. Every sanctified heart may truly confess that there is more

blessedness and peace in this hallowed communion than in any other, and that it is far greater happiness than any which excludes remembrance of divine love; but does any one dare to say that this, and occasional rapture in prayer, varying the calmness of devout resignation, is to the heart of man, or woman, *wholly* a satisfying compensation for that *fulness* of happy love which makes each hour of a beloved one's presence the delight of hope, the treasure of memory, the temporary lull of all dissatisfaction while it lasts? Is the visible, audible presence of those we love so small a boon? Was the Creator making a false reckoning for our happiness when He put into each heart an indestructible yearning for human fellowship? Let us not think so—let us be very slow to bring into contrast feelings which the word of God seldom places in opposition—never requiring us to be *unnatural*, but only superior to nature whenever it resists divine law; commanding us to love God supremely, but to love our fellow-creatures very greatly too.

The common abuse of this permission by *inordinate*

affections proves nothing against their rights within measure; and those who are guilty of the "*grande folie de vouloir être sage d'une sagesse impossible*," who try to exterminate all natural emotions, that they may offer to God the sacrifice of an unearthly life, must surely think that He *has* made a great deal in vain both in the hearts and destinies of his children. But, whatever they may think, all experience teaches that "*il est mal sûr d'anticiper en ce monde sur les droits de la mort, et de rêver l'état des saints quand la vertu seule nous est imposée, et quand la vertu est déjà si rude à accomplir, même très-imparfaitement.*"*

Of those conditions which most seriously abate religious joy, each soul has of course its own particular knowledge. I shall only refer to those which have caused me most perplexity from their being, as it seemed, not immediately the effects of sin.

There are—it would be cruel folly to leave them out of consideration—times of such overwhelming grief that the soul passing through them would answer to every assurance of the possibility of religious joy,

* Victor Cousin.

"*I cannot feel it.*" A person in this state becomes aware of the *mystery* of grief, and would look at the most powerful arguments of comfort, as only so many varied proofs of her peculiar wretchedness, since they fail to comfort *her*: she would cry out in bitterness, "I *believe* in the love of God, it is as much as I can do by the greatest stretch of faith; to *feel* it is not in my power." Yet even then, when "the poor soul out of the depth cries, and cries aloud, as if her Father were out of hearing"—when by the inscrutable purpose of the Almighty, we lie prostrate in darkness, ready for the enemy to insult with terrible suggestions of unbelief, even then let us take the words that God has given us, and plead with Him still. Though noways uttered, except by sighs and groans, the petition of the feeblest believer will not be disregarded.

Scripture has recognised this state of apparent desertion, one holy prophet has complained, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour," and another, that "the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble," seemed as one "that turneth aside to tarry for a night:" "as a man

astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save." And since their time the faith of devout men has occasionally faltered, and they have been confounded at the woe and evil which Omnipotent God will not avert, and have remained dumb with astonishment, almost believing that "He taketh no knowledge" of the exceeding misery of man.

Probably we all know *something* of the blackness of that night which seems to hide our anguish from His pity; but we know also that its darkness is no darkness with Him, and that in those fearful times when our soul's anchor appears to be cut adrift, and all our treasures thrown out to the fury of a pitiless storm, He clearly discerns all our affliction and all our dismay, and is as near and as mighty to save, when the *due* time of trouble is ended, as He seems to be in those calm hours of prayer when before we have done speaking He answers, and infuses comfort more than equal to the sorrow which has but wetted the cheek, and intensified the ardor of supplication.

Alas! we know all this; God grant that when the

dark hour comes we may feel it! "How easy a thing it is for a man to teach and comfort other men, and how hard a thing it is for a man to teach and comfort himself in the promises of God," for "beware of despair can every man say, but to eschew despair in great conflicts of mind is an hard matter."

If there is a crisis in the Christian's life still more threatening than this, it is that state which has been designated as "religious syncope."

Almost worse than woe is the profound indifference to all holy things that will at times steal over us; a deadly chill, which though no doubt attributable in great measure to the workings of sin, does not bear any proportion to sin *consciously* committed. This indifference, without prompting to rebellion against the law of God, such as extreme sorrow sometimes suggests, opens the way to any sin for which there is present inclination; and while it lasts prayer seems to be mechanical, praise and thanksgiving a mere farce.

I hope that there may be less guilt in these moods than is generally supposed by people who feel them

most painfully: insensibility, whether of heart or mind, it is *not* always in our power to remove; but I think that a strong effort of mind to recall the impression of any signal mercy, any one particular occasion in our lives, in which peril has been escaped, or prayer distinctly answered, might be of great avail in rousing the conscience and warming the heart. Besides these *most* distressing states of feeling, and those much more frequent of

“Nature’s ebbs, which lay the soul in chains,
Beneath weak nerves, and ill-sufficing veins,”

which I do not enter upon here,—supposing that for mere depression of spirits every one’s common sense will supply the simple remedies of patience, recreation, and bodily repose,—there are moods resulting from *external* influences, during which it is almost as difficult to feel spiritual joy as it is in times of great dejection, or utter numbness of feeling; for example, the temper of mind to which we may naturally be brought by forced association with an underbred and obtrusive person.

This may not affect better people as much as it does me; it tempts me, I confess, to feelings of repugnance.

It is worse than mere irritation to be every minute combating a dislike that appears so inexcusably disproportionate to its cause; while justice, as well as charity, obliges one to cover the struggle with smiles and suavity, at the very time when you long to make some demonstration of dislike such as might rid you for life from a recurrence of the trial, with one individual at least. I say it is worse than irritation, because *that* one knows to be almost entirely the effect of one's own infirmity, but in this case (though impatient dislike reveals quite as much weakness) it *seems* less faulty; for no mood can be sweeter than that which is now and then disturbed by the presence of a really vulgar mind; and it is not easy at once to recall a text of the Bible, or a thought calculated to make you feel kindly, and appear courteous towards one who asks an impertinently curious question, with loud tones, strong emphasis, and incorrect pronunciation.

It is quite possible to remember the goodness of heart that may make such a questioner dear to all those who are used to his or her manners; it is as practicable as doing our duty, to feel that such a one is dear to the Lord who differently disposes the circumstances of our lives; but it is next to impossible to feel *at will* a serener joy in holy thoughts while every perception is pained.

Those who say we ought not to feel repugnance, because it is a fellow-Christian who tempts us to feel it, might say, I think, with equal wisdom, that we ought not to dislike the taste of wormwood, because it comes from a plant that God has made. "Sensation is sensation,"* and neither faith nor charity will wholly overbear its verdict; but, for counteracting the evils arising from disagreeable companionship, I believe there is nothing so powerful as a humble remembrance of the presence of God. To compare

* "Dr. Johnson owned to me that he was fatigued and teased by Sir A. doing too much to entertain him. I said it was all kindness. *Johnson*.—'True, sir, but sensation is sensation.'"—*Boswell's Life of Johnson*

little things with great, I beg you to remember the effect that the presence of a friend, whom you deeply love and venerate, will have upon your behavior under provocations. By being present only, such a friend will exalt your feelings above chagrin, will hold in check your impatience, and stimulate your warmest charity; the simple fact that he or she is looking on, seeing the cause of your annoyance, and appreciating your self-command, generally insures a degree of sweetness of temper that might not otherwise be felt. The comparison need not be farther insisted on. He who ever sees us has had His habitation among the sons of men; He submitted to be within reach of their strife of tongues, among the vulgar and presumptuous He moved, suffering Himself to be continually assailed by "little men, greatly malicious:" and can you think that "He that is perfect in knowledge" forgets all this? Surely no: surely when pricked and exasperated by the most insignificant thorns of daily life, we may turn to Him, and say, with grateful reverence, "Thou understandest my thoughts."

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There is another kind of spiritual chill that is hard to understand, and, till it is understood, still harder to remedy: it is a coldness about religion which we sometimes feel, when in close companionship with people more advanced in godliness than we are ourselves. This is very mortifying, and seems strangely unlike what one would have expected; it cannot be said that we envy the grace of God in other souls, while we earnestly desire it for them in the abstract; it is not that we suspect them of insincerity because their expressions refer to a state of feeling more holy than our own, for we have learned from experience the mistake made by those who do this with regard to ourselves, when any sign of our poor and cold affections appears to them improbably devout; we quite believe these exalted spirits are truly all they seem to be, yet beside them ours often flag.

To explain this requires more knowledge of the human heart than I possess. I call it the effect of antagonism, but from what that arises. I am ignorant. Possibly, when in this case it is roused, self-love

has been grieved, and hope paralysed by our being made aware of comparative deficiency. Possibly, the fear of being hurried, by a wish to sympathise, into modes of speech too forcible for perfect truth, makes us draw back even from that position in spiritual life to which we are habituated: possibly we are influenced by a well-grounded suspicion that devout sentiment may sway the mind with which we are brought in contact, towards extreme and undesirable conclusions; these and many other feelings may obscurely work upon us, and by their combined force they may occasion the indevout mood of which I complain; but I think that we should be more able to revive pious emotion by prayer, than by any exertion of intellect for the purpose of detecting where our error lay.

Warmth would be more likely to return to the uneasy heart if we made our want of feeling the subject of simple confession and undisguising prayer.

Speaking of this want to a lenient and clear-sighted friend, we should probably say: "It seems

very wrong, but I cannot feel *at all* just now; these ecstatic thanksgivings fall coldly on my heart. I do *not* feel astonished at the mercy of God towards me, nor do I feel so very wicked,—*penetrated*, as these people say, with a sense of my unworthiness. I see that my faults are very natural, and in consideration of my disadvantages and weakness they seem to me very pardonable too: and how then can I join in expressions that misrepresent my feelings? In truth, if *I* quoted these rapturous, triumphant hymns, I think I should be mocking the Almighty with deceit. Blame me if you will, but I could not forgive myself if I adopted a tone which for *me* is overstrained and false."

And would a wise friend blame? I think not. I believe that even man's wisdom would answer: "You do well to refuse to simulate piety,—well to face contrasts of feeling which prove your soul to be in an attitude different from that of your neighbors,—*well at all risks to keep to truth*: yet remember that the Spirit of truth warrants the expressions on which you comment to be suitable in the mouth of man;

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and remember also that you may gradually be led by that Spirit to use the same with entire sincerity. In the meanwhile it is your duty to conform to usage, where Church authority prescribes a form; and to abstain from using it (if *contradictory* to your feelings) when it is *not* enjoined, *and when you can do so without offending a fellow-Christian*. But *at all times* lay before God your wants, your deadness, your present incapacity; do so with happy trust, for He is able to make of you what He will."

Now in default of any visible friend to advise you thus, let me beseech you to give good heed to the invitations of the Bible. Pour out your heart before Him, who entreats for the confidence that He commands.

Tell Him who loves you so much, how little *you* can yet love. In doing so, I am *sure* that the irritation of finding yourself less pious than those you are with will soon subside; and you may feel that even *this* poverty of spirit does not necessarily lessen your hopes of the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Life often seems so dark,
The heart so cold and void,
Without love's faintest spark,
And even faith destroy'd.
Salvation, found with pain
Seems far from us to lie;
Yet these sad hours contain
A blessing from on high.

The Lord doth always choose
His own fit time to bless
Joy's light He doth diffuse
After the heart's distress.
The dew of grace He showers
On dry hearts in their night;
Through dark ways and sad hours
He leads us to Heaven's light."

C. J. P. SPITTA's *Psalter und Harfe*.

"*Die dürre Zeit*."

It is not easy to refrain from quoting the whole of a hymn so beautiful as this.

The comfort of unrestrained prayer is not, I imagine, sufficiently prized by many, even of those whose prayers are habitually persevering and true; but it would make too long a digression from the main object of these chapters, if I tried to show you

what a multitude of slight hindrances withhold us from the greatest privilege of prayer.

"I speak," said Guthrie, "with the experience of many saints, and I hope according to Scripture, if I say there is a communication of the Spirit of God, which is sometimes let out to some of His people, that is somewhat besides, if not beyond that witnessing of a sonship spoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart: it is a thing better felt than spoken of." But it is not until, as he says again, "the Lord hath driven thee out of thyself, and commended Christ to thy heart above all things, and made thee resolve in His strength to wage war with every known transgression, and thou art in some measure as a weaned child, acquiescing in what He doth to thee;" it is not until then that you can know how blessed it is to pray always, and without reserve.

Perhaps I cannot convey to another mind my idea of the sort of prayer here spoken of, without giving an example; I hope it will not be thought irreverent to do so. Suppose that in the course of some unin-

teresting day, you come up to your own room, longing for any sensation of spiritual life, feeling none. You kneel; if you use a formula of prayer to which your lips are accustomed, it is too likely that they only will pray, and not your heart. "But," you may answer, "I must keep to formulas though disinclined, let it cost me what yawning effort it may, for otherwise my thoughts run out into extravagance, or vain repetitions about personal emotion." I doubt this being an inevitable consequence. I believe that truth in the expression of *present* feeling will at such times keep your heart closer to prayer than the best worded form.

Try whether it will not be so. Look back to the things which have touched you nearly since your last praying: a slight provocation, it may be, after breakfast;—a painful train of thought suggested by a casual remark; try to draw out these impressions from vagueness, and represent their accompaniments of weakness and fear to Almighty God. Perhaps another hour was marked by the sad recital of what some one had endured of pain or grief; cannot a remembrance of this rouse you to heart-felt thanks-

giving by the force of contrast? and does pity give you no impulse for intercession? Then came a discussion upon some difficult question, which involved the credit or welfare of several other people,—some loved, some perhaps not liked,—you spoke eagerly, it may be unwisely, and you regret certain harsh things that you said, but now you have time to measure your want of charity, and to ask for wisdom from the Allwise; will you not use the opportunity? and implore Him to give grace to your lips, and counsel to all your purposes?

“On me dira; mais le moyen de prier lorsqu'on est sans cesse obsédé du sujet qui nous chagrine et qu'on ne peut presque penser à autre chose, ni être touché d'autre chose? Dans ce renversement et ce bouleversement de l'âme, pour s'exprimer de la sorte, est-on maître de recueillir son esprit, et est-on maître d'affectionner son cœur? Ah! j'en conviens, et telle est notre misère: il y a de ces temps orageux où l'on n'est proprement maître ni de son esprit par rapport à l'attention que demande la prière, ni de son cœur par rapport à une certaine affection

Mais prions au moins comme nous le pouvons : or nous le pouvons toujours, puisqu'au moins nous sommes toujours maîtres d'aller nous présenter devant Dieu, et de nous tenir auprès de Dieu."* And if we do this when it is all we can do, we shall have no difficulty in finding subjects for prayer in happier times. "Nous dirons à Dieu tout ce que le cœur nous dictera : le cœur dès qu'il est touché ne tarit point; réflexions, affections, résolutions ne lui manque point. Rien ne le distrait de son objet, rien ne l'en détourne. D'un premier vol et conduit par la grâce, il s'y porte, il s'y élève, il y demeure étroitement attaché. Ne cherchons point d'autre maître que le cœur; nous apprendrons tout à son école, s'il est plein de l'amour de Dieu."†

* Bourdaloue.

† Ibid.

CHAPTER XVII.

"These ascetics, these mystics, while conversant with those elements of religion which throw the human mind off from the path of vulgar and ordinary sentiments, had renounced or lost all consciousness of the genuine motives of the Gospel, those motives which in restoring the equipoise of human nature give a natural flow to the strongest affections, even while the mind is carried to the highest pitch of excitement. Just in proportion, therefore, as these religionists were deeply moved by religious considerations, they were extravagant, unnatural, and artificial, and (it is no paradox) *the more sincere they were, the less genuine*; the more in earnest and the more honest, the more do they excite suspicion. It is always so: powerful emotions not harmonised, or not adjusted to the real principles of human nature, produce appearances so nearly resembling hypocrisy and fraud, that the individuals are liable to imputations which do them wrong."—ISAAC TAYLOR.

THE Bible makes known to us that Christians have a privilege still greater than that of free access to the throne of grace; St. Peter speaks of the servants of Christ being *partakers of the Divine nature*.

I dare not put into words all the hopes of future exaltation which this and similar intimations seem to justify: but, for our present life, I accept them as

Being conformed to the Likeness of Christ. 301

a permission for all Christians to endeavor to think and feel in accordance with those declarations of the Divine mind which have been already distinctly revealed.

Incomprehensible, and infinitely distant from the mind of the creature, as the thoughts of God must ever be, there are yet some which He has invited us to share, which we should therefore entertain as often and as willingly as we can; and these, while they raise us from a narrow circle of selfish interests, guard us against the *exclusive* attention to religious exercises which has caused so much misery upon earth, for they are thoughts of mercy, of delight in the happiness of every living thing, of grief when by sin or error any part of its well-being is forfeited, of wisdom as to the best way of removing evil. These thoughts occupy the human mind with present and accessible business, and make it impossible to indulge in that contemplative style of piety which, to the grievous dishonor of the Saviour who took upon Him our nature, is sometimes cultivated at the expense of *humanity*. It is a mournful page of human

nature to which I allude, and one that it would be far pleasanter to ignore.

"But seest thou not how far more easy 'tis
To dream devoutly than to do good deeds?
How willingly the most inactive man
Dreams piously, that (haply at the time
Himself not clearly conscious of his aim,)
He may not feel permitted to do good."

LESSING'S *Nathan der Weise*.

In this way religion has been sometimes so terribly perverted from its real objects, as to incline one to say to those who thus misuse it: "Gardez toutes vos pratiques de dévotion, j'y consens, et je vous y exhorte même très fortement, mais avant que d'être dévot, je veux que vous soyez chrétien."*

Now St. Paul having admitted that care how to please the Lord was more likely to occupy the unmarried heart than the married, some women seem to think that they have scriptural authority for believing that, while this care predominates, they may, and probably must, be displeasing to their

* Bourdaloue.

fellow-creatures. Prone as we all are, from our very limited capacities, to exclusiveness of some sort or other, this abandonment to pious cares suits the weakness as well as the devotion of a woman's nature.

I dare not say that such abandonment is *wrong*, lest I should seem to speak lightly of our chief duty — undivided attention to the will of God: but the point I dispute is, whether it *can* be the will of God that any one should set aside all thought of pleasing, so long as it is written, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification;" and if I was required to justify my belief, that without being in some degree pleasing, no one was likely to do much towards edification, I should refer to certain facts in human nature for my answer. I would point out that when any one attempts to absorb herself *wholly* in the endeavor to please God, she can hardly fail to concentrate every thought on the self she wishes to sacrifice; intense egotism, sanctified by good intention and firmly based on principle, is too often the consequence. And since we are most

emphatically told, that in doing good to one another we have the best and surest means of pleasing God, do we not run great risk of failure, if in order to secure the end we neglect the means?

For example, though the duties of prayer and friendly intercourse do not often clash, yet any one who is used to pray frequently and fervently will recognise the possibility of their doing so, knowing that it would be sometimes more agreeable to her feelings to break off uninteresting conversation, that she might commune with her own heart and be still, than to prolong the exercise of her patience by fruitless talking and languid mirth; for

"How calm and pleasant is the stillness,
Where we alone with God can be,
For there the heart with all its fulness,
In sweetest solitude is free!"

From the *Hannover Kirchen Gesang-Buch*.

But she who searches for the root of things will be inclined to suspect that it is communing with her own heart, and pondering upon her own feelings,

Prayer sometimes easier than Patience. 305

and not heavenly-mindedness which sometimes makes it really *pleasanter* to pray, than to try to interest and soothe the heart of another. And besides the indulgence of self-interest, in prayer we are safe from the temptations that beset us so closely whilst we are in companionship with other people, and therefore it is often more natural than right to turn from those whom we were intended to cheer and encourage, in order to pray to him who is invisible.

I once knew a poor man who told his clergyman that he would willingly pray for the scolding wife from whom he had fled, every day and all day long, rather than return home to live with her; and he thus acknowledged the feeling all may have known, that it is sometimes much easier to speak freely to a silent and hidden Creator, than to move and be in the presence of a captious, restless, or overbearing fellow-creature.

This preference so natural to those who are uneasy with their companions, but happy and calm when "alone and single with Omnipresency," is probably one of the secret causes for the world's dislike of

religious people; and since the world has so many insuperable reasons for its dislike to Christianity, and since it is our duty as Christians to do all we can to make it honorable and beloved, I think it behoves us to keep a strict check upon the unsociable instincts of spirituality, and even in our *wishes* to respect the prayer of Christ for His disciples; seeking not to be removed out of the world, but by His power to be kept from evil in it.

A woman whose piety has outrun her wisdom, takes, with regard to the world, a very different attitude from that which I suppose the Bible to recommend; she not only determines to keep herself unspotted from the world's evil, but she will not hear of its good; she thinks she cannot evince antagonism too marked; she, therefore, glories in eccentricities of demeanor and conduct. She is leaving the pleasures of the world; she will, therefore, resign its sympathy, and ignore its code of opinions.

She thinks that *because* she respects the law of conscience supremely, she is emancipated from all laws of less validity; she greatly errs so to think,—

forgetting that the world, with all its follies and crimes, contains the half-Christianised virtues of many powerful minds, and is, therefore, famous for preserving common sense, and for cherishing that peculiar combination of what is both desirable and possible, which is seldom to be found in the theories of a solitary spirit.

To be *unnecessarily* eccentric is to turn away from advantages that *cannot* exist in a range of ideas separated from received opinions; and, while a full exercise of the commonest virtues is so rare, I think we need little beyond a resolute adherence to what is right and wrong in essentials, for proving to ourselves and others that we are not of the world, though remaining in it; trying to gain all its teaching can afford of practical wisdom, and submitting our selfishness to the unrelenting discipline of mixed society.

The bitter tone with which more worldly people comment upon the short-comings of those who strive to disentangle their hearts from the world, might serve as a warning to every one of us; for it proves how anxiously and how keenly they watch for ex-

ternal defects, who cannot perceive the increase of grace within.

They watch, hoping that their own negligent lives may prove to be more consistent and more successful than the hard-fought battle of the soldiers of Christ. And not only are His soldiers narrowly watched by those who still refuse to join in the holy warfare, but by all of *any* profession their conduct is scrutinised. If our religious zeal appears *in any way* to shelter malice and sloth, to support pride, or lend a decent covering to envy, deceitfulness, and spite, all those with whom we live will quickly detect the strange and shocking incongruity, and they will feel a suspicion of what the satirist has said concerning

"une bilieuse

Qui, follement outrée en sa sévérité,

Baptisant son chagrin du nom de piété,

Dans sa charité fausse, où l'amour propre abonde,

Croit que c'est aimer Dieu que haïr tout le monde."*

Lest, therefore, the faith we profess should suffer from the infirmity of its professors, we must keep

* Boileau.

watch upon our tempers, and be extremely careful that our clear perceptions of right and wrong do not transpire at times when personal feeling tempts us to apply them to the conduct of those about us, with the acrimony that is commonly attributed to old maids.

Let us be silent, and refrain from censure direct or indirect, until we are able to discover whether it is really necessary to inflict it at all, and, if it is, how it can be given with least pain and most benefit to the blameworthy parties.

And for our own relief, if it can be done without any neglect of duty to our neighbor, "when the coldness, the indifference, the faithlessness, the empty promises, the loitering, and delays of other men in giving their poor assistance grieves us, let us go into the quiet chamber, let us give free course to our tears, but not to murmurs and complaints of other people, let us weep before God, strengthen ourselves with His word, revive ourselves again with His promises, and say to Him, 'Yet am I ever with Thee!'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"All is best, though we oft doubt,
What the unsearchable dispose
Of Highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close."

Samson Agonistes.

ALTHOUGH in the consideration of single life I have now and then compared it with the life of married women, it seems to me not quite rational to make this comparison in the abstract; for the peculiarities of either condition, which are sufficiently invariable to allow generalisation, are few and unimportant when weighed against the multiplicity of differences that make the lot of each individual an exceptional case. Indeed, it is scarcely possible to separate the effects of what *invariably* belongs to married, as contrasted with single, life, from the much stronger influences of personal character and peculiar circumstances.

Single and Married Life Contrasted. 311

It is hardly possible in those states of society where the individual mind makes little resistance to the pressure of external facts; it is impossible as we ascend in the scale of civilisation; for, among those who have put forth their full spiritual strength, circumstance loses much of its force; and, when it is a question of what will produce most happiness, we must consider the tone of *feeling* which external incidents promote, more than the train of events which may necessitate such and such results. Having, however, undertaken to disentangle our ideas of an unmarried gentlewoman's position from the vulgar prejudices frequently attached to it, I must assume that the states of celibacy and matrimony may be *theoretically* compared, and that from the comparison, imperfect as it is, we may draw some useful and interesting conclusions.

The nominal division in society of married and unmarried is depressing to some people, because it seems to merge the individuality of each single woman in a class almost proverbial for uninteresting appearance and acid virtue; married women being

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supposed to find in their *doubled* store of joys and cares an endless variety of interests, and at least a permanent freedom from the weariness of a self-centred existence.

Human beings are, no doubt, gregarious in their tendencies, but each spirit is too conscious of its own originality to be content with class distinctions only ; and I suspect that the term "an old maid" has become disagreeable and dejecting more from this cause than from any other ; it not only recognises a generic difference, to the neglect of what is specifically characteristic, but it assigns those who, from being often comparatively torpid among *realities*, are singularly apt to be anxious about *ideals*, to a portion of society which is generally believed to be more within reach of slights, more destitute of advantages, and more resentful of deprivations, than that which accepts the wear and tear of married life,—which watches over young children, and directs servants, and settles household accounts.

All the contradicting evidence of daily life is insufficient to counteract this popular superstition, and

The False Estimates of Imagination. 313

it fails to do so for a very good reason; the superstition is based upon laws of nature. The exceptions which make these laws less recognised than they should be, the married life which is more torpid, more selfish, more lonely than that of the single woman, and the old maidenhood which is more glad and active and full of interests than a wife's existence, are the result either of a perverted nature, or of a social state so artificial, that even those who profoundly venerate the laws of nature *are glad* to set them aside, in compliance with the more binding law of submission to Divine Providence. And while we thankfully submit, we need not be distressed because for us some of Nature's laws are overruled. The highest title ever given to Nature was that of "the steward of God," and when we have the direct expression of a master's will towards each one of us individually, it is unreasonable to regret the consequent disregard of orders sent in more general terms through a servant.

According to human judgment, it is undoubtedly *happiest* for a good woman to be the wife of a good

man ; but the conditions requisite for this superlative degree of happiness are not easily secured.

I compare an unmarried woman's notion of the joys of married life to the remembrance of a beautiful piece of music which sometimes lingers in one's brain ; the air that haunts you, how sweetly it runs on in the muffled chambers of imagination ! You follow its windings *there* with the greatest ease ; yet if you try to play it from notes you find that but a small part of its beauty is clear and simple melody,—you discover that the harmony is intricate,—the discords many, though in due time resolved,—the whole piece very difficult.

It is perhaps fortunate that you have not to make the same sort of discovery in the concord of married life. But people who are just going to be married do often seem *very* happy,—so joyously occupied,—in such a full stream of engrossing interests. They look so, and their happiness may indeed be transporting ; but lookers-on cannot always estimate its attendant penalties ;—the hurry and tension of mind, the complicated dependence upon other people, the misgivings

and fears that beset any great joy;—all these, if they do not embitter happiness, mix with it considerable alloy. And, though you think it must be pleasant to be the central object of so much interest in every adjacent circle, do you also think whether you would like, in the course of a few years, to be cited as “that poor Mrs. —, with her husband always ailing,” or “herself never able to stir from the sofa:” or to have it said of you, “how they ever contrive to get on at all with their very small income one cannot guess; no wonder she looks so ill-dressed and pale;” or to be pitied for six little children having the whooping-cough at the same time, when you were yourself too ill to nurse them,—and without a cook?—common occurrences that I mention as *mild* samples of the varied trial which Fate may draw out for you from that vast magazine of unpublished experience—married life, without a fault on either side: where faults are the source of trouble, the harsh and complaining temper: the fastidious desire to have things in a better style than means allow; the spoiling of children, rendering them a torment at home and

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abroad; all these far worse evils are generally *possible*, and have to be encountered in our considerations upon a state which looks so blissful on its sunny side, and never can expose its darkest.

If the imagination of women would busy itself nearly as much with the inevitable troubles, as it does with the uncertain comforts of matrimony, the homes of England would not hide so many aching hearts as it is to be feared they now do: there would be more peace and less regret among those who *once* dreaded to become old maids.

No one, I suppose, can think the unhappiness of celibacy comparable with the wretchedness of an unhappy marriage. From my own observations, I should not be inclined to think of unmarried women as at all *less* happy than the married; and, even when they appear to be so, it must not be forgotten that where there is no *one* person bound by sacred vows to share the worse as well as the better of a woman's lot, it is very natural that complaints and regrets should be more widely dispersed, (and so awake more general attention,) than they are ever likely to be

Happiness Independent of Externals. 317

when one brave individual has solemnly engaged to share the pains and pleasures of continuous sympathy.

I believe we all think too much of external facts in respect of happiness; though strongly affecting feeling, which certainly alters as circumstances alter; yet by *no* arrangement of *circumstance* can feelings be governed or insured. In our hopes and fears, in every anticipation, we ought, I am sure, to think more of the Omnipotent Being who affects the spirit of man in whatever way he will; who, without the need of mediate causes, can produce in our hearts strong confidence, or vivid joy, or inexplicable grief. Did we more entirely trust in the power of God, we might look forward to life's uncertainties with calmness, knowing that as by His will plentiful refreshment can be brought out of the most stony rock in our journey through the wilderness, so by the same will the fruitful land may be made barren, and we may be smitten with woe when all around us is smiling in unclouded prosperity.

A lonely old age is sometimes very dreary in pros-

pect, but it may not appear so to us while passing through it. Future difficulties generally look worse than we find them when they become present; like the steep pitch of a hill, at a distance it looks frightfully precipitous—when we reach the declivity, we descend far more gently than we expected; the fall of ground seems gradual as we loiter down; and, among many little wayside distractions, we are almost insensible of the loss of a blyther air and a wider range of view.

Seeing that many devout minds have doubted whether marriage or celibacy is most favorable to piety, I think that you who remain single may give yourselves the benefit of that doubt, by supposing that, as by the orderings of Providence the events of your past life have not induced you to marry,* for *you single life is preferable—for your soul the cares*

* "Loose as these events seem to hang upon one another, yet they are all knit and united together in a firm chain, and the highest link of that chain is held and managed by an unerring Providence. The chain indeed may wave and shake this way and that, but still the hand that holds it is steady, and the eye that guides it is infallible."—South.

and excitements of marriage would have been too great a snare: and, since it is from no short-coming, no want of particular attention to each human soul, that Divine love fails to fill us with joy, but often because our hearts are *pre-occupied* as well as perverse, we may with reason hope for a fuller perception of this love, when absorbing affection for a fellow-creature no longer prevails.

And yet, notwithstanding those *few* passages in the Bible which appear to put the unmarried state in higher esteem than the condition for which God first formed us, His dissimilar yet agreeing creatures, I think we should do wrong to believe this state of detachment from earthly love to be decidedly the *best*. So to judge seems to me to dishonor the first and most general ordinance of our Maker; and, if the consentient records of history are to be trusted, this assumption that single life is in *itself* holiest and best has caused an incalculable amount of misery among Christian people during many successive ages. In the feebler sex it has occasioned morbid excitement of a perverted impulse. Instead of a meek

submission to the temporary disadvantages of single life, and a clear-sighted recognition of its sorrow and deprivation, how often has there been among virtuous women an attempt to exalt and glorify this separate and unfinished life as being holier and more desirable in the abstract, as well as in their own particular case! And, by a natural consequence, those instinctive affections that were placed in our breast for human objects have been strained by an incongruous application to heavenly ideals; hence, even in cases of eminent piety, the painful admixture of sentimentality and devotion which it costs calmer-minded Christians some effort to distinguish from hypocrisy and self-deception. Would it not be better to allow that some right feelings must lack their completion, some pure desires their scope, rather than to confound devout joy and holy confidence with the passionate tenderness of a woman's lonely heart?

Might she not find joy and comfort and perfect sympathy in secret communion with the Redeemer, without those fervors of expression which cause, in sober minds, a just anxiety with regard to the awful

Measuring other Natures by our Own. 321

reverence due to the Deity, and the humble reserve befitting sinners not yet separate from evil?

It is ill for any heart to determine that its own form of trial is most desirable for all people,—as well might a lame person believe the use of limbs to be generally undesirable, because to himself it is denied, as a woman conclude that celibacy was most conducive to spiritual advancement, because she herself is not called to marriage by mutual and strong affection. But this turn of thought is not unusual: in lesser affairs, at least, it is ridiculously common. How often do secluded people lament that any souls should be subject to the snares of much society! Light-pursed thinkers mourn for the moral difficulties under which the affluent must labor; minds little given to vivid exercise regret that any should be tempted to pride of intellect by their joy in the beatitudes of thought: and, though we are amused by remarking, on the other hand, that those who are much in the world grieve over the disadvantages which seclusion inevitably entails; that the rich are sorry to think *how* difficult it must be to be good, when you are so poor that all about you is

shabby; and that very clever people sigh over the weighty impediments with which the stupid must run their race; yet our discernment of these common delusions is not lasting enough to hold us back from the same sort of mistake; for to make the portion of our own souls a measure for the needs and liabilities of the human race is a folly few escape.

Perhaps I shall be told, that while professing to remove some prejudices against it, I have really taken too gloomy a view of unmarried life. It may be so. My observations will cause, I dare say, a good deal of laughter among happy spinsters, a good deal of censorious animadversion among proud ones; those who laugh most will be the elder women who have thoroughly tried the state I describe, and have learned that, happy or unhappy, it is their portion for life, and that, as such, both wisdom and propriety of feeling require them to make the best of it. There are many such—let them laugh with full contentment. There are many who have chosen single life with deliberate preference, and who wonder at the vulgar error of supposing that *every* woman would be happier man-

ried, and that every woman has wished to be so ; such an error, they think, could only be excusable in the sanguine imagination of men, whose active duties hide from them the incessant anxieties that make a woman's married life anything but a sinecure. All those who feel this surprise will think it absurd enough to receive condolence for what they deem worthy of congratulation ; let them also laugh at me as much as they will : but I appeal from these well-fortified spirits to women of weaker mould, whose tenderness of heart is uncured by time, who feel as they were once *expected* to feel, long after the betrayal of such feeling has become obsolete.

What woman is there among such as these who does not mournfully acknowledge the loneliness of her life, and the frequent need of some one to lift her up when borne down by all the sorrows which oppress her, either through sympathy or personal feeling ?

Bound both by instinct and duty to wait long beside the spring-head of *every* sorrow, women see the earliest portents of grief ; they watch its secret growth, and to them is entrusted its last bitter confession. The

girl who looks unconscious of such a thing as grief, may charm; the woman who owns to any ignorance of it, gives a bad report of her heart. And as to her own experience, it is not woman's glory that she is exempt from weakness or from sorrow, but that, suffering in many ways beyond reach of human sympathy, she rules the "surging griefs" of her heart, and will not allow them to disturb the peace of the feeblest creature near her. In so doing, she often finds herself fighting single-handed with an almost overwhelming succession of despairs. "Cares often beleaguer the heart like an army, pain gnaws in every nerve, the feelings become sharpened, the clouds that lie over the future will not lift, the last ray of light disappears; there lies often the unhappy creature, cut off from all human help, and knows not whether to think of the present or the past."* And this goes on while all is placid externally, for to whom should she complain whose saddest feeling is that she is a solitary among dearest friends? But should this be an abiding conviction, and not, as is usual, one that passes

* HEINRICH SANDER'S *Erbaunungs-Buch*.

away with the dark hour that brought it; if single life were indeed as lonely, as sad, and as loveless as our morbid fancies *sometimes* paint it, still it is but *this* life: with respect to our whole existence, when once we are proved to be faithful servants of God, how inexpressibly unimportant may be the happiness or unhappiness of our stay on earth. If we now regret that on our fifth or sixth birthday a rainy day made it impossible to enjoy the out-of-doors part of our birthday amusements, we may hereafter remember with a sigh that in this world we were so unfortunate as to be unmarried.

“O Eternity, thou art very long; what is it that a soul must a little while be sorrowful and afterwards have eternal joy!”

CHAPTER XIX.

"As the heart of childhood brings
Something of eternal joy
From its own unsounded springs,
Such as life can scarce destroy;
So, remindful of the prime,
Spirits wandering to and fro
Rest upon the resting-time
In the peace of Long-ago.

* * * *

"On that deep retiring shore
Frequent pearls of beauty lie,
Where the passion waves of yore
Fiercely beat and mounted high;
Sorrows that are sorrows still
Lose the bitter taste of woe;
Nothing's altogether ill
In the grief of Long-ago."

R. MONKTON MILNES.

ALLOWING the worst charges against unmarried life to be true; allowing that it is lonely and often burdensome, in the years when earthly prospects begin to fade; it is impossible for us to deny the consoling effects of time.

"Tu l' alma acqueti, che tant' arse ed alse,"

said an Italian poet, in a sonnet addressed to Time, as "il Vincitore delle Passione." How many of us will feel the same as years go on, each laying upon the mind its freight of varied experience, and reducing to perfect submission the will that once strove against Omnipotence!

We talk of childhood and youth as of sweet seasons which cannot return, and are pitiful to ourselves on that score; yet most of us know that they were sweet, only as we know that the dawning of a summer day was fresh and delicious, while we were lost in unconsciousness. Youth, and the happy privileges of youth, are over; we have before us the less celebrated, but no less enjoyable satisfactions of middle age. If we believe in them, if we work on patiently in expectation of them, they will assuredly be ours. I do not pause again upon our increasing means of doing good, for though *great* comfort is derived from them, yet enjoyment is not to be looked for as their most natural consequence. "The busy hand that would cleanse the garden of the Lord from weeds, must expect nothing

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but pain and wounds from the nettles and thorns that it has to weed out."

But though a shuddering resentment of *recent* sorrow may disincline you for recurrence to times *lately* passed, I think you will find that memory can now bring us

" fire
From the fountains of the past,
To glorify the present ;"

that its increasing store of associations, and growing tenderness for all that lies in the far distance, may now be a source of real delight.

If the life which lies behind us was troubled and dark, yet if it was hallowed by sincere religion, it has still its own pensive beauty in retrospect ; almost every sorrow which has ceased from immediate pressure is idealised there, and often seems more dear than joy, for

" Thoughts that once wrung groans of anguish
Now cause but some mild tears to flow,

" And feelings once as strong as passions
Float softly back—a faded dream,

Our own sharp griefs, and wild sensations,
The tale of others' suffering seem."*

Every effort of the will to strengthen the powers of the mind, memory will now repay with abundant usury. If we have accustomed ourselves to clearness of perception, both in thought and in feeling, the images of past times will now stand out distinct and bright; and, as we grow old, we shall find that the past can interest us as keenly as any future ever did. We shall turn back to its unalterable scenes as to a priceless possession, from which nothing can now separate us, so long as the mind is unimpaired.

"Oh come grato occorre
Il sovvenir delle passate cose,
Ancor che triste, e ancor che il pianto duri!"

And if we look back to what was pleasant years ago, we generally find all that surrounded it vivid with joy, and brightening to imagined ecstasy.

Zschokke describes the *rejoicing* effects of time better than I can, when he says: "Every new spring

* Charlotte Brontë.

that I live here below seems to me yet dearer and more beautiful than any which has gone before. In every new spring the former spring-times of my life are again reflected in beautiful remembrance. The longer I can see the creations of Jehovah, the more my being seems to be expanded." And I am sure that this is the feeling of many quiet women, whose silvering heads have bowed in past years beneath the stroke of affliction. Fortunately for England, we are not obliged to trust to conjecture or fancy, when we seek for evidence of the happiness of "old maids." We must all know too many instances of their usefulness, their constancy, their unwearying and tender love, to doubt that they may be *very* happy. We see that to the sublime patience and unfailing loving-kindness of some women, no adequate honor could be given on earth; but they *have* the blessings of grateful hearts, and the eye of Him that seeth in secret is ever upon them, seeing both their toilsome service here, and the joy prepared for them in that day when Himself shall reward them openly.

I do not, however, pretend to expect that the

sorrows and the comforts of the holiest woman are likely to be allotted to her in the proportions usually spoken of in weakly written hymns. I do not suppose that, *because* two-thirds of her life have been sad, the last portion of it will be marked by triumphant felicity; neither should I expect that, if a season of unmixed happiness is granted to her, she would therefore look back to more troubled feelings with the astonishment that swells the heart (and the style) of the hymn-writer in his concluding verse: for I attribute the peace of elderly people in great measure to their *intimate* acquaintance with the hearts that may once have threatened to break. I think that a sensible old maid knows well how to manage her own sorrows; she has learned the lesson so often inculcated by Montaigne: "Nous avons une âme contournable en soy mesme; elle se peult faire compaignie; elle a de quoy assaillir, et de quoy deffendre, de quoy recevoir et de quoy donner. Ne craignons pas en cette solitude nous croupir d'oysifveté ennuyeuse. . . . La plus grande chose du monde c'est de scavoir estre à soy." If, therefore, she has sometimes flagging

spirits and disconsolate views of life, she does not waste time in bemoaning herself, but with the thought, "It is my own infirmity," she pushes bravely through the temporary darkness, and prays for the cheerfulness she cannot just then command.

If she feels stern and repulsive towards those who are happier, she understands the origin of that aching sternness too well to hate herself for feeling it, as once she was inclined to hate; she knows that a little flush of happiness would suddenly make her as tender and indulgent as the softest hearted mother; that, if she liked *herself* a little better, she would not think noisy babies, and cake-seeking boys in turn-down collars, so intolerable as they now appear; she tries, therefore, to be patient with herself as well as with them. And if, in the wearying changefulness of an unsettled life, she is now and then tempted to long for some anchorage for the heart,—some intensity of feeling that might silence the tumult of petty cares, while she remembers the wish of Naomi, that her daughters might find rest in the house of a husband, she remembers also that rest is not always found there, and that

even if it was, if the greatest earthly happiness was bestowed upon her, it would fail to satisfy. She tells herself with quiet assurance—

“No well that earth-born fountain fills
The hot thirst of the spirit stills.
Be still, my troubled heart, and know
Not all things here bear fruit that blow.
Thou bear’st in thee—earth’s silent guest,
That which in Heaven alone can rest.
Which on and on with ceaseless play,
Urges thee darkly on thy way.
First movement of the wing it is
Of butterfly in chrysalis—
Thy grief, scarce understood by thee,
Home sickness for eternity.”

EMMANUEL GEIBEL.

I may, perhaps, be charged with expecting too much support from generalisations; some unhappy reader, glancing over this book, may smile bitterly at the bold front offered in theory to the evils of celibacy; she may say: “All this is easily said; your general principles look very serviceable on paper, but they are inapplicable, because *no* theoretic advice can touch the core of one’s worst grief.”

I sadly feel the force of this objection, yet it is not, I think, *wholly* true: every one, more or less, adapts her conduct to general principles; the poor often console themselves with proverbs very imperfectly suited to their needs, and the religious will fortify their courage with texts that can only be brought to bear upon individual cases by a strained interpretation; why, then, should we not believe that theoretic prudence may be of use also? I am convinced that it may. But, while saying this, I must also admit that there is perhaps less danger to be feared from the *neglect* of theoretic prudence than from its *over-estimation*, to which thoughtful people are notoriously inclined. Such people are necessarily subject to great fluctuations of feeling, for every thinker sees both facts and principles in a variety of lights, which makes it impossible to regard them with *uniform* feelings, or to act upon them with consistent directness; there is also a momentousness in trifles when reflected upon deeply, which throughout life must cause a frequent recurrence of hesitations.

It is often seen that minds of most resource are

most often at fault in times of emergency ; they often fail in action beside those of far less power, whose narrow vision precludes a disturbing variety of prospects. It happens to these unlucky wise ones as it did to the fox in the fable, who had so many stratagems for safety that when danger came he was obliged to decide before he acted. Thus the theorising mind will try first one motive for action, then another and another, hoping to gain from each more powerful impulse than can ever be drawn from a principle only in *occasional* exercise ; and thus, with accumulated means of helping others, such a person will often be the most helpless of a community : while, on the other hand, one rule, one maxim, one proverb, steadily acted upon, will give to inferior minds a weight in counsel, and a promptness in action, which command respect and almost always insure success. To a thoughtful person, who feels herself in this way partially disabled by the influence of cross lights, I desire to offer a very simple piece of advice. I would fain say to her, whenever perplexities begin to impede a purpose, there is nothing so useful for you as *action* of

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some sort or other. If you are in a *disquieted* mood from any cause whatever, go and do the least agreeable thing which you have been long wishing or intending to do: this will be a tonic to every faculty, and refreshment to your heart; for however much the present has power over us, the remembrance of what lies undone in the past, from any *neglect of duty*, hangs upon the soul with dispiriting weight.

But if you are *positively unhappy*, then go and do what is *most agreeable*; for the removal of that unhappiness, the relief of your heart, if it is possible, is a duty, because it is favorable to the prosecution of all other duties. Only, whatever you may be *feeling*, *ACT*; and be sure that, so long as you find nothing but gloom and perplexity in your thoughts, truth is partially hid from them.

Do not wait to act till you can fix upon some action that may seem to you sufficiently important; but take in hand the most trifling thing that suggests itself to your notice, if it will employ, and if it can interest, you.

It is amusing to notice the indigenous dread of

mere enjoyment besetting every English heart that is anxious about duty. We have heard so much of the *stern* claims of duty, that we are apt to look upon simple pleasure of any sort with deep suspicion; and yet while the sun shines the fruit ripens best, and while little children and young animals play they grow and strengthen, and so become fit for their destined purposes. May nothing be gathered by analogy from these cheerful facts? Think what we will, shutting out sunshine as an impertinence because through blinds or clouds it gives light enough for the day's work, or lamenting the heedlessness of little ones who still laugh when there is no reason for laughter, this is certain, that unless the mind of a highly educated Christian is soothed by the pleasures of imagination or art, it is almost of necessity an unhappy mind; because every enlargement of knowledge, and every degree of heightened conscientiousness, opens more avenues for the approach of sorrow and fear; and if, with the increased susceptibility of a religious mind, we studiously neglect recreation and intellectual pursuits, it will be hardly possible to prove

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to those around us that we have "joy and peace in believing."

Gloom and depression will be the inevitable relaxation of a high-strung nature, when none else is allowed.

And if it is permissible for a human being to form a guess at the *reason* of any of God's dealings with men, I may here mention what has often struck me with regard to our acknowledged subjection to vanity. It seems to me, that, without being subject to vanity, the free-willed creature could scarcely endure its present probation: for without many distractions from minor interests, and much refreshment from the lighter parts of our nature, the stress of conscience upon every thought, and word, and deed, might *suspend* action; and the tremendous certainties revealed to faith so occupy us as to leave no power of mind disengaged for carrying on the affairs of this present life. It need hardly be said that if this world had really as little hold upon us as the dying sometimes think it ought to have, more than half our earthly occupations would be thrown up; and while we were

incessantly expecting the infinitely superior satisfactions of another world, the *necessities* of this would not be duly provided for. Apart from the unquestionable wisdom of inspiration, I think that in telling us to rejoice in the good things of this life, Solomon's advice approves itself to our human wisdom more than that of some modern teachers. He is certainly old-fashioned in his views of life, but so is this human nature with which we must get through it; and, though I would cherish the highest aspirations that keep within range of human capability, I am really afraid of a standard pitched too high for our reach, "entre nous, ce sont choses que j'ay toujours veues de singulier accord, les opinions supercelestes, et les mœurs soubterraines."*

Pardon this long digression in favor of merely pleasant things, but, believe me, they are *not* trifles; do not leave them out of consideration when you design schemes of usefulness. You need not go far out of your way to seek little pleasures; many are close at hand, quite as accessible, and quite as much

* Montaigne.

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neglected, as the hay-fields near home, into which we are always *meaning* to go, and have seldom gone.

It was when advising *immediate* action of some sort, that I turned aside to vindicate the use of things which we call trifles, though they may serve to allay impatience, and turn the current of painful thought; such, for instance, as games of skill, fancy-work, and sketching from nature. I earnestly beg that you will not despise these trifles.

For positive griefs, from which thought cannot be diverted, there is but one remedy.

"Lift thyself up, oh thou of sadden'd face!
Cease from thy sighing, draw from out thy heart
The joyful light of faith."

At your age, you should be able to accept, with full assurance, any of the *certainties* of faith; if, therefore, you believe that thousands of the faithful in your country pray daily for the relief of the sorrowful and weak-hearted, and if you believe also that true prayer is both heard and answered, you *know* that in this time of trouble you are prayed for by those

whose effectual, fervent prayers will avail much. If you are used to pray for other souls in their days of darkness, this knowledge will be a great consolation when you feel too miserable to pray for yourself.

Is, then, the life of unmarried women so sure to be sorrowful, that a book professing to try and meet its requirements, must begin and end with consolation? Far be it from us to come to such an ungrounded conclusion? It is a happy life to very many, it may be made, at least, very tolerably cheerful to all; but, if you do not find it so now, let me once more remind you, that during this short life *only* have you an opportunity of proving that you love God though He smites you, and trust in Him though He seems regardless of your need. Only here can faith triumph.

When death comes to end a life of doubtfulness and repining, and you **THEN** feel that it was mercy which loosened every tie to earth, so making you glad and thankful to approach the home of pardoned spirits, how bitter will be your regrets, your self-accusations, your shame, for previously mistrusting the infinite love of God!

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We can now but faintly imagine the state of one who begins to trust *entirely*, because the veil is being withdrawn, yet surely it will have its anguish. Have you ever felt the tide of self-reproach that sets in upon the heart when some great proof of a friend's distrusted affection has put your doubts to shame? Have you known the pang of remorse for having waited to be affectionate, grateful, and confiding, till the time for showing a noble trust in your friend was quite passed by?

Such keen remorse as this, in *far* greater measure, is what I suppose we shall all feel, even after a humble Christian life, whenever the close of earthly trial brings with it the just expectation of eternal glory.

How may we *then* long to have again some of our unprized, joyless days, in which to prove with warmer zeal our love, and loyalty, and entire devotion to the Saviour who gives us the victory!

If your days are weary and joyless now, look on to that day which hastens towards you, when, if you are His, He will wipe away *all* tears.

The thanksgivings which you now extort from a feeble and dejected heart will not be forgotten in that new birthday, and you will *then* see that in the whole course of your pilgrimage on earth, God did not do without cause all that he has done in it.

THE END.



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