

Stray Thoughts for Girls eBook

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Page 1

LINES

Written on being told that A lady was "Plain and commonplace."

You say that my love is plain,
But that I can never allow
When I look at the thought for others
That is written on her brow.

The eyes are not fine, I own,
She has not a well-cut nose,
But a smile for others' pleasures
And a sigh for others' woes:

Quick to perceive a want,
Quicker to set it right,
Quickest in overlooking
Injury, wrong, or slight.

Nothing to say for herself,
That is the fault you find!
Hark to her words to the children,
Cheery and bright and kind.

Hark to her words to the sick,
Look at her patient ways;
Every word she utters
Speaks to the speaker's praise.

"Nothing to say for herself,"
Yes! right, most right, you are,
But plenty to say for others,
And that is better by far.

Purity, truth, and love,
Are they such common things?
If hers were a common nature,
Women would all have wings.

Talent she may not have,
Beauty, nor wit, nor grace,
But, until she's among the angels,
She cannot be commonplace.



Arthur Heathcote.

The Virtuous Woman.

A Farewell Bible lesson to girls on leaving school.

“Wisdom ordereth all things strongly and sweetly.”—*Wisdom* viii. 1
(Vulg.).

It would be interesting to make a “Garden of Women” from the poets, collecting the pictures of “Fair Women” they have drawn for us, but I want to consider specially the ideal woman of that ancient poet Solomon, and to see how far she can be translated into modern life.

The subject ought to be considered by you who are leaving a school you have loved and valued, and which you should commend to the world, by showing that it has made you fit for home. Beaumaris School has a blank shield for its arms, with the motto, “*Albam exorna,*” “Adorn the white;” you are all starting with white shields, and you *can* adorn the white: it is not only in Spenser that we find Britomarts. You are as much a band of champions as were King Arthur’s Knights; you have all the same enemy, have made the same vows, and for a year have been in fellowship, learning and practising the same lessons: can you help feeling that there is a responsibility laid on you, to see that the world shall be the better because of you? Be like Sir Galahad with his white shield on which “a bloody cross” was signed, when he had fought and won.



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You know that I admire the old-fashioned type of woman—the womanly woman,—and you will not suspect me of wishing you to start off “on some adventure strange and new,” but I do want you not to be content to lead a commonplace life; you *must*, anyway, live your life: resolve that by God’s grace you will live it *nobly*. You cannot alter the outward form of your life,—you will probably be surrounded by very commonplace household duties, and worries, and jars,—but you can be like King Midas, whose touch turned the most common things to gold. We have it in our power, as Epictetus tells us, to be the gold on the garment of Life, and not the mere stuff of which Fate weaves it. We can choose whether we will live a king’s life or a slave’s: Marcus Aurelius on his throne was a king, for nothing could conquer him; but Epictetus in chains was equally unconquerable and equally a king. We all have the choice between the Crown and the Muck Rake, and I think we sometimes turn to the straws and the rubbish, not because they are fascinating to us, but because they seem the only things open to us: we do not feel as if our lives had anything to do with Crowns. If you think of your various homes from the point of view of turning their “necessities to glorious gains,” and as a field for winning your spurs, I suspect you are each feeling that this is very “tall talk” for such a commonplace home as yours. “All lives have an ideal meaning as well as their prose translation;” but you feel perhaps that you are sure to be swamped in little bothers and duties, and pleasures, and dulness and stagnation, so that you will find it hard to see any ideal meaning at all. This is not true, and to look on an ideal life as “tall talk” is a snare of the Devil; and in these days of common sense and higher education we need to guard against it, and to remember that “a thing may be good enough for practical purposes, but not for ideal purposes.” “Ideal life” is not tall talk, but our plain duty, unless our Lord was mocking us when He said, “Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect.”

To know our ideal is one step towards attaining it. “So run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as one that beateth the air.” Before taking such a definite step in life as leaving school, it would be very interesting to draw up a plan of what you would like your life to be, and also of what you hope to make of the life apparently before you, which may be very different from the life you would like. If you kept it, like sealed orders, for five years, it would be interesting to see how your views had changed, and how prayers had been answered in unexpected ways, and it would also be a solemn warning to see, as we assuredly should, that wilful prayers had been heard to our hurt.



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Bacon, when he made a new start as Solicitor-General, made a survey of his life, past and future, his faults and blunders, his strong and weak points, his hopes, the books he meant to read and to write, the friends he wished to make. I am sure that thinking over our own lives as a whole would strengthen and guide us. We rush into action and fight our best, but we do not make a plan of the campaign, and thus much of our energy is wasted by misdirected effort; and, in leaving a school-life of rule and regularity, you will be much tempted to slip through the day without the safeguard of a life of Rule; but, until you *are* the saints you are *called* to be, you cannot afford to do without this help. We must remember the warning of St. Francis de Sales against playing at being angels before we are men and women.

On the other hand, you will need to guard against the temptation to make your rules unbending and inconsiderate, to follow your ideal, heedless of the fact that you thereby become tiresome to your people. How often the home people feel jealous of school, and say it has cut a girl off from her home interests, that she comes back full of outside friendships and interests and new principles. Of course she does; if not, what good would school have done her? But she ought to feel how natural and how *loving* is this (often unexpressed) jealousy, and, by sympathetic tact, to avoid rousing it, and not to be always thrusting school interests down home throats. The duty of a life of rule at home is all the more complex because home pleasures are duties too; if it was only a question of self-denial it would be plain sailing, but your mother likes you to go out, and your brothers want you, and if you refuse to enjoy yourself it hurts them: if you even betray that you would rather be doing something else, you spoil their pleasure, for a “martyr” to home duty is a most depressing sight to gods and men. And the complexity lies in the fact that you enjoy going, and conscience pricks you every now and then because you never read, and you seem to go through the day in a slipshod way, with no definite rule, —no daily cross-bearing, no self-restraint to give salt to the day. At school you have a definite duty of self-improvement set before you, and everything urges you to follow it. This remains a duty when you go home, but it is very hard to reconcile it with the many things that clash—not the least of these being our own laziness when the help of external pressure is taken away. You have had intellectual advantages, and you will be downright sinful if you fritter all your time away over flowers and tennis, and never read because you do not like to be thought unsociable: you are bound to improve your talents, but take it as your motto, that *rules should be iron when they clash with our own wishes, and wax when they clash with those of others.*



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Yet we must yield *sensibly*, and not allow our time to be needlessly wasted—at all events, by brothers and sisters and friends. It is different with a father or mother: they are only lent to us for a part of our lives, and no memory of sensible, useful work will be to us the same pleasure in after years as the thought of the time that passed more pleasantly for a mother because we spent it in idle (!) talk, or the knowledge that a father had enjoyed the feeling that we were always at hand if he wanted us. A strong-minded woman might consider matters differently, and feel that a language learnt, or a district visited, was of more value, but we shall not be able to reason so when we see life in the new light which death throws upon it; the little restrictions of home life will then assume a very different aspect.

Unless you are driven with an unusually loose rein, you will probably be irked by having to be punctual, and to account for your letters and for your goings and comings; but if you ever feel inclined to resent it, just think what it will be when you are left free—free to be late because there is no one to wait dinner for you, free to come and go as you will because there is no one who cares whether you are tired or not; some of these days you will give anything to be once more so “fettered.”

Higher education often makes girls feel it waste of time to write notes for their mothers, and to settle the drawing-room flowers: they “must go and read.” Now, what mental result, what benefit to the world, will result from an ordinary woman’s reading, which can, in any way, be comparable to the value of a woman who diffuses a home-atmosphere, and is always “at leisure from herself”? You know that I care very much for your reading—you will have plenty to do if you read all the books I have begged you to study—but if it gave your mother pleasure for you to be at the stupidest garden-party, I should think you were wasting your time terribly if you spent it over a book instead. Some people think ordinary society, and small talk, beneath them:—well! do not let the talk be smaller than you can help, but remember Goulburn’s warning, “Despise not little crosses, for they have been to many a saved soul an excellent discipline of humility.”

But to come at last to Solomon’s ideal—what is our first impression of her? Surely it is *strength*, and we probably feel her strong-minded, and rather a “managing woman”—and, as a rule, these are not loved. I feel that she wants some sorrow to humanize her—she would hardly be sorry for less prosperous, less sensible people: the modern feeling of, “the pity of it, Iago, the pity of it!” has never gone home to her; she is not like Ruskin’s “gentleman” who has tears always in his eyes, in spite of the smile on his lips; she is not “quick to perceive the want” in the many lives, which are empty or crippled, though, perhaps, seemingly prosperous: things turn out well with her, and she deserves it,



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so the sight of her would bring home a sense of undeservingness to the less fortunate; she cannot speak so as to be “understood of” them; she is not one of those who have learnt that “*avoir beaucoup souffert c’est comme ceux qui savent beaucoup de langues, avoir appris a tout comprendre, et a se faire comprendre de tous.*” But the virtues Solomon describes need not result in this type, which is antagonistic to us; extremes meet, and it is the exaggeration of a very lovable type—the woman who gives you the feeling of rest and protection and strong motherliness, who is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. “The meekness and gentleness of Christ” is translated by Matthew Arnold as the “sweet reasonableness,” and this makes a very lovable woman. Sweet unreasonableness makes a more *taking* one, but not a *keeping* one. Butterfly women have more fascinating ways, but Spring-time comes to an end—the day will come for all women when others will come to them to be ministered to, to be rested and soothed and raised. It is sad to watch many who have the faded pretty ways which once was all that was required of them, and who, in middle life, cannot understand why their belongings find them so inadequate! Long ago, Swift warned girls against making nets instead of cages, but they have not all learnt wisdom yet. And the main point is, not how you can get, or give, most amusement, but how you can give most comfort; and no one goes to a weak person for that. There are few things certain in life, but one of these few is, that others will come to each one of us, in doubt, in sorrow, in pain, in ignorance, and that, through negligence and ignorance of ours, they may go away uncomforted, unhelped, untaught, and this, though each one of us has it in her power to become, through God’s grace, one of those Queens of Consolation of whom Dante spoke.

I think the Virtuous Woman ought to be on her guard against hardness: it is her temptation, naturally, as it was that of the Elder Brother,—but love and humility can make even strength lovable. And for those who are in no danger of being too like the Virtuous Woman, but who are still struggling out of a lower life, I am quite sure that weakness is the rock ahead. It must be so for nearly all women: their feelings are keener and sooner developed than those of men, and they are less trained in intellect and self-control. Their chief value lies in intuition and impulse, and their chief danger also. You will never be the “Virtuous Woman” if you are self-indulgent in novels which dwell on feelings, in daydreams, in foolish friendships, which only bring out the emotional side of your nature, instead of strengthening you to do what is right, and widening your sensible interests in life. There is but one certain protection against this temptation, and we find it in Proverbs xxxi.; I mean, *industry at home*.



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Industry is a leading feature of Solomon's ideal, and nothing but plenty to do can possibly keep our minds fresh and sweet, and wholesome and strong,—and hence, strengthening for others. Feeling is the only part of a woman's nature which will develop of itself:—her mind will not grow unless definitely cultivated, and no more will her conscience, but if she leave the field fallow, weeds of foolish feelings and fancies spring up on all sides. This is why it is your duty, when you leave, not to allow yourself to be idle: not only because God expects you to bring your sheaves with you at the Last Day, but because your field cannot stand empty—if good grain is not there, weeds will be. And manual work—gardening or housework—gives more fresh air to the mind than anything else. If you ever, as *Punch* expresses it, “find your doll stuffed with sawdust,” if life seems a disappointment, and you are a prey to foolish fancies, and have lost your spring, then try being really tired out in body by useful work, and see if you do not find it an effectual tonic. Some say that these “mental measles” are a phase which the modern girl must inevitably pass through: perhaps so, but I should be disappointed if you went through them,—at all events, if you did so in the hopelessly idiotic way that many do! I should be disappointed if, in the future, you came and said, “I am in the dark, and Life is all a tangle!” I do feel you ought to have learnt that “the light of Duty shines on every day for all.” “We always have as much light as we need, though often not as much as we would like,” and if you honestly want to do your next duty, you will have light enough to do it by. Come to me, by all means, if you like, and say, “I feel idle and good-for-nothing, and don't particularly want to see my Duty!” but do not moan about Life being all perplexity! It is always nobler to do your duty than to leave it undone: make this principle your sheet-anchor, and spiritual feelings and light will come some day, if God sees fit. It does not always do to apply direct remedies to these “measles:” if your mind is out of gear, leave it alone, and attack it through the body by industry. And industry *at home* is best; here was the true strength of the Virtuous Woman. The strength of her modern descendant lies abroad: she is strong and admirable, she does splendid work, but there is always a tinge of excitement to help one through outside work. Things done among father and mother, brothers and sisters, are either very peaceful or very flat, according as your feelings are either wholesome or unwholesome—there is none of the pleasurable excitement, generally more or less feverish, of working with friends we love and admire; it is the difference between milk and wine. I do not think wine wrong, but I think it is much better to cultivate a taste for milk; you must watch yourselves, and not get to feel home things dull. Some are so strong in home, so wrapped up in their



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own family, that outsiders feel *de trop*, which of course is a fault on the other side. If we have happy homes, it is a trust for the use of others; we can give a home feeling to those who are less fortunate as they pass by us, like the swallow flying through the lighted hall. Lonely people may gain a sense of home from this large-heartedness in the happy, a feeling of rest and repose, which is the very essence of the atmosphere I should like my Virtuous Woman to shed around her; she must “do good by effluvia;” in her home, “roof and fire are types only of a nobler light and shade—shade as of the rock in a weary land, and light as of the Pharos in the stormy sea. And wherever a true wife comes this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head, the glowworm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot: yet home is wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far around her, better than ceiled with cedar or painted with vermilion, shedding its quiet light far for those who else were homeless.”

Let us now consider the Virtuous Woman verse by verse. Solomon is describing a rich woman with an “establishment,” a sphere and husband and children, as if a woman’s life was not complete without this. And no more it is; it may be very useful and very beautiful, but it is not complete. Girls are often blamed for thinking too much about marriage: I think they do not do it enough,—at least in the right way; you are not fit to be wives now, and you should aim at becoming so, and to do that, you must be fit to manage your house and to teach your children; if you fit yourselves to be perfect wives, you will at least be very perfect old maids, and find plenty to do for other people’s children! But your life would then be incomplete. St. Paul is misquoted when his words in Cor. vii. 34 are used to condemn marriage; our Lord puts it before all other earthly ties, and it is used as a type of His love for His Church, which should guard us from two errors in connection with it. If married love is to be a type, however faint, of Christ’s love for His Church, there must be no unworthiness connected with it; “no inner baseness we would hide;” no marrying for the sake of being married, for the dignity and position, or the worldly advantages it may bring; and there must be no matchmaking or flirtation that a woman need be ashamed of afterwards. “Let the wife see that she reverence her husband,” says St. Paul, and the husband must be able to reverence her. And there must be no selfishness, no getting entangled in engagements that must bring trouble on others; to marry *for* money is degrading, but a woman may redeem it by being a good wife; to marry *without* money means debt, which is irretrievably degrading, and is altogether selfish instead of romantic.

But, married or single, rich or poor, Solomon’s Virtuous Woman gives us principles to go on.

“*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.*” Is not trustworthiness a main point in those we respect? Do we not require our Virtuous Woman to be reliable, not to repeat what we say to her, not to forget her promises, in short, that we know “where to have her”?



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"She will do him good and not evil all the days of his life." It would distinctly do him evil if she did his work for him! This is a great temptation of capable people; it is so much easier to do a thing yourself than to see others bungling over it; but remember, that *not to do other people's duties is as much a duty as it is to do your own*. Unselfish people are often selfish in the harm they do husbands, and brothers, and sisters, and unconscionable friends, by doing their duties for them. You recognize that you yourself are on a downward path when you leave duties undone. You have no right to help any one else to tread that path. It is much pleasanter to spoil your brothers than to make them take their fair share of family burdens; it is much pleasanter to be popular,—but if your brother grows up selfish, three-fourths of the sin will be on your head. You will have to be very careful to convince him that you are not selfish by sacrificing yourself on every occasion when it is not bad for him, but if you are to do him good and not evil all the days of his life, you must remember that you are your brother's keeper in this matter.

"She worketh willingly with her hands." The idea is going out that, to be like a lady, you must sit with your hands before you. I heard of a village tea the other day where a curate's maid-of-all-work was boasting that her mistress was a real lady who could not do a thing! "Dear! how strange," said an old servant; "my first mistress taught me, with her own hands, all the house-work I know." "Ah! she couldn't have been a *real* lady," said the other. "Perhaps not," said the old woman reflectively; "I can't tell, but I know she was an Earl's daughter." If you knew anything of Colonial life in old uncivilized days, you would know how invariably it turned out that those settlers were nobody at home who talked there about what they were "accustomed to," and how they could not do this or that,—while the real ladies laughed and buckled to. I do not believe in a woman being thoroughbred if she cannot do what comes to her to do; she may have little bodily strength, but if she is of the right sort, spirit carries her through, just as you often find uneducated people, unnerved by pain or fright, crying and pitying themselves: a real lady has nerve for it all, though she is ten times more sensitive, and, till the occasion arises, she may lie on the sofa all day, and believe herself quite unable to do a thing!

People sometimes seem to think it the mark of a sensitive, high-bred, refined nature to be unable to conquer fads, and fancies, and fears. You hear them say, with an air of modest pride, "I *can't* eat this or that;" "I *can't* touch spiders:" very likely they suffer if they do, and I do not see that they need be always forcing themselves to do it, but they should feel the power to do it *if need be*; if you are not master of yourself, there is bad blood about you somewhere; *noblesse oblige* applies preeminently to such things.



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And I think *noblesse oblige* ought to teach us another lesson in this matter of work. So many often say, or feel, "It's not my duty to do this or that; why should I? it's just as much *her* business,—why shouldn't *she* do the dirty work?" The true lady says, "*Somebody* must do the dirty work, and why not I as well as another?" And so she worketh willingly with her hands; for "common household service" is

"The wageless work of Paradise."

"*She bringeth her food from afar.*" She is foreseeing and businesslike: she is not obliged to get inferior articles because she is driven at the last moment and cannot send to the best shop; she is never unable to match her dress because she has not thought about new gloves till the very afternoon that she wants them; she does not forget till half-past six that dinner has not been ordered, and then, in despair, order in ready-cooked things from a shop.

"*She riseth while it is yet night.*" Early rising is a great trial to some, but I think those who are conscientious often make a mistake between sloth and conscientious care of health: and the Virtuous Woman should be very careful of her health. Some girls think it fine not to be; they say, "Oh, well, I shall only die the sooner! Better to wear out than rust out!" and they feel—and so do some of their friends—that they are very noble characters, and accordingly these tragedy queens stalk picturesquely through wet grass when they could quite well keep on the gravel. I hope none of you will develop into tragic heroines. I have no patience when I see girls with perfectly prosperous lives inventing tragedies for themselves. They have no right "to take in vain the sacred name of grief." If there is nothing else to romance about, they fall back on being "misunderstood," which generally means that their mother understands them a great deal too well to please them. I dare say you will not see this in yourselves or in your friends, but it will strike you very much in your acquaintances, and you will, in time, recognize your own share of human nature, for we all do, undoubtedly, enjoy being sorry for ourselves, though I suspect life is much happier for all of us than we deserve.

But to return to the question of health. If you could go out like the flame of a candle, well and good! the world would probably be well rid of you if you were going through life tragically, longing for death, but you will not "wear out" in consequence of carelessness about wet feet and want of sleep, and over-fatigue, and fancifulness about eating. These things destroy, not your life, but your nerves and temper, and all that makes your life a comfort to others; "wearing out" yourself means that you will wear out others, and require from them much time and nursing and good temper.

Now, sleep is a most important consideration in such a nervous generation as ours: every woman ought to have eight hours' sleep, and more if she needs it, but she should not wake up and then go to sleep again; that second sleep, which is so pleasant, is the sleep of the sluggard. I would like to give her "a chamber deaf to noise and blind to

light,” and never let her be woke, but she should get up the moment she wakes of her own accord, or, at most, spend ten minutes in the process of waking.



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“She planteth a vineyard.” I should like my Virtuous Woman to be fond of gardening, and at all events read in Bacon’s Essays how God Almighty first planted a garden.

“She strengthened her arms.” This verse makes us fancy the Virtuous Woman as being unpleasingly strong, but we should guard against being purposely weak, with an idea of its being pleasing; Thackeray’s Amelia is hardly a good model, and Patient Grizzel did her husband an infinity of harm!

“Her candle goeth not out by night.” But the Virtuous Woman must be self-denying in the matter of sitting up, now that modern life makes so many more demands upon her brain. You know it is self-indulgence when you sit up late; you were not bound to be so sociable as all that; you only hinder yourself and others from proper time for prayer and sleep; if you made a move after a reasonable amount of talk, the others would be sensible too. And so you repent and force yourself to get up very punctually the next morning, not seeing that this is on the principle that two wrongs make a right. It is your duty to get up in good time, but it is also a duty to get sufficient sleep. I know you have a more comfortable feeling when you have punished yourself,—you feel that you took the self-indulgence and you want to pay for it. This sounds fair and honest, but it is not, because you pay for it with the health and strength that God gave you to use for Him. Instead of the satisfactory scourge and hair shirt of rising betimes next morning, try the more commonplace penance of going to bed in proper time the next night, without any dawdling. So many girls do things in a dreamy, dawdling way, that must be a sore trial to those about them: if a thing has to be done, you should do it in a quick, purpose-like way, and not waste your own time and other people’s temper. A girl will placidly tell you, “I’m always slow, it’s my way,” never realizing that “ways” may be very objectionable. We think it dishonest in workmen that there should be a difference between a man who works by time and one who works by the piece: you blame the workman who spends twice as much of his master’s time as he need, but, when you dawdle, you spend *your* Master’s time: getting through with things quickly and “deedily” is a matter of habit, and the Virtuous Woman practises it in everything she does.

“Her hands hold the distaff.” The Virtuous Woman will not be satisfied until she knows how to make a dress and do plain work; not that, having acquired the knowledge, she will necessarily use it, for a woman with brains and education can employ her time to more purpose, and can give employment to poorer women at her gate, by putting out her work. It is burying her talent in the ground if she employs, in making her children’s frocks, the time which should be spent in cultivating her mind, so as to be fit to educate them when they are older.



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“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor.” The “classes” are poor and needy, as well as the “masses:” read Mozley’s “University Sermon” on “Our Duty to our Equals,” and learn to see that they also need a stretched-out hand. We may be very kind in our district; are we as kind to social bores? We may be very energetic in school feasts; are we as careful to provide amusements of other kinds for people who, in rank or brains, are slightly our inferiors?

“She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet” (marg., double garments). She looks after the health of other people as well as her own; she does not keep her maid sitting up night after night, or overwork her dressmaker. She is as considerate for the flyman waiting for her on a rainy night as she would be for her father’s coachman and horses, remembering that the flyman is quite as liable to catch cold as the coachman, and has fewer facilities for curing himself.

“Her clothing is silk and purple.” She dresses suitably, richly if occasion demand it, but never showily. If she has to walk as a rule, she will not buy dresses that look fit only for a carriage: she will not wear, in church, a brilliant dress that would be suitable at a flower-show.

“Her husband is known in the gates.” There was doubtless a great difference among the husbands at the gate, and I feel sure that this one took a specially large and public-spirited view of the business there discussed. The Virtuous Woman would not usurp his office, just because she had the power of speaking well,—she would remember the Russian proverb, “The Master is the Head of the House, while the Mistress is its Soul,” and she would be a very high-souled mistress, and care greatly that her master should not only be a good husband and a father, but should also serve his generation as a good citizen and a true patriot. When the public good demanded sacrifices, she would not drag him back by insisting on his duty to his family, nor would she persuade him to rob the public stores, or time, by taking little perquisites or shortening his office hours. She would feel with De Tocqueville, who says, “A hundred times I have seen weak men show real public virtue, because they had by their sides women who supported them—not by advice as to particulars, but by fortifying their feelings of duty, and by directing their ambition. More frequently, I must confess, I have observed the domestic influence gradually transforming a man, naturally generous, noble, and unselfish, into a cowardly, commonplace, place-hunting, self-seeker, thinking of public business only as the means of making himself comfortable; and this simply by daily contact with a well-conducted woman, a faithful wife, an excellent mother, but from whose mind the grand notion of public duty was entirely absent.”



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The husband of “a superior woman” is usually much to be pitied, but surely the reason is that the woman is not superior enough. She has capabilities and knowledge, and has learnt to value them, and is right in so doing, but she has not learnt the next page of Life’s Lesson Book, which is, the relative insignificance of her own acquirements, and the value of the qualities she has not got,—qualities which her husband very likely possesses, only he has not the feminine power of expression. How often a woman’s seeming superiority lies in this gift of words, which, as George Eliot says, is in her, “often a fatal aptitude for expressing what she neither believes nor feels.” The man often silently knows, and *lives*, the noble sentiment, which the woman fluently utters, imagining herself to be its discoverer and prophet. Another point to remember in this matter is that women are apt to overvalue intellect, perhaps because it is only during the last few years that intellectual advantages have been within their reach. Sydney Smith looked forward hopefully to a day when French would be a common accomplishment, and women would be no more vain of possessing it than of having two arms and legs! Perhaps when, not only French, but still higher education becomes more generally diffused, we may learn the proportions, and realize that, though intellect is a good gift, many others are to be preferred before it. The more we know, the wider our horizon grows, and the smaller we ourselves seem relatively to the wider expanse around us. “Man’s first word is, No: his second, Yes: and his third is, No, again.” We start with ignorance and are necessarily humble, in a negative way: then comes the schoolroom, when we prize highly the knowledge so laboriously acquired; and then comes the schoolroom of life, which sends us back again to humility, though of a larger and nobler kind.

(The tendency of the day is to overvalue education, rather than the reverse, so I need not dwell on the necessity laid upon the modern Virtuous Woman, of developing her intellect, more than Solomon required from his ideal.)

“*She maketh fine linen and selleth it.*” She is reliable and punctual, and clear in business arrangements. How much charitable work of the present day requires good arithmetic and a clear business head! She will not miss her train, and she will write a clear legible hand, especially when names and addresses are concerned. A good handwriting is a matter of patience and self-discipline, and a truly unselfish person would force herself to acquire it, because she can thereby, in small ways, be of so much use and comfort to others.

“*She shall rejoice in time to come.*” She is not likely to do this, unless she learns to rejoice in the present also. Rejoicing is a habit like most other virtues, and if we fail in this, it is probably ourselves and not our circumstances that need to be changed. “The aids to *happiness* are all within,” and the Virtuous Woman will take life bravely and cheerfully, like the heroes of old, and will think it a poor thing to pity herself and to go about with a long face. She



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“Welcomes and makes hers
Whate’er of good though small the present brings—
Kind greetings, sunshine, song of birds, and flowers,
With a child’s pure delight in little things;
And of the griefs unborn will rest secure,
Knowing that mercy ever will endure.”

“*She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.*” Perhaps few things have done so much harm in the world as sympathy! Are we not all conscious of having perpetually allowed the kindness of our tongue to be divorced from wisdom, so that our affectionate sympathy has weakened our friend and done more harm than good? It is so much pleasanter to both when we join in her discontent or irritation, instead of being to her a second and a better self, aiding her to see things wisely, as she would see them when she grew calmer. “A book,” said Dr. Johnson, “should teach us either to enjoy life, or to endure it,” and so should a friend.

“*The law of kindness.*” It may seem a small thing that the Virtuous Woman should never lose an opportunity of saying a kind word, but, if we all did this, the world would be revolutionized; how it lowers our moral temperature when some needless criticism is made, or some disparaging remark is repeated to us! The Virtuous Woman would set herself to be a non-conductor of these “stings and arrows,” while, in “a voice ever soft, gentle, and low,” she would pass on to us the pleasant things our friends say, which make us feel “on the sunny side of the wall.” What was said of St. Theresa will be true of her—“it came to be understood that absent persons were safe where she was. It would be hard to exaggerate the power of influence for good which the confidence she had thus won must have given her. Her nobility felt the treachery which always lies in detraction, the kind of advantage taken, as it were, of the unprotectedness of the absent.”

Some separate wisdom and kindness in another way; they are so anxious to help others that they stretch a point of conscience, and persist in a forbidden friendship, in order to help the friend. Now you may be unjustly treated in being told to give up your friend, and you may feel, and rightly, that it is very cruel to him or her. Perhaps so, but your want of principle, in being disobedient or deceitful, must harm your friend infinitely more than any amount of your good advice can do her good. *Acting on principle always helps others*: it is the most catching thing in the world, whereas our words and our personal influence do not help them one bit, unless God is speaking through us, and making us His instruments, which He will not do if we are behaving wrongly.

“*She looketh well to the ways of her household.*” She gives her servants full work, and insists on its being done, at the right time and in the right way, but she is careful never to overwork them, and to remember that servants have rights and feelings; she is not only kind, but *considerate*, which involves far more sympathy and thought.

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“She eateth not the bread of idleness.” But she never does her servants’ work, or spoils them. Of course, if she is very poor, and has few servants, she will lend a helping hand, but she will be wise in her industry, and understand that riches are a call, not to idleness, but to another kind of work—overseeing and directing, but not doing. “One good head is worth a hundred good hands,” but the head must know how things should be done, and therefore the Virtuous Woman will make it a point of conscience to know how to cook, and equally a point of conscience not to do it, if she has servants who ought to see to it.

“Her children shall rise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praiseth her.” My Virtuous Woman may never marry, but she will be a mother in Israel in spite of that. Every woman finds scope for motherliness if it is in her; one way or another she will find children looking to her for love and help, and she must fit herself to educate those children, for this is a woman’s main duty in life; she should never be satisfied till she has earned a right to the compliment which Steele paid his wife—that “to know her was a liberal education,” until

“Men at her side
Grow nobler, girls purer, and, through the whole town,
The children are gladder that pull at her gown.”

“A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.” I may seem to have made my last words to you consist of merely worldly-wise counsels, and to have left out of sight “the one thing needful,” but in many other Scripture lessons we have spoken of that Prayer, and Bible reading, that “going in the strength of the Lord God,” which is the only source of strength for man or woman.

I have tried to give a few practical counsels for everyday life, believing, as I do firmly, that the best part of this world’s wisdom is really one with Christianity, and that the fruits of dutifulness, common sense, and kindness, cannot be produced unless there is the root of real religion. Solomon takes that root for granted, only at the close reminding us of its necessity; and, in picturing our ideal woman, I am sure we all see her with

“A brow serene
Speaking calm hope and trust within her, whence
Welleth a noiseless spring of patience,
That keepeth all her life so fresh, so green
And full of holiness, that every look,
The greatness of her woman’s soul revealing,
Unto me bringeth blessing, and a feeling
As when I read in God’s own Holy Book.”

Making Plans.



Holidays.—This is the time to show if school has done you any good.

At school you are reminded constantly of Prayer, hard work, tidiness, regularity, self-control: you are practised in these things, and the great underlying principles of life are brought before you so that not one of you has any excuse for being careless and unconscientious in the holidays. Also you are most of you communicants, and you know that it is impossible to be a communicant and to “let yourself go” in these ways.



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You have duties in the holidays as well as in school time. It is wrong to spend two months in self-indulgence without any self-discipline. You must open your eyes to your duties,—practising, sensible reading, tidiness, and daily unselfishness.

It may be no one's business to remind you in the holidays, and your mother may let you alone a good deal, from wishing you to have "a good time;" but you alter very considerably during two months, and it is your part to see that you alter for the better.

Two months means two Communion with definite resolves, two definite upward stages in life. If you let yourself go till you get back to the crutches of school, you will have gone two very definite stages downhill.

Some of you are tidy here, but at home your temptation is to plaster some neatly folded garment or sash over the recesses of an untidy drawer, or to use anything that comes to hand, any racquet, or croquet-mallet, or oil-can, or thimble; your own cannot be found—you take the nearest and then leave that also lying about.

Do you think these things do not matter? You would think it mattered very much if you grew up an unreliable, unconscientious woman, and yet, I do not know in what lesson-book you can learn to be thorough and reliable and conscientious, except in the daily lesson-book of these trifles.

You each know that daily practise is a duty, if your mother wishes you to learn music. A daily duty neglected, or a daily duty done, means a very considerable difference in the person by the end of two months.

There are one or two further points in your holiday and grown-up life which I should like to talk about to-day.

Visits.—Enrich your life with them, instead of letting them be times when you slip back morally. Take your conscience with you (but do not wear it outside), and be very careful to keep your rules, your prayers, your home standard of right and wrong, your quietness and self-control. Do not "let yourself go," and do silly things for fun. A great many leave their sense of responsibility at home, whereas our visits are part of the regular course of that life for which God will judge us. And keep your mind open, get new ideas, read the books in the house, instead of taking a store with you.

Next consider your duty in the choice of people you live with. First, there are your relations. You say you cannot choose these; no, but you can choose which side of them you will draw out. Every one is a magnet; some attract the worried, irritable side of other people, some the serene, pleasant side. If you try to see the bright side of things and to agree instead of differing, and if you say nice things about people when they are out of the room, your family circle will show themselves very different from what they might be if you were a magnet for unpleasantness!



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Secondly, there are your friends. Do not let one person monopolize you, or you her; do not have friends given to secrets, and do not let any one trap you into a promise not to tell. If her secret is all right, she cannot object to your telling your mother, and if it is silly you had better be clear of it. And do not forget that nice people do not deal in secrets, they keep their family affairs to themselves. It is the Rosa Matildas at "Young Ladies' Academies" who have secrets in a corner.

Thirdly, choose your book friends carefully. You live with people in books, so have a conscience about your choice in this just as much as with living friends. Some books are bad for any one; a great many more would do harm to you, but perhaps not touch an older person. When I was your age, many an argumentative book (which seems thin and empty to me now) might have upset my faith. Many an exciting, passionate book (which I now read with a calm and critical mind) would have filled my whole heart and soul! Be thankful if you are kept under direction about books; but if you are not, use common sense and conscience. Manage yourself sensibly, and since you know that you are in a very mouldable, impressionable stage, it stands to reason that you had better steadily read classics now, to form and strengthen your mind.

When a girl reads sentimental and passionate poetry, neglecting Scott, Milton, and Wordsworth, I call it the same sort of wrong mismanaging of herself as if she ruined her digestion with a greedy love of pastry. Poetry and pastry are often the same sort of weak self-indulgence.

I do not say read *no* novels that are exciting and romantic, or even that are silly, but I do say, sandwich them. Face the fact that a silly or passionate novel is likely to have great power over you at this stage, and therefore read very few of them, and read many of Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Miss Austen, and Mrs. Gaskell.

Do not read society novels that make you live with flippant, irreverent, or coarse people, or those who take sin lightly.

It is not right for a girl to live with people in books who would not be good friends for her in life, and she ought to make a conscience of not doing it, even though there may be no definite bad scenes in the book to shock her.

Books should give you nice ideas. You have got the making of your own mind and character in your own hands, and you are responsible for the books on which you choose to feed yourself, for each one of them alters you for good or bad. Your book list is a very good help to self-examination.



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There is a great deal to think about and to settle for yourself when you begin life, but there are three points of goodness binding on every one. One is, giving time to God. A girl must stick to her prayers and go to Church on Sunday whether other people do or not. Sunday varies in different households, and I think each girl is bound by her parents' standard in the matter as long as she lives at home; when she marries she should think the matter over and have her own standard. But the root of Sunday-keeping lies in the fact that she must feed the Sunday side of her or it will die; and she should go to Church, once at least, to show her colours. As to how much she feeds that Sunday side, or when,—that varies with the household, only she should resolve on something and stick to it. You need not be disobliging, since you can always make time by denying yourself.

Secondly, have a standard in talk. You cannot tell your elders when you think them wrong, but you should not join in, when your contemporaries say what you think wrong. Speak out then, or at least be silent and unresponsive.

Thirdly, do something for other people, some steady kindness which you do not give up just to suit your own convenience.

Now, what plan of life should you have? You must have a plan and resolution, for if you drift you are almost certain to drift *down* and not up.

Yet you are quite rightly looking forward to a time of freedom. But freedom means being able to command yourself, it does not mean being free to drift without a helm.

Also you will be under control to a certain extent. Very likely you will sometimes resent control or reproof at home more than you would resent it from an outsider! But you are a stage nearer that sad freedom of later life when it is nobody's business to look after you, and you have now got to learn how to use wisely that fuller freedom of later life.

I hope you have been learning at school to use the comparative freedom of "being out." I hope that, with both men and girls, you will remember what I tell you here about not being silly and uncontrolled, or loud and boisterous. The actual school rules pass away, but there is not one of them that is not founded on some principle that I hope you will carry with you and live by.

The books, the music, the pictures in which you are interested here are not mere lessons to be shut up joyfully when you leave! They are the great interests and amusements of the friends whom you most value, and it would be very disappointing if you did not use your free time in making opportunities to carry them on better than at school, for you come here mainly to find out what interesting things there are in the world you are going into.



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But to go to practical details. Take a girl who wants to be good and dutiful and useful, to be a comfort at home, to keep her brain in good working order, and to enjoy herself: what should she resolve upon if she is to be of use in the world and not drift idly along? She must think it out for herself, and no longer wait for orders. She must put the salt of self-denial and effort into every day, of her own accord, and not feel absolved because her mother has not given any special orders. You are responsible for your own life, and it is horribly easy to slide into a slack, pleasure-seeking life which will eat all the good out of you.

You must not fill the day with rules and employments so that people feel you always engaged, yet, though you must seem disengaged, you must have a real purpose underneath. You must be free to idle about after breakfast while your mother or the visitors are settling the day's employments, and yet you should aim at always having something to show for your morning,

“Something accomplished, something done.”

It is more difficult to live an ordinary idle life well than a hard-working one, because it rests entirely with you whether you put any salt into your day, and because it is your duty to do much as other people do, while at the same time, underneath, you must keep to your standard of Right and Wrong.

But, suppose a girl wants to arrange her own individual life on the best possible lines. Had you better make your plan, and begin at once?

There is great danger, if you wait, that your good resolutions will die away, and you will never begin. And yet, when you first leave, you want a little time to feel quite free, and your people like to feel you are quite free to enjoy yourself.

There is a great deal to be said for beginning at once, but I am not sure about it!

If you feel that you will *never* begin good ways unless you do so at once, then begin! But I am not sure that I should advise you to make your Resolution at once, though I should like you to make your Plan. I should like you to plan your day while you are here, and write it out: you will not do much with Resolutions unless you write them. Plan what time you will get up and go to bed (you should have a conscience about both); settle a plan of your reading,—what books you want to read during the first year, what poetry to learn, what subjects to study. Plan it all out, and then seal it up, and keep it till Christmas comes. Then think over it, and pray over it, before New Year's Day, and then start your definite resolutions with the new year.

But are you to fritter away the time between this and then? No, carry out your ideas of reading sensible books and doing kind things for friends and poor people, and saying your prayers and reading the Bible, and write down every day exactly how much you



did. Let your resolution be to keep a record of these months, rather than a resolution to keep to a detailed plan. Keeping a record is self-discipline in itself, it means self-examination every night. If it shows you to be silly and idle and unpersevering, it will make you ashamed of yourself. Also it will give you some idea of how much time you can really count on getting. See how your plan works before you promise God to keep it, and then you will not make unwise resolutions at the New Year.



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In arranging one's life, it is well to take our Lord's three divisions of Duty,—Prayer, Alms, and Fasting,—and see how our life and our plans stand this test.

Prayer.—Under this head you would notice whether your daily prayers, and your attendance at the Holy Communion, were regular, and how you kept Sunday.

Alms.—What proportion of your money do you give away? You ought to give away one shilling out of every half-sovereign which you spend on yourself; and be sure you spend dress-money on dress, it is not honest to use it on charity, or books, and then to look shabby.

But money is only part of the giving which you owe: 'Such as I have give I unto thee.' What have you got? You have got education. There may be girls like yourself living near you who have less; could you not start some sensible reading together? I remember delightful French and German and Dante readings when we lived in the country,—eight or ten girls used to come regularly, and we all enjoyed it.

Are there no old people you could amuse in some way,—possibly with whist? Or rather lonely people (aunts sometimes), to whom you could write regularly; people like to be remembered, especially by the young! As long as you are young your kindnesses are very much valued, and if you choose to be selfish instead, it is forgiven you, but, as you are in youth so you will be in middle life, therefore be careful. As I heard Mr. Clifford say, "As long as you are young you may be selfish, or vain, or silly, and people love you all the same! But, by the time you are thirty, people will begin to say they will not stand it any longer, and by the time you are forty or fifty you will be left to a lonely life!" So begin a *kind* life at once, and act towards all around you on the principle 'such as I have I give thee.' Sometimes you can share your money, sometimes your pleasures, sometimes your education. And remember that in the work and kindnesses which you do for others, you must put first and foremost what you do for your mother and father and home people. "*Haus Teuffel, Strasse Engel*" is a bad name. The point of that text about 'Corban, it is a gift,' is, that you must not feel absolved from duties at home, because you do good works outside. Find out some home duty you can do regularly, and stick to it. I dare say your mother may not suggest any to you, because she wants you to have a good time, but think of *her* pleasure and amusement; mothers often talk as if they enjoyed being left at home, just to make more room for you. Keep your eyes open, and find out what you can do to make life pleasanter to her. Talk over your plans with her; often mothers do not realize that a girl wants to find duties and kind things to do, and so they only shower pleasures on her which do not satisfy her.

If there seems no special work for you, be on the look-out to do the things that other people do not like doing; that is the sort of person I like better than any other,—the one who feels "somebody must do the tiresome work, why shouldn't I?" Nothing you could do in the future would please me so much as if you lived by that motto; and, if you add

to it a determination to make it quite a pleasure to your mother to find fault with you, you will do well!



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So much for Prayer, our duty to God, and for Alms, our duty to our neighbour; how about Fasting, our duty to ourself?

What is the good of fasting? Is it simply that we should be uncomfortable? No, the point of fasting is self-discipline and training. This is your duty to self: not to get comfort or amusement or success in the world, but, so to train, to drill, to feed and strengthen yourself, that you may be a good soldier for God.

Such questions as the proper amount of Rest and Amusement and Exercise all come under this head, for we ought to aim at just as much as will make us good soldiers, not to try for as much as we can get.

We must manage ourselves; we must keep our bodies in good order, and keep our brains keen and bright. Self-denial in sleep and food and drink are part of this management.

Early Rising ought to be on your list of resolutions. Some find it best to name a certain hour, but then, if they are not called punctually, they feel the resolution broken, and they very likely lie on slothfully. I think it is best to resolve to get up either five or ten minutes after you wake, or are called; look at your watch, and jump up when the time comes.

When you are up, your Rule of Prayer is the first thing to think of and to act on.

And when you are dressed (carefully and prettily dressed), and your soul is dressed in God's armour, what are you going to do with the new day God has given you?

First carry out some duty in the house; next see to your own improvement, not as a self-ending pleasure, but in order to make yourself a useful woman, to train you for better work in the future.

Reading is not the only kind of such training, but it is one of the best kinds and gives you new ideas. I advise you to try for half an hour a day, and to keep a list of the books you read:[1] make an abstract of a sensible book once in three months: sandwich your English novels with foreign ones: keep a sensible book on hand and, alternately with books you fancy, read something a little above you: take up some special subject every three or six months and read several books on it, or else read through the books on my lists: read no novels before luncheon.

It is seldom safe to fix the hour very decidedly; some one interrupts you, and then you feel the rule broken and you get discouraged!

Make a point of being occupied, keep some needlework on hand, idleness leads to silly thoughts and self-indulgence. Do not be out-of-doors all day; have something indoors to show for yourself. Feminine occupations have a good result on the character, and help you to be quiet and recollected, to be the womanly woman who makes a real

Home for her father and brothers. As Roger Ascham is reported by Landor to have said to Lady Jane Grey, “exercise that beauteous couple, the mind and body, much and variously; but at home, at home, Jane! indoors, and about things indoors.”



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Mr. Lowell said that most men act as if they had sealed orders not to be opened till middle life! I do not want you to waste your life like that, I want you to feel that you have a definite purpose and that you know what orders you ought to give yourselves, or rather what are God's orders for your life.

What is your purpose in life? I hope—Lord Bacon's words in our Tuesday midday Prayer express it—"the glory of God and the relief of man's estate." You go into life knowing how dearly the Lord Jesus Christ loves you, at how dear a cost He bought you; therefore, not just to save your souls, not just because you would be *afraid* to live carelessly, but, because of His amazing love, you will try to live as He asks you to do. God grant you such a sense of that amazing love that you may rejoice to spend and be spent in His service.

And you will want to live for the relief of man's estate. The more your eyes open to life, the more you see how many sore hearts there are in the world, and (besides the well-dressed sorrows which are as sore as any) there is the pain and poverty and sin of those who have no chance in the world; what can you do for the poor—you who have so many chances in life, who have so much love, so many pleasures? There may not be very much open to you when you first grow up, and you may be very busy with your pleasures and home duties. Let your mother enjoy your pleasures, she has been planning them for years, but do what little things you can to discipline yourself so that by-and-by (when you are free to work) you may be a worker worth having. It is that which makes the waiting years worth while.

Often a girl gets tired of enjoying herself and longs for some purpose in life, but she is tied in a hundred ways. Sometimes she loses her aspirations, her wish to do some good in the world, and sinks down into an idle round of small pleasures and worries. But do not you do that; rather realize that, according as you spend your waiting time,—before you marry or find some definite work,—such you will be when your opportunity comes:

"Be resolute and great

To keep thy muscles trained: know'st thou when Fate

Thy measure takes, or when she'll say to thee,

'I find thee worthy; do this thing for me?'"

I was talking over East London work the other day with a worker, and she was saying that the best preparation for usefulness lay in such common things as cooking, cutting out, musical-drill, gardening, children's games, neat business-like letters, keeping your own accounts, a power of small talk! All these are possible to each of you, and a resolute putting of salt into each day,—some discipline, some self-denial, some thoroughness,—will turn you out able by-and-by to do good work for the Relief of man's estate.



“Be resolute and great
To keep thy muscles trained”

that you may be fit to do something to show forth your sense of the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ.



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[Footnote 1: "Record of a Year's Reading" (6_d_. Mowbray) would be useful to you.]

Conversation.

Tourgenieff has a story in which three young princes, one by one, went into an enchanted garden and plucked a magic apple which gave the eater one wish. The first asked for money, the second for beauty, the third for the good-will of old women. The third proved to be the successful one.

If a fairy godmother offered you one gift, what would you choose? I am not sure that you would not do well to imitate that shrewd young prince! It is old ladies who can teach you knowledge of the world, and whose good-will gets you the most desirable invitations! However, you can easily gain their good-will without any apple, so that, on the whole, I should advise a princess to choose the gift of being a good Talker—or rather one who produces good Talk.

A woman Macaulay, even with brilliant flashes of silence, is not loved: you do not want a hostess who "holds forth," but one who sets her guests talking; and every woman is the hostess when she is talking to a man, or to any one younger or shyer than herself. You should make people go away with a regretful feeling that they missed a great deal by having talked so much themselves that they heard very little from you.

Do you think it is easy to listen—that it means mere silence? I assure you it means nothing of the sort; it means listening with all your heart and soul and mind, and making the speaker feel, by your way of listening, that you *have* a heart and a soul and a mind. There could not well be anything further from the person who makes him feel that there is a mere dead wall of silence before him *at* which he is talking.

Listening is a fine art and requires great tact and a peculiar delicate perception of the shades that are passing over the speaker's mind, and dictating (often unconsciously) the words he says—words which in themselves do not convey his mind, unless you are of the family of the Interpreter in Bunyan, and know by instinct what he feels.

Only a large heart of quick understanding has this gift; but we help our heart wonderfully by keeping our mind keen. The heart is apt to be very blundering and stupid by itself; just as the mind is very apt to go off on a wrong scent about people, unless you have a warm heart to throw true light on their motives.

A *quick-witted heart* is what I should put as the first requisite for a good talker; and next a *noble heart*—a heart that cares for the best side of things and people, a heart which brings out the bearable side of circumstances, and the nobler side of people, and the interesting side of subjects.



Some people are like Kay, in Anderson's "Snow Queen," they have a bit of ice in their heart, and they see all the smallnesses and absurdities about them, instead of being alive to the pathos, or endurance, or good-nature of the apparently stupid lives round them. They are always in a critical, carping, superior frame of mind. These people can often talk brilliantly, but it is thin. You cannot have a large mind without a large heart. 'We live by admiration, hope, and love;' without these, we cease to live—we wither.



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The best talk is kindly; any fool can point out flaws, said Goethe (who certainly had a great mind, whatever his heart was like),—it takes a clever man to discern excellencies. A good talker makes other people feel they are much cleverer than they had before realized; they are at their best, thanks to the listener who draws out the best side of them. It is delightful to be with some people—you are sure of hearing good talk—interesting subjects spring up wherever they are.

Perhaps you have a friend staying with you who is one of these delightful people, and you say: “Oh dear! I must go and pay a duty visit—it will be so dull, but do come with me.” And, lo and behold! that visit is delightful, for your friend made that dull person into an interesting one by getting her to talk and show her real self. For the real self of every soul is interesting, only it often has such a “buried life” that we are not skilful enough to find it.

Now, does your way of talking bring out the best side of yourself and of those you talk to?

School gives you tremendous opportunities of adding to the kindness and nice-mindedness of the world; for there you talk with a large number who, like yourself, are not yet made, and who are, therefore, more coloured by the person they talk to than older people would be.

There are people in the world who never hear unkind gossip or vulgar jokes, for no one would think of saying such things to them. I know girls who would never have such things said—who would never get a letter written to them that was not of a nice tone—because, instinctively, their friends would feel such things out of harmony with them.

When girls are silly, or spiteful, or not quite nice in what they say to you, it pays *you* a bad compliment; do not in your own mind merely condemn *them*. They would not say it to you if they felt you above talk of that kind. You may be above it in your own mind and may feel that your home surroundings are on a higher level than such talk; but either you have not had the courage to show your colours, or else you are like that in your heart, and they know it by instinct.

See to it that you keep at your best: for the danger of school is the temptation to follow a multitude to do, not evil, but folly.

Many, from indolence or thoughtlessness, or from yielding to the bad bit in them, join in silly school talk, silly mysteries, giggling, criticizing other people, boasting about home, loud, rough ways of talking, slang, cliques and exclusive friendships (every one of which is underbred, as well as silly or unkind), and are yet, three-quarters of them, fit for something better,—at home they *would* be better, and at school they *could* be better.



Many people dread schools for fear of wrong talk going on; now some of you may (through gossip, or newspapers, or servants, or novels) know of bad things or fast things; and it is perhaps not your fault that you know; but *it is a very heavy sin on your conscience if you hand on your knowledge* and make others dwell on wrong things which would never have been in their minds but for you. Books or friends which give us a knowledge of wickedness, do more harm than we know.



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Never have the blood-guiltiness on your head of teaching evil to others, or leading their minds to dwell on it. Some find it much harder to get rid of such thoughts than others do—they may be more naturally inclined to it, and you may have woke up in them far more harm than you guess.

Your very first duty when you are thrown with others is to see that *no one shall ever be less nice-minded because they knew you*. See to it that no one learns anything about evil through your being with them. You can very easily soil a mind, and you can never wash it clean.

If you feel the least doubt about a thing, do not say it—do not tell the story; if you want to ask a question and feel in the very least uncomfortable about it, hold your tongue, or ask your mother instead.

There are many things which it is not wholesome to talk about among yourselves, but which it is quite right to ask your mother about, or any one in her place, if you find yourself dwelling on them. Of course this includes everything which makes you feel at all hot, with a sense of something not quite nice;—everything in books which it would make you hot to read out loud (an excellent test);—and I include all uncanny things such as ghosts and palmistry and fortune-telling:—these are not safe things to talk about, and I ask you as my particular wish not to do it, though you are quite welcome to unburden your mind to me if you wish to do so! I think your common sense will bear me out in not wanting them talked about among yourselves, because you never know who may take it seriously or what harm you may be doing, though as I have read “The Mysteries of Udolpho” to you, you will see that it is not the subject, but the indiscriminate talking which I object to!

But apart from wrong talk, what sort of silly talk are you likely to be infected with at school? It is not unlikely that among a number of girls there will be one with a hawk’s eye for dress, who knows exactly how a trimming went, and how long this or that has been worn; in fact, she takes in every detail of the dress of each person she sees for a minute, and can talk of it by the hour! She may have no harm in her, but she is first cousin to a milliner’s apprentice (and is mentally the poor relation of the two, since the milliner notices these things as a part of business, and very likely has other interests in life for her spare time). If the girl wishes to prove herself of different family, she needs to put to sleep the side of her that belongs to the keen-eyed young lady behind the counter, by feeding other sides of her mind, and turning her powers of observation on to other things.

I should like you to be faultlessly dressed outside, and I should like you to be perfectly well inside; but I should not admire you if your chief subject of conversation was the devices by which you arrived at the dress, or the decoctions you took to arrive at the health.



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Copy the flowers of the field, not only in prettiness, but in giving an impression that you grow as naturally as they do! Make us feel that you *could* not have anything ugly or awkward or unbecoming about you. Your dress and your rooms and your dinners should be perfect, but do not entertain your guest with the mere mechanism of how you arrive at any one of them. Give time and thought to this machinery of life—enough to produce the right result, and then go on to the real interests, for which they are only the stage. I do not want a sloven, but I want a girl who is a real person and not a mere *poupee modele* to show off dresses.

Petty gossip is the prevailing danger of any small community such as a girls' school. Provincial gossip, Matthew Arnold would call it—provincial being one of his severest adjectives for the Philistines whom his soul abhors,—by which he means that their talk is limited to their narrow-minded local gossip, so that when a stranger comes from a larger world, they have nothing in common. I think his use of that word marks his French turn of mind;—parochial would be the better expression in England, where the talk is very often literally parochial,—besides deserving the word in its wider meaning, as describing talk which is full of unimportant, local, and personal facts, instead of belonging to the larger world of ideas.

English girls, as a whole, are supposed to be bad at talking—to giggle among themselves, and to have nothing to say on general subjects. But, besides this, there is a certain love of silly mysteries and secrets in some girls, which is apt to be too much for their common sense.

Some girls are so keen to chatter, and make themselves interesting at any cost, that they tell their family's private affairs or discuss the faults of their nearest relations. I am sure you would all remember that any one, with a grain of decent family pride, washes every bit of dirty linen at home, and holds their tongue about family news till they are sure it is public property, and to the family credit! If you ever want to talk about such things for real reasons, always go to an older friend and not to one of your own age; for an older friend would know enough of the world to take it up by the right handle and to hold her tongue.

Again, some girls fancy that a little theatre gossip marks them out as women of the world. To talk about a play and about the good and bad strokes of acting is one thing:—the petty personal gossip about the actors and actresses is on the same level, to my mind, as the talking about dukes and duchesses by those who read of them in a society paper, without ever expecting to meet them.



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Again, there is some school talk which is undesirable, though not wrong. I mean talk about the things which belong to your future life, but which are just the sides of it that you want your education to help you to keep in proper proportion. There are interests, such as hunting and dancing, which are all right in their own time and place, but which make a silly, empty mind when they are your chief mental food. You come to school to take an interest in work, and in bookish things generally. It is not so easy to do this when you are in the full swing of home amusements, and so you come away for a sort of mental retreat, during which it will be easier to you to let your bookish and thoughtful side grow. Here you are, and your home amusements are left behind. Would it not be a pity to let your mind keep running on the very things from which you have come away? Do not let your tongue or your mind run on the amusements of home—they prevent your taking real interest in your work.

Also there should be no talk about religious differences. Of course, you all come from different homes and have somewhat different teaching, and I do not wish you ever to discuss those differences. Every one should keep to her home ways, and try to live up to them. Religious controversy never yet made any into better Christians, and it generally makes them worse!

Avoid Religious gossip about the services and the clergy. Make it a rule for yourself, wherever you are, never to criticize the clergyman or the sermon. Very likely you might say something to the point—it might do him good if he heard it! That will not happen, and what *will* happen is, that you will do yourself harm by being critical or amused, instead of making your mind devout. If your “mind” knows that, whatever it may notice in church, your “will” is not going to allow it to speak of, then your critical part goes to sleep. A joke loses its amusingness if one is not going to tell it, and you are then able to think only of your Prayers and Resolutions.

Purity and Reverence are the two main things in talk, but how about Sense?

There is one class of girl I have sometimes noticed with amused regret—I dare say you have too—though she is by no means so objectionable as the other kind I spoke of. She is a would-be child of nature. She has no thoughtfulness or weight about her; she is an engaging kitten who exists on the rather inadequate stock-in-trade of nice eyes; she is quite irresponsible and useless, and tells you so, in an ingenuous way, for which her nearest and dearest long to box her ears! I would call her “The Artless Japanese,” remembering the princess in the *Mikado*, who says, “I sit and wonder, in my artless Japanese way, why I am so charming.”

Again, very often a girl of your age gets a good deal of society in the holidays or before she comes. She comes to school on purpose to keep away from that, till the right time for it comes (when I hope she will have plenty of it!)



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Now, when a girl is not much accustomed to society (especially to men's society), it sometimes turns her head, and she gets an idea that any joke about a man is amusing. I will not say that this sort of a joke is like a servant, for a well-brought-up servant puts many a young lady to shame by her nice-mindedness. Young ladies' academies are supposed to be full of that sort of thing—for which there is no word but vulgar—and when such girls leave such academies to go home for good, they are always in holes and corners either with a man, or with another girl talking about one. A man does not respect that kind of girl—though he will go just as far with her as she will let him—and he will tell it again at his club, and probably to his sisters. If *she* does not mind about her dignity, why should *he*? There is hardly a man living who would not make game of the advances of the girl who admires him, just as there is hardly a man living who would speak to others of the girl he loves. Unluckily, every idiotic girl (who is silly about him) thinks she is the one he cares for, and never realizes how she is “giving herself away!”

And the worst of it is, that the girl is not only lowering herself, she is lowering a man's standard of Woman in general. You, each one of you, help to decide whether your brothers and every man you meet shall have a high or a low standard about women. I assure you, when I think of girls I have known of (and heard of from men), I wonder that men have any respect for women at all.

We shall never know how much of Dante's nobleness was due to his having once known a girl in Florence, who never was in any specially close relationship to him. He met her at the gatherings of Florentine ladies, where she must have heard his songs, but the most close personal intercourse they had was one day when they passed each other in the street, and she bowed to him,—“From that salute, humbleness flowed all his being o'er.” Do you say, he was a poet, and Beatrice was one of the most famous of all Fair Women, and therefore they are no guide for you? What man has not got poetry in him, waiting for the woman he loves to wake it? and what woman does not possess that womanhood which is, by God's ordering, in itself an attraction to a man, and which it rests with her so to use—by self-restraint and love of noble things—that she may be, to every man about her, something of what Beatrice was to Dante?—he may know very little of her, and care less, but she will have helped to raise his idea of what a woman should be.

Women have a great deal to answer for as regards men, and every girl should do her best to be on the right side and to help a man to be at his best, by showing that she thinks silliness and vulgar chaff objectionable. Every girl sets the tone of those she talks with, for every one's conscience responds to the tacit appeal of a nice-minded girl's dislike of these things. If you do not respond, it checks such talk wonderfully.



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Boys are sometimes told that they must swim with the stream at school and join in bad talk because “everybody does it,” but the nice boy stands out and does not, and helps weaker ones thereby.

Girls have a much smaller temptation in that way—more to silliness than to actual wrong; but your tone—in these matters that I speak of—helps your brothers in their battles with downright wrong. Every boy who knows his sister’s standard is very high, is helped far more than he is conscious of, by her influence,—and far more than she ever knows, for she does not know all his temptations.

Women have been trained to nice-mindedness by centuries of public opinion—they have always been admired for it, and blamed if they lack it; while men have not been so trained; therefore women have a special power of helping men, who are, consequently, not likely to be born so particular about these things as women are.

Always feel responsible for what you laugh at: very often people say things tentatively to see if you will laugh: you help to fix their standard by the way you take it, and you often throw your weight into the wrong scale because you are afraid of seeming priggish. A man’s sense of humour is different from a woman’s; when you go into the world you must be careful not to laugh just because a man makes a joke, until you are quite sure that it is one to laugh at. Perhaps your host makes it, and his wife looks a trifle grave: then be quick to take your cue from her and to notice what nice women think nice for a woman.

Very often in talking to girls and preparing them for life, the whole question of flirtation and nonsense is left out—there is not even as much said as in Mrs. Blackett’s village, where the clergyman’s wife put every girl through a special catechism before she left to go to service, part of which was, “Lads, Sally?” The correct answer briskly given by Sally was, “Have naught to do with them—but if they *will*, tell mother.”

The whole subject of getting married, or falling in love, or meeting a man you *may* fall in love with, is often smothered up out of sight, as if it were something wrong. If you have your life so full of other interests that it does not concern you till the real thing comes, so much the better—you will lose the pleasantest five years of your life if you turn your mind in this direction too soon.

What often happens is that it is plentifully thought of and talked of among the girls, and hidden away from the mothers and any older friends. Either do not speak of it at all, or let it be an open straightforward thing, instead of a Rosa Matilda mystery. So often a girl feels a delightful spice of impropriety in any remark about a man or a boy. If she had more to do with them she would not be so silly—unless she had a very odd sort of menkind belonging to her; but you will find girls (very unattractive ones, too) always imagining that a man is in love with them, or else being silly themselves over every other man they meet.



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What I am describing is, of course, very vulgar; but, from the castle to the cottage, no house is folly-proof, though the outward manifestations of it may be less objectionable where the manners are better.

Now, with regard to all the kinds of talk which I have singled out as undesirable, please understand, that except in speaking of wickedness (or worse still nastiness), which is always a sin and needs your penitent confession and God's absolution, all these things are wrong, only in the wrong place and wrong way and wrong proportion.

If you are keen about any of them, and want dreadfully to talk about it, do so; let it out, if you cannot fill your mind with other things; only, do it with an older person, so as to save yourself from that demon of silliness who hovers about a room where girls are alone together. He is powerless unless you invoke him; but remember, he is always there, eagerly watching his opportunity.

I advise you to make it a rule for yourself always to go to an older friend, when you want to talk about anything that might be not quite nice, or that might verge on silliness. If conscience or prudence give any pricks in the matter, go to an elder. You do not know how much such a rule would save you from, and if you say, "but that is impossible, she would not understand!" then I say to you, "well, it is always possible to hold your tongue, though I do not wish to impose such a severe penance on you; I only say, talk to a safe friend, or to none."

This question of talk is a very practical one in school life. Probably most of you think privately, "How silly girls are!" What do *you* do, to make the mass less silly? That sort of infectious silliness is the great danger of school life, but the chatter is made up by individuals, who could each talk instead of chattering: remember that a girl at school need not be a schoolgirl; but she is in great danger of it, unless she is careful!

When you live at home you do not talk nonsense at dinner, you probably join in sensible talk. Well, do not alter because you are with girls, and say complacently in your heart "How silly the others are!" Your neighbours would not be silly if you did not admire it. You yourself are part of the mass you are criticizing. On which side do your words go—talk or chatter? Watch yourselves, and see how your words, each day, can fairly be divided between those two scales.

"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Are these words too solemn to use, after suggestions on talk which may seem to you to have been occupied with very petty and ignoble details? Surely not, for your talk on these commonplace matters really settles your standard, and that of the world about you, on the deepest moral questions. The common talk of the day is both cause and effect of the morality of the day.



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May I suggest some thoughts for self-examination on the matter? One good question to put daily to yourself is, "How much of my talk to-day was for myself, and against others? Perhaps I was too well-mannered to boast, but have I turned things to my own advantage, shown up my own strong points, instead of trying to help others to shine? Have I tried to get cheap credit for wit, by sharp speeches, *would-be* clever criticism and pulling people to pieces? Have I started, or handed on, spiteful remarks?" If you like, use another question, and ask yourself, "Was I like S. Theresa, 'An Advocate of the Absent'?" Or ask, "Have I, by my way of speaking *or listening*, lowered any one's standard to-day?" Very often people say things or make jokes tentatively, to see how we shall take it, and through fear of being stiff or priggish we surprise them by seeming to enjoy what they were rather uncertain about. It is quite curious how ashamed most people generally are of seeming as good as they really are; they "hide their best selves as if they had stolen them." If they would show their colours, they would find that many of the apparently careless people they meet do care about the real interests of life. If they themselves do care and yet try to seem careless, are they not responsible for half the carelessness in those about them?

"The manner of our ordinary conversation," says Bishop Wilson, "is that which either hardens people in wrong, or awakens them to the right. We always do good or harm to others by the manner of our conversation."

Aunt Rachel; or, Old Maids' Children.

"What is the matter, my dear" said Aunt Rachel to her favourite niece, Urith Trevelyan, who was spending the Easter holidays with her. "You look fit to be a sister in mind, though I hope not in manners, to the Persian poet, who described himself as 'scratching the head of Thought with the nails of Despair.'"

"I think life is very difficult," remarked Urith, with a solemn sigh.

"There I partly agree with you," said Aunt Rachel; "especially to people who insist on doing to-morrow's duty with to-day's strength. I doubt very much if the holiday task, which I see in your hand, is the cause of this gloom."

"Oh dear, no! I was thinking what shall I do with myself when I leave school at Midsummer; it will be so very hard to read by myself."

"My good child, do attend to what you are doing; you are just like the man in the 'Snark,' who had

"luncheon at five o'clock tea,
And dined on the following day.'



“I wish you would dine off that unfortunate task to-day, and when you have finished it we will talk about your future work.”

The task did not take long when Urith fairly gave her mind to it, and the next day she and her aunt started for a distant cottage at the far end of the parish. Urith seized the opportunity, and began as the door closed behind them—



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“Now, Aunt Rachel, how can I do everything I ought when I leave school? I shall know nothing of Greek or Roman history, or mythology, or French or German history, or even of English, except the period we have been just doing, and I have done only a few books in the literature class, and none in foreign literature, and I have forgotten all my geography, and I shall have Latin and Greek to keep up, and French and German and chemistry, and I don’t know anything, hardly, of modern books, or of architecture or natural history, or philosophy, or of cooking”—here, in her ardour, she tripped over a stone, and her aunt availed herself of the pause to say—

“Add Shakespeare and the musical glasses, and you will have a tolerably complete programme before you.”

“Yes, Aunt Rachel, you need not laugh, you always say girls are so uneducated, and can’t respond to literary allusions; but how are they to become educated when there is so much to be done?”

“My dear Urith, there is a very wise Irish proverb, ‘Never cross a bridge till you come to it,’ and though this bridge of culture seems such a bridge of sighs to you, I really do not think it need be. In the first place, it has not got to be crossed in one year. You get far more law now than in my young days, for you and your friends are not expected to come out full-blown heroines at seventeen or eighteen; you are almost expected to carry on your education for some time longer. It is not safe to count on it, for real life may come on you in a dozen ways when you once leave the safety of the schoolroom, but you will probably get several years of tolerable quiet, and, if I were you, I would not spend my first year in a desperate effort to fill up all the gaps in my education, and to go on with school-work in the school spirit. I should take my first year of freedom as the arbour on the Hill Difficulty, where Christian rested; the lord of that country does not like pilgrims to stay there for good, but they go on all the better for it afterwards. I should look on this year as being the ornamental fringe to the intellectual dress you have been weaving for yourself at school. And do not forget that the dress and the trimming are not an end in themselves—they are only to enable you to leave the house with decency, to go about your business; and at the end of the first year I should count up my possessions and see where I was wanting—if the dress proved thin, I would then set to work and furnish myself with a jacket, by hard, steady work in the second year.”

“But some of my school-work will be wasted if I don’t keep it up.”

“Quite true; but do not keep it up simply because you have once begun it; some of your lessons will have done their work by ploughing and harrowing your mind, and may be left behind. The use of school is to teach you how to use your mind, and to try your hand at several branches of study, that you may be able to follow whichever suits you.”



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“But I have not got any particular turn for anything, and it seems a pity to drop things.”

“Yes, it is a pity, but you are not going to teach, and you will have to do the best you can. You had better make up your mind, before you begin life, as to what sort of woman you want to be, and then cut your coat according to your cloth, for if you begin by wanting to keep up everything, you will probably end by dropping everything, in despair.”

“Well, I want to keep up Latin and Greek and French and German, and Algebra and Geometry and Chemistry and Mechanics, as well as English subjects.”

“And seeing that your day will probably be only twenty-four hours long, I fear ‘want will be your master’! If you had a strong turn for any one of these subjects, I should say keep it up, by all means; but as you have not, I have very strong doubts whether you will find mathematics or classics much use to you. You know enough to take them up again if ever you wanted to help a beginner.”

“Then do you think Latin and Greek and mathematics no good for a woman?”

“Certainly not; you will read your newspaper, and the books of the day, in quite a different way now that your mind has been trained by these subjects, but you do not need to keep the scaffolding up when your house is built!”

“It does seem a pity!”

“Well, I do not want to debar you from these subjects if you really enjoy them; there would be a reason for going on, if they were intense pleasure to you, but I suspect you do them as ‘lessons,’ and, if so, you had better forsake them for things that directly tend to make you useful.”

“Oh, cooking and nursing, and that sort of thing.”

“Yes; but I was not thinking of that sort of thing. I meant things that bring you closer to others; Madame Schwetchine says that every fresh sorrow we endure is like learning a fresh language, because it enables us to speak to a fresh set of souls in their own tongue, and to sympathize. Every fresh thing that you learn brings you in sympathy with a fresh set of people. It gives pleasure and ease to a stranger to find that some one in his new circle knows his old home, and we can try to be at home in the mental country of each person we meet, so as to be able to respond to them. If you are a genius you can have your own country, and wait in it, till you meet some fellow-countryman; but as you only want to be an ordinary woman, ‘not too bright and good for human nature’s daily food,’ you will give far more pleasure to others, and widen and strengthen your own mind far more, by being able to join on easily to all you meet, than by pursuing some one abstruse study, whether it be mathematics or philosophy.”



“But it seems such a small thing to spend one’s mind in learning odds and ends of other people’s hobbies.”

“But I would have a hobby of my own, and do some steady stiff reading, only, as you are going to be a woman, and not a student, I would choose reading that linked me to as many as possible of other people’s interests. How dull and shy poor little Miss Smith was yesterday, till I found that she knew Venice as well as I did. After that she quite enjoyed her visit.”



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“Yes, but I could not have talked about Italy. I never have a chance of going abroad.”

“You do not know when you may go, and if you went to-morrow it would be a case of ‘No Eyes.’ You do not know an interesting piece of architecture when you see it, you would not know what pictures to look for, you would not know the history of the places you went to, and, in short, you would miss nine-tenths of the best points, for want of knowing they were there.”

“Yes; I might read up countries, but it is so unlikely that I should ever see them, that it does not seem much use to read up for nothing.”

“Well, supposing that you did not go, but that you had read books on Italian Art, and made out a list of the pictures you wanted to see at each great town—Florence, Venice, Rome, Siena—and knew about each painter, his history, his style, and photographs of his works, and copied out under each picture what good critics had said of it, or at least put a reference to the book where it was mentioned (e.g. Kingsley’s description of Bellini’s Doge; Browning on Fra Lippo Lippi’s Coronation of the Virgin; Ruskin’s best descriptions); and if you looked out all the famous men of each town, and knew their history, and what parts of the town were sacred to them; if you studied the buildings of each town, looked up its architecture, and tried to draw it from photographs and illustrations, and then hunted out all the poetry and novels about each place, and drew out a sketch of its history, marking where the local history of the town dovetailed into larger European interests, and specially where it touched England—I think, after this, you would enjoy meeting any one from Italy almost as much as if you had been there, and you would not feel you had read up for nothing. I should take a fresh country every year, and make believe that you were going to it next summer, and that you were getting ready to be ‘Eyes,’ and not ‘No Eyes,’ while there. You would have got the spirit of the country by this, far more than ninety-nine out of a hundred of those who go to it in the flesh. You are leaving school at eighteen, and by the time you are five and twenty, *i.e.* before you are fully grown up, you might have thus visited Italy, France, Germany, Spain, America, India, which would make you a fairly cultivated person.”

“But it is so hard to get books; I can read Ruskin while I am with you, and when I am with Uncle Charles I could find some of the others I should want, but I can’t get hold of a course of reading at home.”

“But if you have such a large peg as Italy on which to hang your reading, you can always find something which bears on it—you can borrow an odd book here and there, or pick up bits in a stray magazine; several of the books you would want are cheap to buy, and, if you keep a list of them, you will be surprised to find from what odd quarters they turn up. People have a way of saying, ‘Oh, do recommend me a



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book,' as if all subjects were equally interesting, or rather uninteresting, and they borrow the first that comes, reading it as a duty, quite regardless of the fact that it does not belong to anything they have read before, or will read after; but if they had made up their mind on a subject, the lending friend would take far more interest, and probably hunt up something that bore on the subject, while the reader would be more likely to get good."

"But if I begin Ruskin here, and then go home, where I may perhaps find an Italian history, and then go for another visit and find something else, it will all be so disjointed."

"Yes, it would be nicer if you could go on with art or architecture; but your reading will not be so desultory as to be useless, if it is all strung on the one thread of Italy, and then you can group it, as you go along, in a commonplace book. I should take a large one, and divide it among the towns I wanted to see, and then subdivide the pages given to, e.g. Florence, under the heads of art, history, famous men, architecture, poetry, novels, and, as I read anything on these subjects, I should jot down the substance of it under the right heading, or if it was a poem, just give the title and one or two of the best lines. And you could keep up your French and German at the same time—suppose you read *Corinne* and the *Improvisator*, they would both help to keep you in an Italian atmosphere."

"Yes, I could keep up my reading, but how about the grammar?"

"I should recommend you to take a very conversational novel and turn a page of it into both French and German every week; this would keep up all the rules of grammar, and, though you might make mistakes, you would gain fluency in expressing yourself, which is much more needed than grammatical accuracy if you go abroad, for a course of lessons will set you right about the grammar at any time, but would not make you talk, if you had allowed yourself to get tongue-tied by not practising translation from English into French; and I should advise you to translate very freely, and use the dictionary as little as possible; if you cannot remember the exact rendering, twist the sentence and paraphrase it, till you can manage it, simply to learn to express your thoughts easily. I should say an hour a week of this would keep up both French and German."

"But you have said nothing of English History and Literature."

"I should be inclined to drop English History for the first year, because you know so much more of that than of Foreign and Ancient History, but if you like it I should take some one prominent reign—Elizabeth or Charles I., or Anne or George III., and get to know all the chief people, read their memoirs, and what they themselves wrote, so as to feel among friends whenever you hear a name of that period mentioned—and read all essays, etc. that you can find upon it. To keep your mind generally open, I should



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make a chart of contemporary history and another of literature, taking one century a month, and leaving plenty of space for adding things afterwards. In Literature, I should take one of the Men of Letters every month, or one of the Foreign Classics, and at the same time read any of the man's own works that I could. Modern poets and novelists and essayists I should read at odd times, *specially making it a matter of conscience never to open a novel before luncheon!* I should read my poets not only promiscuously, as the fancy took me, but compare their treatment of different subjects; e.g., you might make yourself a private New Year's Eve service, of all the poems on it you can find—Coleridge, Tennyson, and Elia's prose poem on the same subject. Or you could make a Shepherd's Calendar for yourself, and copy out under each month what poets have said about it, and its flowers and features generally: or a Poet's Garden; collect all the bits about flowers, and make a 'Poet's Corner' in your garden, admitting no flower that cannot bring some poetry as its credential. It will make country life far more enjoyable if you know your poets as Thomas Holbrook, in 'Cranford,' knew Tennyson."

"I should like all that, Aunt Rachel; but you have not said anything that sounds like stiff reading yet."

"No; and you ought to have something that will tax all your powers, as well as this general cultivation, which will be all pleasant. I should take some really stiff book, on Logic or Political Economy, or Butler's 'Analogy,' and after each morning's work make a careful analysis of the argument, leaving one side of your MS. book blank, that you may put in afterwards any illustrations or criticisms of your own, or others, that may occur to you in the future. I should always keep a stiff book in hand and treat it so, even if all other regularity and plan in my reading fell through—it would be a backbone."

"But I shall have so much writing to do if I am to make a commonplace book on each subject."

"It will make you slower, but much surer. I know a girl who writes a review of every book she reads, giving extracts, and an abstract of the argument and her own opinion of it. She finds it most useful, both as practice in expressing her thoughts and for reference afterwards."

"But it would take so long."

"You would be well repaid, and you would not read any books in your time for study which were not worth taking trouble with. In reading a book, I should put a mark to everything that struck me, and at the end of a chapter should look over the marked bits, and put a second mark to those parts that seemed specially important, after I had mastered the drift of the chapter. It would then be easy, when you had finished the book, to write a review, for you would only look at the doubly marked bits."



“And am I to do no science?”

“I should vary your science with your opportunities, because you have no strong turn for any one in particular. When you go to town in the winter for that long visit you should get some cooking lessons, and before you go you should get the books recommended by the South Kensington Cookery School, and study the bookwork on the subject. When you go away in the summer, you should take up geology, or botany, or whatever suits the place you go to.”



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“But I shall only have smatterings of things at this rate!”

“Smatterings are very good things in their way, so long as you are not misled into thinking them more than they are! They are the keys which will enable you, in the future, to follow up the subject for which you may have any special opportunities. They also prevent your being quite a dumb note anywhere,—it is something to be able to listen intelligently! Besides, if your mind is open on all sides, you will never find any one dull, for you are almost certain to be able to gain information on some one of the subjects you are interested in.”

“I don’t see how I can get all these things in, Aunt Rachel, for I shan’t have much time.”

“I think you might manage two hours a day, and I should divide the week thus: Monday and Friday I should give to Italy or any subject which you meant to take as the staple of your reading; Tuesday take a science, and Wednesday English literature; Thursday take a stiff book and half an hour of French; Saturday take ancient history or mythology and half an hour of German. I should write an essay every week at odd moments, if I were you, for you ought to think things out for yourself as well as filling your mind with other people’s thoughts by reading, but you could work out your essay in your head while walking or waiting for any one. I should also advise you to make a list of every book you read after leaving school; you will find it very interesting in after years, especially if you put a short criticism on each.”[2]

“But surely I had better do more than one subject in a day? I should get tired of reading one book for two hours.”

“You might vary your treatment of the subject. For instance, take notes of the History of Italy for one hour, and look out descriptions of pictures for another. In literature you could read about your author for one hour, and read his works for the next. In your science, give half the time to book-work, and the rest to practical work.”

“But would it not be a more thorough change to go to a new subject?”

“So it would, but you may not be able to fit in two hours’ reading with your duty to your neighbour! On any day that you could honestly be only a half-timer, you are far less likely to get careless, and to despair of regularity, if you get a bit of your day’s subject, than if you have to leave one of your subjects entirely undone.”

Even Aunt Rachel’s good advice came to an end at last, as in course of time did Urith’s visit, and also the Midsummer term, after which she left school with the best possible intentions, and announced them at home with much dignity. But, far from being allowed to carry on her course of study, it became a study with her two small brothers to prevent such morbid fancies from taking effect. They won golden opinions from the servants

those holidays, who said that the young gentlemen had never been so little trouble before. They suddenly became as



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full of “resources within themselves” as Mrs. Elton herself, to the admiration of the whole family, except of the unfortunate Urith, who might have unravelled the mystery, since the cultivation of her domestic virtues by startling and unexpected interruptions of her reading, occupied such of their spare time as was not devoted to the mental exercise of devising new plans for her discomfiture on the morrow.

But, happily for Urith, holidays are terminable, and when the boys left she hoped to do great things. But visitors came to stay in the house, special friends of her own, with strong theories as to the value of co-operation in the matter of brushing their hair at night.

Midnight conversations did not conduce to work before breakfast or to much energy after it. It was, therefore, with very mingled feelings that Urith welcomed Aunt Rachel, her outside conscience, whose yearly visit was usually an unmixed pleasure to her.

Having written much about her intentions at first starting, she was not surprised when her aunt, on the first evening of her visit, settled herself for a talk, and began—

“How is the reading going on? You were very sensible in saying that you meant to begin at once on leaving school, so as not to get out of the habit of work, and as you have now had three months I suppose you have something to show for it?”

“Well, I thought I should have had, but, you see, the boys wouldn’t let me!”

“I don’t see why you need have drawn the boys’ attention to what you were doing; but since they left—”

“The house has been full!”

“Yes, my dear, but as you generally do have visitors, your reading will never flourish at this rate.”

“Well, I couldn’t neglect them.”

“No; but they don’t require entertaining before breakfast, do they?”

“No; but I was so sleepy.”

“What time did you go to bed?”

“Well, I suppose I ought not to have stayed in Barbara’s room, but Alice had so many stories to tell us of her adventures that I did not leave them till after twelve o’clock.”



“As Alice is by no means tongue-tied in the daytime, her adventures might have kept, and if you went to bed in proper time, you might get half an hour before breakfast. But what do you do after breakfast?”

“Oh, then the flowers want doing, and mamma always wants some notes to be answered, and then it is so fine that we go for a walk, and don't get back till after luncheon, and then visitors come, and I must be there to talk to them; and when it gets cool, people come in for tennis, and as to reading after that, why, one barely gets time to dress for dinner, and in the evening they like me to play to them, and papa wants the paper read to him, and you know, Aunt Rachel, you always said home duties ought to come first, so I don't see when a girl at home is to read!”



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“I quite agree with you about home duties, my dear; but, though many things have changed since my day, home duties must have changed most of all, if they now include chattering till midnight, and taking a two hours’ walk in the morning, on days when you are likely to get three hours’ tennis in the afternoon, and being obliged to play in the last set, so that you cannot even go and dress a quarter of an hour too soon! It seems to me that you might get these home duties done by eleven o’clock, and then get an hour, or an hour and a half, for steady reading, or, if not so much as that, still visitors do not come directly after luncheon: in fact, I noticed that you got through two volumes of that new novel before any one came. Now, that time would have done equally well for history, and even when the boys are at home, their suspicions would not be much aroused if you went to wash your hands for luncheon a quarter of an hour too soon, and the same in the evening before dinner.”

“Yes, Aunt Rachel, it all seems very easy when I talk to you, and I feel now as if I should carry out all you say, but I know a hundred little things will come to make it very hard. I wish it were easier to carry out one’s good intentions.”

“I do not wish it for you, my dear; you will be worth ten times more if you have to exert strength of character, than if everything is done for you; we ought to feel a little insulted if Fortune lets us live on too easy terms, though I cannot say, after all, that you have very hard ones. There now! I have given you quite enough advice to start several girls in life. I will only add this: do not get flurried over your work, or insist on doing it when time and strength will not permit; and, on the other hand, do not be self-indulgent!”

“Like as a star
That maketh not haste,
That taketh not rest,
Be each one pursuing
His God-given hest.”

[Footnote 2: See “Record of a Year’s Reading.” 6_d_. Mowbray.]

“Get up, M. le Comte!”

You have all been considering what qualities are most necessary in family life and what qualities are most to be deprecated—you have, in short, been considering Dr. Johnson’s question as to what makes “a clubbable person.” I find, on comparing your suggestions, that there are thirty-eight things to avoid in home life (which suggests complexity); however, each of you was to confine her attention to three virtues and three failings, so in giving you my own likes and dislikes, I will not dwell on more than three.

I will not take manifest faults like irritability or selfishness—we all strive against those, but I would suggest turns of mind that are often not realized as faults:—



I.—*The Benevolent Despot* who takes infinite trouble for your help or pleasure, but insists on your enjoying yourself in *her* way. (The young very often do this to the old or to the invalid, quite forgetting that one's own way loses none of its charm, even in age or illness!)



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II.—Then there is the *Peter Grievous* who cannot stand a word of reproof; she is aggrieved or huffy or sulky in a minute—she thinks that she has a delicate sense of justice, and that she does well to be angry; she feels as if her mother took a curious and selfish enjoyment in finding fault with her,—whereas the poor mother has to take her courage in both hands before saying anything calculated to bring on those black looks.

III.—And then there is *The Snail*, always slow, generally late, and frequently a martyr—she has to be spoken to so often that her case usually develops into the Peter Grievous disease as well. For if a mother speaks, let us say, six times—in the daughter's mind it ceases to be reproof, and becomes Nagging. It never occurs to the daughter that she sinned six times (or even shall we say eight or ten?); she feels that she is being nagged at, and may therefore cease to attend, and may enjoy a grievance into the bargain!

Now, I have slow friends who really suffer from a sense of their failing, and who realize acutely what they make others suffer; they were not trained at first to pull themselves together and to collect beforehand any materials they were likely to want (as you can train yourselves by settling in properly to do your preparation)—and they did not teach themselves to start five minutes sooner instead of leaving things to the last moment. (They think that the consequent family thundercloud is their sad fate from their being of a slow constitution.) But if you have only one horse and your neighbour two, and you are to dine at the same house, it only means that you must order yours earlier. Do not start together and then bewail your sad fate; nothing condemns you to be late except your own bad management.

Especially be careful to be up early when you are going to early service with your mother; it fidgets her to wait—she recalls all your many previous sins of the same kind—and just when you both want to feel *at one*, you start off together (rather, I should say, you overtake her), both feeling very much *at two*. And yet you made an effort to go! and you feel she ought to be pleased with you—do not spoil it by that fly in the ointment of being late.

* * * * *

It seems to me that the Benevolent Despot, the Peter Grievous, and the Martyred Snail, are people to avoid in choosing your family!

Now, the people to choose for your family party are, first, *the Reliable Person*. I know one person who is a perfect tower of strength, she is full of common sense: if you give her a commission she is sure to get the right thing and to do it reasonably; she knows exactly what she paid, and she tells you! If she undertakes to do a thing it is certain to be done in good time; she does not wait till the very day the thing is wanted and then find that it cannot be got.



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Now, *you* often let yourselves do a stupid thing, or a forgetful thing, and then say, "Oh, I'm so sorry!" and feel as if you had wiped it out. Not at all! You have lost one chance of growing into a reliable woman. In all your life you will only have a certain limited number of chances, and should use every one you have—to be reliable is worth all the genius in the world for comfort to others, and *you can each win this crown* if you care to do so.

One other person I would choose if I were fated to have sisters, would be the one who purrs when she is pleased. It takes all the colour and air out of life when people gaze impassively at beautiful things, or hear lovely things and never seem to have taken them in; or meet kindness and look as if it was not there. You do not need to gush, but *do purr!*

And thirdly I want a magnanimous nature;—one that takes slights and neglects in a large-minded way, and does not believe people meant them and, if they *did*, does not fret: one who is serene when little things go wrong, and does not fuss or worry: one who accepts generously as well as gives generously, and who is keenly alive to people's good points and good intentions. Little petty motives and small spites and jealousy die away in the light of a nature like that. It keeps the family atmosphere sweet and wholesome.

* * * * *

Now, my lessons are generally about the things that can be carried out at home, or else about the beliefs that underlie them. You know that my ambition for you is that you should go out into the world and lead the ordinary small social life, but that you should live it in a great way and bring great beliefs to bear on it.

This is a special lesson—the last of all to some of you—the last in this year to all of you.

How long have you been at school, each of you? How many times have we come together here, and thought over together, point after point, the things that really matter to us?

Week after week we are reminded by these talks to pull ourselves together, first in one way, then in another, and I do believe we have all tried.

Have the suggestions *I* made and the Resolutions *we* made, soaked into our lives and altered the stuff of which we are made? That is the Responsibility for *me* who speak and for *you* who hear: "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

A Bible lesson written for you and dwelling on your special life and dangers is a more pointed reminder to you than a general sermon, and when you leave you will not get



these reminders: one is hardly ever spoken to religiously after being grown up. It is no one's business afterwards (as it is mine now) to speak to you.

Therefore I want you always to keep some religious book on hand that is likely to *speak* to *you*. For instance, Bishop Wilkinson's books speak, so do Dean Paget's and Law's "Serious Call," and "Christian Perfection." Read a little of such a book every day, and a longer bit on Sunday. If you only say your prayers and go to church, it is apt to become an outside thing; you want stirring up!



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When you go out into the world you may drift into the ways of each household you are with for the time being; whereas I want you to have your own definite religious life, an inner life of rules and duties: dress like other people, but keep a hair shirt underneath, as the Saints did.

And when I talk about this and that piece of advice (advice which is often worldly wisdom; for goodness and worldly wisdom are closely allied),—always remember that I pre-suppose the life of prayer and rule about which I so often speak—only *there* can you gain strength to follow such advice.

But now (pre-supposing the inner religious life—the effort after the Practice of the Presence of God)—what shall I pick out as practical advice for a closing lesson to those who are going into the world?

I.—Always *vote on the right side* in conversation.

Very often the lower side, or the *unreligious* side in talk (or in doings, such as not going to Church) is the easier side to take. It seems obtrusive to show what you feel to be right; and very often the one who takes the religious side is narrow-minded and tiresome compared to the others. Goodness is very often tiresome, and non-religion broad-minded and amusing. (Gallio is often a most attractive person!) It takes courage then to side with the tiresome one, instead of saying something rather clever. In youth one has a great horror of belonging to the tiresome side. Cleverness counts for so much, and it is hard in early life to put goodness first! One does not realize the beauty of the strength and principle shown by the tiresome people, and it takes real principle to show one's colours in ordinary talk.

I once heard of an earnest religious girl who was asked to a pleasant country house, and who thought she might lawfully take a holiday, as it were, and be like other people while away from home; so she laughed and talked with the rest and kept her real life to herself. On the last night, a girl she had taken a fancy to came into her room, and, after a little time, said, "It has been so nice meeting you, but I rather wish your sister had come too." "But I have no sister." "Why, I have heard so much of her, and of how good she is, and though you wouldn't think it, I have been bothered about things lately, and when I heard your name, I thought it was she who was coming here, and I planned to have a talk with her:—you're awfully nice, but of course one wouldn't talk about those things to you any more than to any of the rest of us."

I leave you to fancy the resolutions that girl made, to show her colours for the future!

And then it does not seem to matter—no *harm* is being said or done, Gallio is generally an excellent person, and really "So-and-so" was unnecessarily tiresome in raising the point; and then, again, one's indolence bids one be quiet and vote neither way.



But every vote on the right side counts; it alters the balance of the general feeling, and probably helps some one looking on,—some one who never let out that they needed or cared for any help. “Right!” has a big battle to fight, and you and I are soldiers, and must stand to our guns.



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Have the courage to show that you like goodness. It makes a difference, for no one ever tells an unkind story to a large-hearted woman, or a nasty story to a nice-minded woman.

If they tell either to you, it means an intuitive perception that you enjoy it,—you bring out that side of them; if there is no response in you, that side of them goes to sleep while they are with you. You create your world in your own image, and are responsible for what is said to you, as well as for what you say.

II.—My second advice is: *Show your mother that you love her.* “In one’s whole life one can never have more than a single mother. You may think this obvious.... You are a green gosling! I was at the same age as wise as you, and yet never discovered this till it was too late.”[3]

Your mother will plan for you to go out and enjoy yourselves, and she probably will not say that she is left alone by this or that arrangement; but *you* must think for her and protest against it, and see that she gets amusement, and is talked to.

I know girls who will leave their mother alone night after night, or sit at home and never utter a word. *They* do not think of it, and *she* feels left out. Even if she makes you go out, she will like your noticing and thinking for her. I believe each daughter fails to realize in her own case how much her mother values signs of the love which both know to be there.

You may say, “My mother does not like a fuss!”—Very likely. But there are ways and ways.—I do not believe any older person is ever anything but pleased when their little pleasures are seen to be a matter of real consideration to a younger one. I have watched so many mothers now that I see it, but I myself used to let my affection be taken for granted. I see now how much more pleasure I might have given, and I would give anything if *you* would do what they say is impossible—*i.e.* profit by some one else’s experience, and try to show your affection for your mother. She is the only person to whom it is safe to fully express your affection. If you feel strongly for any one else, expressing it is apt to lead you to be silly, or sentimental, or wanting in self-control, but little loving ways with your mother are quite different—they are always comforting to her and good for you. Every one of an older generation is apt to feel that the younger one does not want them; therefore express your affection doubly to an elder compared to what is necessary or right, or wise to an equal, *because by nature the elder does not quite believe in it!*

I dare say you are nevertheless thinking as I used to do. “One’s mother is quite different—*she* knows I love her best.” In a way that is true, but all I have said is true too!

III.—My third advice is: *Put some salt into every day*—the salt of effort and self-denial. Go on with a book though it bores you. Go out for a walk though you feel lazy. Finish



some drawing or needlework, which you would rather leave to begin something else. Make yourself do something which you do not like, and which is useful.



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And I say to all of you, not only to the leaving ones: Do not lounge through the day just because it is holidays. You are not a little child who has to be made to do things: you are a sensible, reasonable being, who wants to grow. You do not leave off eating for a month, you do not leave off growing for a month; then do not leave off growing in other ways. Do not be *worthless* at any time.

Some of you seem to think you will not have to give account of holidays to God—I think you will be more called to account for them, for then you have a chance of showing your real stuff.

And when you are grown up, and quite free, feel that you are still more responsible.

Enjoy yourself to the top of your bent, but see that each day you gain new power to do what you ought, and what you make up your mind to do; and remember that this power is only gained in the using—and dies out if we do not use it. I shall be horribly disappointed if you do not gain this power, and if you do not use it well, “to the Glory of God and the Relief of Man’s Estate.”

Be ambitious—be all you were meant to be; make the world different; be generous—freely you have received, freely give.

Some one said to me the other day, “Girls are younger nowadays, and they go on being young till they are well through middle life. At sixteen we had to look after other people, but they shirk responsibility, till women of thirty are content to be like birds of the air, just amusing themselves, and feeling no call to be of any serious use.”

I said, “Well, I do not like to see even a girl of eighteen with no *raison d’etre*, ‘living like a prize animal!’”

Why were you born? God thought about you, and took trouble about you, and has something you can do for Him. To exist beautifully is not enough! Have you definite duties, which you stick to even though they bore you, *e.g.*, house duties, or reading aloud, or lessons with the younger ones? If not, find some!

Marcus Aurelius counted each day lost in which he could not at night look back on something he had done for others.

Jeremy Taylor, in the “Golden Grove,” says:—“Suppose every day to be a day of business: for your whole life is a race and a battle; a merchandise, a journey. Every day propounds to yourself a rosary or chaplet of works, to present to God at night.”

I have given you three pieces of advice—



- I.—Vote on the right side in conversation.
- II.—Show that you love your mother.
- III.—Put salt into every day.

I would end with one more. I take it from Saint Simon, that clever on-looker at the Court of Louis XIV. whose memoirs are famous. His morning greeting to himself was—

"Get up, M. le Comte! you have great things to do to-day."

You will all of you go out to lives that you *can* make empty and self-indulgent and narrow if you like; you *can* shirk duties and eat capriciously or intemperately, and lie in bed too long; you *can* idle about all day amusing yourself, and fill your mind with dress and gossip and spite;—perhaps you would feel there was “no harm” in such a life!



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No harm! I would rather hear you were dead than that you lived a life like that!

On the other hand, every day of your life you *can* make the wings of your soul grow by an honest bit of self-denial, by an honest bit of work for others, by an honest bit of mental work.

Every day you can be *more worth having*; there is not one of you here who has not the power to make herself—and to *pray* herself—into a noble, dutiful woman.

"Get up, M. le Comte! you have great things to do to-day."

[Footnote 3: Gray's Letters to W. Mann.]

A Friday Lesson.

Our course of lessons for this term brings us to-day to Jephthah's story; to decide on the amount of blame due to the father is not a matter which so nearly concerns us as to learn the lesson of true womanhood taught us by the daughter. Hers was no blind obedience; her reason for sacrificing herself gives us the true position of a woman as a helpmeet, and as a helpmeet in the performance of public duty. "If thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord"—her father must do his duty at all costs, and she will help him to do it, even at the cost of her own life. The place of every woman is to make duty possible and imperative for those about her—for brother, sister, husband, friend. How many women keep their menkind back from public duty by their fretfulness about the inconveniences entailed on themselves? A clergyman or doctor has to face fatigue or infection,—a citizen wishes to vote according to his conscience and against his interest: how often a woman—wife, sister, or mother—puts expediency before him, persuades him that "'second best' will do," instead of aiming at "one equal temper of heroic hearts."

Besides the love of her country and the sense of public duty, which shine out in Jephthah's daughter, notice the plain lesson of simple obedience, "That she subdued her to her Father's will."

The ideal of obedience is less thought of now than in the "Ages of Faith,"—perhaps, in one way, this is only a right development; but, though obedience is a "young" stage of moral growth, it is a necessary one,—mankind went through it, and each man or woman worth the name must go through it even as our Lord Himself did. I recognize the strength, the North-country virtue of "grit" in such independence and sturdiness as that of the Yorkes in "Shirley," but the willing and reasonable obedience of a strong nature seems to me still higher—it is a nobler attitude of mind to feel, "I don't care whether I get my own way in this or that, or am my own master; I want to be in touch with the larger, higher life around me," that larger life of moral growth into which only a humble, teachable nature can enter. The larger, stronger nature—the big dog—yields gladly to

its master; the small terrier nature loves to find an opportunity to yap and snarl. There is nothing fine about the unreasoning instinct to resent an order—it



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is rather the sign of a small nature. To take the commonest instances, when you are told to go to bed, or to mend your dress, or to put on a wrap, or to tidy your room, are you in any way a finer nature if you dawdle and argue and resent the order? Nothing is so small as self-sufficiency and self-centredness, whereas humility and obedience are of the Nature of our Lord Himself, and every humble and obedient soul is in communion with His Greatness. Dante's hierarchy of heaven, "in order serviceable," in ordered ranks, culminating in God Himself, gives us a feeling of harmonious greatness which is lacking in the scattered units of his "Inferno." It was only ignoble greatness which preferred to reign in Hell rather than serve in Heaven.

It may be that, in the maturer stages of life, obedience ceases to be a primary virtue. I am not at all clear when that mature stage begins,—but all would admit, in theory, that a noble character must have obedience as a foundation. I think it would help you if you could step outside your own momentary irritation at being ordered to do this or that, and see how unlovely it is to argue and stand on your rights and contest points. The essence of good breeding is to give way to others; quite apart from the consideration of the "Fifth Commandment," a thorough-bred person would shudder at the rude tone of voice, the snappishness, the contentiousness, the contradiction which many girls—otherwise "nice" girls—allow themselves to show in speaking to their mothers. How many of you feel quite guiltless on this score? I am afraid you would often have to blush if a stranger, to whom you looked up, could hear the way you answer back at home.

You half feel as though it were "fine" not to be ordered about;—but the "best" people in the Christian sense of the word, and the "best" people in the worldly sense, inherit the feelings of the ages of chivalry, that, the nobler a man was, the more deference and service he showed to others: "*Ich dien*" is the motto of chivalry and worldly greatness.—"I am among you as he that serveth" was the saying of Him Who, "though He were a Son," "learnt obedience." For this next week, when you are tempted to answer back—to be independent—to resent being ordered—remember how much more beautiful, how much more noble, is a humble submissive temper, than the miserably small ambition of being your own master. Do not be so small-minded as to contest and resent authority. You sometimes hear a servant say, "That's not my place," or "I won't be put upon." You never hear a true lady speak in that temper,—and yet, is there any difference in spirit between this tone which you would condemn, and your own way of answering back? You cannot get out of bad habits all at once, but get your ideal right, and you will grow to it. If you are not living in your own family, and feel inclined to resent orders, remember the days of chivalry, when all pages (often princes by birth) spent their youth serving in other people's houses, and learning the motto of every true knight, "I serve."



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And whether with strangers or at home, remember Him Who was subject unto His parents, Him of Whom Jephthah's daughter was but a faint type.

A Home Art; or, Mothers and Daughters.

Know your own work, and do it.

This is a simple sounding rule, but we all find practical difficulties in following it. You have most of you lately left school, and I think the difficulty of the first part of this saying must have struck some of you. At school you knew your own work,—you had a certain time-table, you walked with the crutches of routine; and when you left school and found your day mostly at your own disposal, you learnt that a free life is far more difficult, and therefore far nobler, than a life under direction.

It was pleasant at first to be able to carry out your own fancies, but you awoke after a while to the fact that you were not spending holidays but living your real life; and then the thought must have come, if you had any stuff in you, "I must anyhow live my life; am I living it nobly?"

How can you live a noble life? Bacon gives us, perhaps, the best answer when he says that "the end of all learning should be the Glory of God and the Relief of Man's Estate." Shall this be the result of your school learning? Others can speak to you from experience, as I cannot, of the glory and happiness of a life spent in the Relief of Man's Estate: I would speak to you of a preliminary stage of work for that relief, of some of the difficulties which beset girls on first leaving school, and owing to which so much noble aspiration and unselfish enthusiasm run to waste.

I believe one of the main difficulties is *friction at home*; a difficulty on which I the rather dwell because it is harder, for those who know you personally, to speak of it without irritating you, or else criticizing your home. How is this home difficulty met? Some meet it by leaving home,—which reminds me of the minister who said in his sermon, "This is a serious difficulty in our belief, my brethren; let us look it boldly in the face,—and pass it by." Some lay themselves open to *Punch's* attack, when he depicts a girl saying, "Mamma has become quite blind now, and papa is paralytic, and it makes the house so dull that I'm going to be a hospital nurse."

Many who are too clear-sighted to neglect home duties, yet leave this difficulty unfaced, in that they look for all the pleasure of their life outside home, and within that home allow themselves to live in an atmosphere of friction and peevishness. The girl who does that has left the riddle of home life unsolved: she was meant to wrestle with that difficulty till she wrung from it the blessing, the peace which comes only from self-conquest and acceptance of all the circumstances of her life.



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Have any of you the lurking thought, "I was born by no choice of my own: those who brought me into the world owe duty to me, not I to them?" I have known some say this, and I have known many act as if they thought it, and I have known some who felt as if God had better work for them to do outside home, and have either gone off to do it, or have chafed against life because they could not go. It does seem to me that the present very general eclipse of the old Roman virtue of filial piety lies at the root of much of the unsound work, and of the undone work, of the present day.

Know your own work, and do it. What is your work on leaving school? Is it not to learn to fit into your home? At school, when you got your remove, your duty was to get into the work of the new form, and to do it. You have now been moved to higher and far more difficult work than any sixth form, you are in the school of home. Are you learning its lessons, or are you fretting for a remove? It may be you find life so easy and pleasant at home that you feel any talk of its difficulties does not apply to you; it is all play so far. But I know so many who feel this friction on leaving school, that I am sure it must be the case with some of you.

If any here fail to feel the debt they owe at home—the debt which God enforced as next to the debt owed to Himself—let me remind them that the whole instinct of mankind has responded to the appeal of parents; filial piety has always been revered and held beautiful, and the hereditary sense of mankind must be taken into account in deciding what is, or is not, a virtue. But supposing I granted, for the sake of argument, that the original debt was on your parents' side and not on yours, what then? You remain as bound as ever to show them submission and devotion; all, in short, that the old-fashioned believers in the Fifth Commandment thought to be due from a daughter. If you are striving after a noble life you must give all this,—if you owe allegiance to either the Christian ideal of love or to the Pagan one of strength. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?" and, equally, if he love not his brother close at hand, how can he love brethren afar off? It is a poor sort of love which lavishes itself on self-chosen and, therefore, less irritating objects of charity, and is powerless to influence the home atmosphere. It is a poor sort of strength which shrinks from the hardest fight, from the conquest of self at home.

Is not every right and wise piece of good work for others an attempt to help them to train themselves to live a higher life? And can we dare to put our hand to this plough while neglecting our own training?

I was asked to speak to you about WORK, and you may think I am forgetting this in dwelling on home life. Not at all; I am looking on home life not as an end in itself, but as God's great training-school for His best workers; as the special place for the development of those qualities which are essential to all true and lasting work for "the Relief of Man's Estate."



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I do not think I underrate the difficulties girls find; quite apart from her own faults and weaknesses, a girl who leaves school and goes home has probably three difficulties to contend with.

First, the change from restraint to liberty, which is a difficult phase in every life. Will you make it a change from “the rich bounties of constraint” to self-restraint, which is better still; or will you let it be a change to the weak lawlessness of a drifting life? If you would respect yourselves, and be worthy to take part in the great battle between good and evil, make and keep some rules for yourselves. Have a rule about getting up in the morning and (almost equally important) about going to bed at night; a rule against novels in the morning; a rule to read something sensible every day. Make what rule you please, only keep it, or you will never be more than a cumberer of the ground. Reading is the best thing to save your life from being eaten away by trifles. The best advisers say to a man taking a country living, “Read, read, read;” I say to you, read doggedly; the snare of a free life is desultory reading. Make any plan of stiff reading you like, and stick to it for one year, writing out notes of what you read, and you will be fitter for real work if it comes, as come it will.

I dare say you find reading is cold work,—very few women really enjoy knowledge for its own sake,—you are tempted to throw it up, and to drift in an easy good-tempered way, which pleases the others much more than your shutting yourself up to read. And the others are quite right in expecting you, now school is over, to be a woman, “with a heart at leisure from itself” and from self-improvement. One of the hardest home lessons for some girls to learn is the power of sitting idle and chatting. They feel it waste of time; they long to be doing something tangible; and yet a home atmosphere is mainly the result of the mother having acquired the art of leisure. You will be very unrestful house-mothers when your turn comes, and very unsatisfactory daughters and sisters in the mean time, if you are always at high pressure, and giving your family to understand that you must not be spoken to!

Too often the girl, who by dint of conscientious struggles keeps up real study, gets out of touch with her surroundings, and sees the stream of family confidences, and affections, and appeals for help and sympathy flowing towards the easy-going sister, who makes no struggles of any kind. Your great wish is to be a true woman, “with continual comfort in her face.” Are your books, and your self-discipline, and your time-table, only a hindrance to this? Must you starve either head or heart? Why cannot you seem outwardly at leisure, and yet live an inner life of thought and work? It needs self-denial, forethought, economy of time, and that most Christian grace of tact; but these are all attainable, all part of that Wisdom which “orders all things sweetly and strongly,” and which is the rightful heritage of every true woman. Let no delusion about amiability induce you to leave off reading and study, only be very discreet as to how and when you do it.



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Let your time-table be a secret hair shirt, and not a red rag flaunted in your family's face. But never give up reading and thinking, the keeping in touch with abstract ideas. As long as you are young you can get on without this, but, when the charm of youth deserts you, you will find life (and others will find *you*) a blessing or a curse, according as you have developed or starved your powers of mind. It may be that you find little pleasure in your steady reading, and see no immediate results from it; never mind, read on, lest you become in middle life one of those amiable, empty-headed women who can give neither help, nor comfort, nor advice, worth the taking. How many old maids, and young maids too, tied by home duties, allowed their minds to get thin and empty: when, at last, they were set free they were silly and inconsequent; no work requiring thought and insight could be entrusted to them.

The second difficulty which is felt by many comes from the new lights of the day. At school, girls come in contact with varied ideals and inspirations,—they drink new wine, and they go home to find that old bottles are still used there. Very often this difficulty is greater in proportion as a girl has rightly profited by school—in proportion as she has been teachable and ready to assimilate good; she goes home with new aspirations to be met by old prejudices—prejudices intensified by half-loving jealousy of the alien influences of school. Are you to shut your eyes to the new lights, and be as though you had never known them? No, but do not keep one Commandment by breaking another. The First Commandment is supreme, Thou shall have none other gods but Him Who is the Truth; Truth must be obeyed at all costs, but if your truth-seeking breaks the Fifth Commandment, it probably breaks the Second also, and the principle you are obeying will turn out to be a graven image of God, and not the voice of God Himself. Very grave doubt rests on any form of goodness which is in opposition to your mother; it may be good for others, but can scarcely be so for you. I know of a girl who got under High Church influence at school, and who, in pursuit of spiritual good, gets surreptitious High Church books and newspapers, under cover to a friend. Another got under Low Church influence, and refuses to please her mother by dressing prettily or going out. It seems to me that both girls read their lesson backwards and neglect the weightier matters of the law, truth, and obedience,—while they seek what is good in itself but not good for them. Others persist in going to a church their mother disapproves of,—they say they can get good at a musical church, and only irritation and harm by going with her. I feel heartily for the trial of going to a church they dislike, but surely conquering self or pleasing a mother is good in itself, quite apart from the help given by the service; while, as to the good derived from the musical church under those circumstances, I doubt much if it comes down from the Father Who gave us the Fifth Commandment.



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I should say, mistrust new lights which are a hindrance to old duties, "For meek obedience too is Light." It is more likely that we should be mistaken, than that a duty should cease to be binding. Let us take to heart Cromwell's appeal to his Parliament, "I beseech you, my beloved brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of Christ, to believe that you may be mistaken."

The third difficulty is that girls often fail to see that home life is one of the "Home Arts," which requires training and practice as much as music does. How much of our home life is set to music? How much of it sets all harmony and rhythm at defiance? A true woman is

"Like the keystone to an arch
That consummates all beauty:
She's like the music to a march
That sheds a joy on duty."

Do you make your father forget his bothers when he comes in from his business? Do you give your mother a share in your interests? Does your brother look forward to his time at home, instead of thinking it a bore? No one has such power over your brothers as you have: you can do more than any one to give them high ideals: how many a brother, who has fallen to the stable-yard level of company, might have been held up if his sister had used her wits and tact to make herself as agreeable to him as she does to other people!

Sometimes it is not selfishness which makes home life a failure, but the not having

"among least things,
An undersense of greatest."

A girl tries to live nobly at home and fails: she is not enough wanted, her mother is not blind, and does not want to be deposed from housekeeping; her father is not paralytic, and only wants her to play to him in the evening; life seems choked by tiny interruptions, such as doing the flowers, or writing notes, and she sinks into a placid or unplacid drudge—the aspirations with which she left school have died out.

Need this be? If she went into a sisterhood or a hospital, the tiny details would all be glorified by the halo which surrounds a vocation; it would all be part of a saintly life. Why is home not felt to be a vocation? Why cannot a girl welcome some tiresome commission or fidgeting rule of her mother's, as much as if it were imposed by some Mother Superior? Ought not the trifling duties to be fuel to her burning desire for her nobleness of life, instead of dust to choke it? You can make them which you will.

Girls often say, "I have nothing to do, worth doing, at home; I want to go and do some real work;" and they sometimes have the face to say this, while they are still as full of

faults as when they left school, and when every hour of the day, at home, brings with it an opportunity of conquering some fault.



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Are you ready for real work? Can you take criticism or contradiction with a perfectly unruffled face and voice? Do you overcome your hindrances to usefulness at home, e.g. do you improve your handwriting so that your mother need not be ashamed to let you write for her? Do you help her tactfully and consentingly—the only help which rests people—or do you argue each point, so that it is far less trouble to do the thing twice over than to ask you? Are you prompt and alert in your movements, or do you indulge in that exasperating slowness, which some girls seem to consider quite a charm? Do you wait till the last minute, and then leisurely put on your things, with serene unconsciousness of the fret it is to every one's temper? If you want to see how unthoroughbred such a habit looks, read "Shirley," and study the character of Mr. Donne, the curate, who flatters himself that he enhances his importance by keeping the others waiting while he complacently finishes his tea.

Do you lay down the law. Do you allow yourself the tone of positive, almost dictatorial, assertion, which, coming from a girl, so sets an old-fashioned person's teeth on edge; or do you try to speak in the tentative, suggestive, inquiring tone, which is not only required by good manners, but is also a real help to humility of mind?

Do not say that these things are too simple and obvious to bear on your future work for the Relief of Man's Estate,—on Work with a big W. They are of the very essence of the formation of character, and your Work for others stands or falls by that.

The sanctifying influence of home-life lies mainly in its necessity, its obviousness,—in the fact of our remaining unprofitable servants after we have done our best. It is the school in which we are placed by God; we are *bound* to learn its lessons, and do its duties: there is no halo of self-sacrifice around it—the position rightly viewed gives us no choice. "I must,"—*there* is the sting, the irksomeness to us. We can submit cheerfully to our self-chosen Pope, and seem most sweet-tempered in bearing criticism and in doing tiresome duties,—the "I must" is not there. This wilful obedience is worth just nothing as discipline of character, compared with obedience to our lawful authorities; "Ay, there's the rub!"

Is not this very necessity in home life—this "I must"—just the thing which makes it akin to our Lord's life? Is there not in that Holiest Life a continual undercurrent of "I must"? His earthly life was a course of obedience, not a succession of self-willed efforts; its keynote was, "Wist ye not that I *must* be about My Father's business?"

Esprit de Corps.

While I was away, I was present at a discussion on *Esprit de Corps*, and whether it was a good thing in girls' schools. What is *esprit de corps*?—The feeling that we are one of a large body of which we are proud. A soldier has it when he is proud of his regiment and is proud of belonging to it.



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Now, is it good or bad for girls to have a strong feeling of this kind for their school? Many opinions were expressed at the meeting. My opinion is that it is a good thing—a necessary thing. But every virtue has its defect—if you overdo it, you fall into some fault; if you are too amiable, you may fall into being untruthful; and so with *esprit de corps*. I want you to have it, but I want you to be on your guard against some faults connected with it. I want our School to be full of it, but I want it to be of the best kind.

One fault very common in members of any large body is conceit. The feeling of belonging to a fine institution swallows up personal humility. You may be more occupied with the importance and dignity of your position, than ready to take home the idea that you yourself are a very faulty member! Margaret Fuller, a clever American friend of Emerson's, said, "There are so many things in the universe more interesting than my individual faults, that I really cannot stay to dwell on them." There is one form of conceit—or rather of self-satisfaction—to which schoolgirls are liable: they know they are living up to the average standard imposed by public opinion and *esprit de corps*, and they are satisfied with this, instead of trying to live up to their own best self. It is quite possible for any straightforward, honourable girl to live up to the average standard, and it is very comfortable to feel satisfied. But if you are trying to live up to the highest standard you know, you will not be comfortable—you will be always profoundly discontented with yourself, but it will be the Divine discontent Plato speaks of. You will be always failing, but it will be failing nobly—the failure of one who loves the highest, and is content to follow the highest, even though it be afar off. In King Arthur's court, the noblest knights went in search of the Sangreal—scarcely one could succeed in his quest, but it was nobler to aim high and fail than to be content with "low successes." We, too, ought each to follow the quest of the Sangreal, that is, to seek to be perfect, and then there is no room for self-satisfaction, far less conceit.

Sometimes *esprit de corps* not only makes us think a great deal of our own merits, but it also makes us blind to the merits of others. We need only put this into words, to see its smallness, but it often happens. Some people's patriotism seems to consist in despising the French and Germans. No one values true patriotism more than I do, but I detest "insularity"—that insufferable feeling of superiority of which English people are so often guilty. We ought to love our own school, or hall, or college; but it is a poor, low kind of love if it means despising other schools, or halls, or colleges, picking holes in them, refusing to learn from them, and being mere partisans. A soldier would be proud of his own regiment, and think it the finest there was, but he would admire the splendid



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history that other regiments could boast, and he would be glad and proud of the fact that there were so many fine ones. All good schools belong to a splendid brotherhood—a grand army—and they should be proud of each other. We can be just as true and loyal to our own, and yet have wide feelings. *Esprit de corps*—loyalty to our body—is a very splendid thing, and we degrade it when we turn it into mere clannishness; it ought to bring out our love for all that is good, just as love for home ought to make us love outsiders better.

I have spoken of the faults of *esprit de corps*—do not think that means I do not value it. No; a thousand times, no! If we had no *esprit de corps* we should not be a living body, but a dead, stagnant mass, only fit to be swept away. What is true *esprit de corps*? My idea of it is, being content to sink all personal interests—being content to be as he that doth serve—being glad and proud to fill the smallest post, if so be that, by filling that post in the most perfect way, you can help on the perfection of the school to which you belong. I was talking to some one the other day about the community to which she belongs, and where she holds a leading place. “Of course, I would black the shoes,” said she, “if it would help the work in the very least, and so would any one who was worth their salt.” I quite agree with her, and I would not give much for any work in which that was not the feeling of the workers, from the highest to the lowest: that is the only true *esprit de corps*.

Some say women are incapable of such a masculine virtue—that women cannot put their private feelings in their pocket and act in subordination to the good of the whole—that they cannot sink their self-importance and their petty jealousies—that they cannot suppress themselves for a cause. Schools like ours have done a great deal for the mental education of women. I think they will do something more valuable still if they show that through their public education women can learn true public spirit, that school teaches true *esprit de corps*—that it teaches them to seek the beauty of being second, instead of the glory of being first.

In acting or recitations, could you be glad to take a minor part to help on the whole, or would you be huffy and cross-grained because your powers were not brought to the front? In the Wagner music at Baireuth, the singers take the good parts in turn, and the best prima donna, as Kundry in “Parzival,” in one whole act has only one word. Think of the self-suppression needed for one who has such talent, to be content to act in such a piece and to put her full power into the dumb by-play, which is all that she has to do.

Esprit de corps is the virtue above all others which we, as members of this school, should seek to attain, and, in the very nature of things, nothing so entirely kills it as any self-seeking; while if you wish to be worth anything as an individual, remember that nothing is so smallening, so alien to any true greatness—to the most far-off touch of greatness—as the wish to be Number One.



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Esprit de corps, to my mind, means that we all stand shoulder to shoulder, loving our school, helping each other; doing our duty in home and school, and in after-life, more perfectly, because we are proud of our school and mean to be worthy members, so far as in us lies; helping others because “our advantages are trusts for the good of others.” Remember our school motto, “Ad Lucem,” and, because you have been brought nearer to the light, help to be sunshine in all shady places. And while you are at school, have the *esprit de corps* which will make you do everything you can, for the good and credit of the school.

For one thing, be careful to get it a good name outside. “Manners are not idle”—people are quite right when they judge a school, as they largely do, by its manners. If girls are really growing as they should in gentleness, courtesy, reverence for age, and all that makes true womanhood, it must tell on their manners, and if they are not doing so, their school is not doing for them what it should. If you have real *esprit de corps*, you will not give people who are prejudiced against us, any reason to think ill of our School in this respect.

Another point of true *esprit de corps* concerns those who have power—whether as prefect, or VI. form, or head of a form, or through being popular. Power was given you that you might do more work for others—you are made a chief in order that you may be as he that serveth; privilege means responsibility—not enjoyment. There is nothing so mean as to take the loaves and fishes of any post, and not to do its duties; to order others about, and to be lax with yourselves. A ruler is contemptible who does not rule himself. Whether we are teacher, or prefect, or head of a form, or a leader in any way, it ought to make us hot, and sore, and ashamed, in exercising our rightful rule over others, whenever we are conscious (as we must all be at times) that we have failed in ruling ourselves—failed in temper,—failed in carrying out minutely, every law, great or small, that we help to enforce on others. *Esprit de corps* will make us use our power for the good of the school and not for our own pleasure.

Esprit de corps means being ready to give time and trouble to all school interests—without any thought of whether you will have a leading part given you, or of whether it is very amusing to do it. You would be unworthy members of the school if you simply came to do your lessons, and took no part in the little things which make corporate life go with a swing. You might as well think you were worthy members of your home because you ate and slept there. Membership in a home means being ready to take part in all its little tiresome duties; to throw yourself into amusements which sometimes do not amuse you personally; in all ways to help on family life. The girl who distinguishes herself in the tennis is thought a good public-spirited member, and so she is,—she helps the school and shows *esprit de corps*,—but, to my mind, the girl who fags well at the match, and gets small thanks and no credit, shows even more *esprit de corps* than the one who has the excitement of distinguishing both herself and the school.



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The clever girl who wins prizes and scholarships, helps our school to shine, and no one applauds her more than I do, but in my heart, I feel that the school owes even more to the dull plodding girl, who knows she cannot do much, but who determines to give her very best to the school, and to be worthy of it by giving no scamped work. Perhaps she gets low marks, perhaps she is told she ought to do better,—and quite rightly, because we want her to rise to give really good work, and are not satisfied till she does; but whether it is good or not, if it is her *best*, she has fought a good battle for the school, and has “helped to maintain the high standard of duty which was founded in the school by its first and beloved head-mistress—Ada Benson.”

Rough Notes of a Lesson.

I hope to start a new lesson for some of you, and I have gathered you all here to-day, whether you will be able to come to it or not, because, in thinking over what I wished to say about this one lesson, I found I was led into describing what I should like all lessons to do for you. My new lesson will be a talk on various things in which you are, or ought to be, interested. I have tried this plan before, and have sometimes been laughed at for having such miscellaneous lessons, but I found their effect very good. I had a spare half-hour in the week, which I gave to this Talking Lesson.

Once I took Dante, and after a sketch of his life and of Florence, we went through the “Inferno;” I read the famous parts in full and told the story of the rest, and now many of those children who listened feel, when they come on anything about Dante, as if they had met an old friend.

Then I happened to go to Yorkshire and saw several of its lovely abbeys: I came back with a craze for architecture, so I and the girls did that together. Neither they, nor I, imagine that we understand architecture, or are authorities on it; but though we only took the barest outline, it made us all use our eyes and enjoy old buildings. I often get letters from those girls, saying that they have since enjoyed their travels so much more, because they now notice the architecture. You know the story of “Eyes and No Eyes”—how two boys went out for a walk—one saw nothing to notice, and the other found his way lined with interesting things. I am sure, architecturally, your way is lined with beauty in Oxford, which deserves both outward and “inward eyes.”

Another time we took the French writers of Louis XIV. and we all feel that Moliere and La Fontaine and *Mme. de Sevigne* are our personal friends, so that the value of their books is doubled to us!

We took mythology at one time, and many girls found that they understood, much better, allusions in books and various pictures in the Academy, which are often about mythological subjects. Ignorance on this point may sometimes be very awkward. I have heard of an American lady who invited her artistic friends to come and see a picture she had lately bought of “Jupiter and Ten.” The friends puzzled over her notes of



invitation, and, on arriving at her house, were still more puzzled to know how to pass off the mistake gracefully, when they found that the picture was one of "Jupiter and Io." I trust you will not cause your friends embarrassment of this kind!



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Another time we took the history of Queen Victoria, as our way of celebrating the Jubilee patriotically. We began by all collecting as much patriotic poetry as we could, which was surprisingly little—I wonder if you would find more—and, all through, we made a special point of finding poems written about any of the events. We found *Punch* a valuable assistance, and we much enjoyed the cartoons and jokes which had been so mysterious to us before. Just that part of history which is not in “Bright,” and which, yet, is before our time, is so very hard to find out about, and many allusions in the newspapers and parliamentary speeches are consequently wasted on us.

Now, all this was miscellaneous, yet I had one object running through it all, and the girls helped me to carry it out by listening in the right spirit, knowing that I was only pointing out the various doors through which they might go by-and-by. Not one of them thought she had “done” a subject because we had thus talked about it,—we all learnt to feel our own ignorance, and at the same time, how much there was in the world to learn.

I want to show you this morning where such a lesson should fit in, in the general plan of your education. To do that, you must first have the plan. Have you ever thought what education was to do for you, or, are you learning your lessons, day by day, just because they are set? I know what I want to do with you, but I cannot do it unless you work hand-in-hand with me, and you cannot do that unless you think about the matter and realize that, for instance, Euclid is not only Euclid, it ought to teach certain mental and moral qualities which you must have if you are ever to be worth your salt. There is a story of Dr. Johnson, which seems to me to apply to so many things. When his friend, Mr. Thrale, the great brewer, died, there was a sale of the brewery, which Dr. Johnson attended. An acquaintance expressed surprise at the great man’s honouring with his presence such an ordinary affair as the sale of a brewery. “Sir,” said Dr. Johnson, turning with crushing deliberation on the unhappy speaker, “this is not the sale of a mere brewery, but of the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice.” This story seems to me well worth remembering, both because it is so characteristic of the Doctor, and because it is applicable to so many things. It is so easy to go through the world not seeing the importance of things, like the common people in “Phantasies,” who never saw what a fairyland they lived in. Lessons, for instance, are not mere lessons, they are “the potentiality of growing rich in wisdom and in goodness beyond our highest dreams.”



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I should be sorry if, in after life, you should wake up and say to yourself, "How much more good my lessons would have done me if some one had shown me the real use of them and made me think, so that I might have learnt all I could, instead of just slipping through them day by day." No one can do the thinking for you. Unless you work with me by trying to think, I cannot really do much for you. I can bring you to the water, but I cannot make you drink. Yes, after all, I *can* make you drink, *i.e.* do your lessons day by day as a matter of obedience. So a better illustration would be that I can make you eat, but I cannot make you digest your food. You can prevent its doing you any good. If you simply learn your lessons by rote and do not use your thinking powers, education is very little good,—the obedience will have done you good, but, as far as mental growth is concerned, you will not gain much, for that sort of education drops off, like water off a duck's back, when you leave school. They say "a fool and his money are soon parted," but that is nothing to the speed with which a fool and his education are parted!

Now, I am going to take the chief subjects you learn, and show the higher things which I want you to gain when you are doing those lessons, and *you* must want it too, or my wanting it will not do much good. You do not learn Mathematics simply that you may know so many books of Euclid, and so many pages of Algebra; it is to give you power over your minds, to enable you to follow a chain of reasoning, to teach you to keep up continuous attention, and not to jump at conclusions. I do not say you cannot learn these things except by Mathematics; you might do it by Logic, and I know many people who have done it by mother-wit and the teaching of life; but when a person is inclined to trust to his mother-wit, and to neglect educational advantages because he can do without them, I for one feel inclined to doubt whether his share of mother-wit can be very large, after all. The people I have known who are clever, without having had the careful school-training you enjoy, used all the advantages that came in their way (though, when they were young, advantages were fewer), and unless you do the same, you cannot expect to be like them. Also, clever untrained people often feel very much hampered by their want of training; you see the cleverness, but they feel how much more they could have done if they had been trained. Therefore, do not allow yourselves to think "Euclid is no good, because 'Aunt So-and-so' is quite clever enough, and she never did it;" depend upon it, that is not going the right road to be like her. I feel quite sure that if this "not impossible aunt" had had opportunities of learning Euclid when she was young, she would have done it, and very well too! Of course, if you mean to read Mathematics from choice by-and-by, you will work hard at the subject now, but I can quite understand that those who are not going



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to do this, perhaps sometimes feel, "What is the good? I shall never look at a Euclid again after I leave school—I want to learn how to hold my own in after-life,—I want to be able to talk when I come out,—I want to be a sensible woman, whose opinion will be asked by other people,—I want to be clever at house-work or cooking, or to be able to manage a shop,—I want to be strong enough and wise enough to be a support and comfort to others,—I want to be a useful woman and not a mathematician!" Well! that is just what I want you to be, but I am quite sure that Mathematics will help you to this, by making you accurate and reasonable and attentive, without which qualities you will be no use and very little comfort. If you work hard at Mathematics while you are here, and gain these qualities, you have my free leave to shut your Euclid for good on the day you leave school,—you will have learnt his best lessons.

Is there any great mental good which you can gain by the study of Languages, quite apart from the advantage of being able to read and speak when you go abroad? Yes; it enlarges your mind to know the various ways in which things are expressed by different nations. A person who knows no language but his own is like a man who can only see with one eye. It opens a whole new world of thought to realize that other nations have other words.

Again, it makes you know your own language. Translation gives you choice of words and trains you to appreciate delicate shades of meaning; this helps you to appreciate Poetry, for one of the main beauties of great poets, such as Milton and Tennyson, is their marvellous perception of shades of difference, and the felicity with which they choose exactly the right adjective!

It is said that barbarous tribes use a very small vocabulary; I sometimes fear we may be going back to a savage state, when I think of the vocabulary of a modern schoolgirl, and see how much ground is covered over with these two narrow words, "awfully" and "jolly." Hannah More complained, in her day, of the indiscriminate use of the word "nice." "Formerly," she says, "a person was 'charming,' or 'accomplished,' or 'distinguished,' or 'well-bred,' or 'talented,' etc., and each word had its own shade of meaning; now, every one is 'nice,' which saves much thought." "Nice" held its position, for we find Miss Austen making Henry Tilney laugh at the same misuse of the word. "Awfully" and "jolly" seem to perform the same kind office for us which "nice" did for our grandmothers,—they "save us much thought," and are used with a large disregard of their inappropriateness; I have even been told by a girl that the *Christian Year* was "such an awfully jolly book"! Now, I am sure of this: you will find excessive use of those two words always betokens an empty, or rather an uncultivated, mind. I do not believe in any exception; their votaries may have learning, but they have not digested it, they are not thoughtful, they are "young (or old) barbarians," for it is the unailing mark of a cultivated mind, to use the right word in the right place, and never "to use a sixpenny word when a threepenny one will do."



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History should not be bare facts; it illustrates and explains politics of our own day; it teaches sympathy and large-mindedness, and the power of admiring virtues which are not of our own type. The Royalist learns to see the strength of Cromwell, and the Roundhead to see the beauty of “the White King.” It ought to make the world bigger to us by helping us to realize other places and other times. If we are to live quiet stay-at-home lives afterwards, it is very important that we should try not to be narrow and “provincial,” and history and geography should help us in this matter.

Poetry in the same way helps to make us imaginative, which is necessary, if we are to have the Christian graces of tact and sympathy. It is very important to learn the best poetry by heart; it is dull perhaps at first, but new meanings unfold themselves every time we say it. Mr. Ruskin says we ought to read a few verses every day, as we should do with the Bible, to keep our lives from getting choked with commonplace dust, to remind us that the Ideal exists. It certainly puts new beauty into life if we know what poets have said about it, and how they expressed themselves, and this might save us from unworthy expression. I have heard an intelligent schoolgirl, looking at a glorious sunset, say concisely, “How awfully jolly!” I have heard a schoolboy say, “How rum!” I believe they were both touched, but I think they would have expressed themselves differently and have got more pleasure out of it if they had been taught to see, by having it reflected from poets and painters, and had known more of “the best that has been thought and said.”

There was so much I wanted to say that it is difficult to stop. I have given only general ideas, but bear in mind—as the main point of what I have said—that I want you to educate yourselves, to get ready for life, and to use your lessons here to bring out those qualities which you will want afterwards in everyday life.

Now, how will such general lessons help you in after-life?

First, I want them to help you to be interested in the things you will meet with in books and newspapers and conversation; you will not hear much about some lessons, but you will about these things—they are things that it “becomes a young woman to know.”

Then, too, I want you to leave school with introductions to all sorts of nice people in books; you will find it do you as much good as social introductions. Schoolgirls are often “out of it” for a time, when they go home, because they had only “lesson-book” interests; I should like to begin outside interests with you.

Also, this kind of general interest makes the world seem bigger and more interesting; we get an idea of how many delightful things there are in it, and so our pleasures are increased, which is always a great advantage. Happiness is a duty, and sensible interests are a wonderful help to it.



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Touching on many interests shows us our ignorance. I have known schoolgirls, who were kept to their lessons, Algebra and Latin and periods of History, and who thought they knew a good deal, because they measured by a schoolroom standard. When they came in contact with the number of things that cultivated people of society care for and appreciate, they learnt a good deal of humility. Certainly the more I read on general subjects the more I feel my own ignorance, and I think it would be very odd if it did not have the same effect on you.

The next reason for this sort of lesson, and one of the best, is that it ought to raise our taste. It is not enough to like or dislike a book: we ought to train ourselves to like the best books. We do not think ourselves born judges in music or art; we submit to being trained before we think our opinion worth giving. It would be just so with a book, but you often hear girls quite sorry for the author if they find a book dull; they feel he is to blame! When I find an author dull, whom good critics admire, I feel pretty sure that I am deficient on that point, and I try to learn to see in him what they do. I speak from experience; when I found Wordsworth dull, I knew it was my own fault, and I read and re-read him, and listened to those who could appreciate him, and now I am rewarded by his being a real part of the pleasures of my life. We need not leave off liking the merely pretty writers, such as Miss Procter and Longfellow. I love Longfellow and admire Miss Procter, but I cared for them both quite as much when I was seven, and an author who can be in some measure appreciated at seven ought to give way to deeper authors by-and-by. Like Guinevere, it is our duty "to love the highest." The great good of cultivated homes is that we learn to "put away childish things" and to admire the better things which we hear talked of. Some of you may not have this advantage; your people may be too busy for talking about books and such things, and some of you may be cut off from interesting talks by having school lessons to prepare when you would like to listen. Therefore, I should like you to get some talk in school on such subjects—to spend some "Half-hours with the best Authors."

Holidays.

"Where shall we spend the holidays?" has doubtless been discussed in many households, by both parents and children,—I wonder if the children followed it up by a still more important question, "*How* shall I spend the holidays?" Just at the close of a term you will not want me to suggest anything that is like lessons, but at the same time I do not see why you should spend seven weeks in idleness and novel-reading, any more than you would live for seven weeks on puddings and sweets. You like plenty of sweets, and I hope you will get them, but I hope you will have meat as well!



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There are many books which are not novels, and which you would yet enjoy,—books which would send you back more thoughtful; and though you might not know any one lesson better next term because of having read them, yet you would be a step nearer to being the sort of women you would like to be. I dare say when you go for your holiday you will get something to read at the station bookstall. Now, several of the books I mean can be got there, as easily as yellow novels, and can be got for the price of *Punch*; they are so small you could have them in your pocket and get them read in odds and ends of time, out-of-doors, so that you need not miss any expedition, or any fresh air, through staying in the house to study. In the same way you could get some really good poem for a penny, and learn it by heart. Nothing would please me so much as if you all brought me next term the name of some book you had read, of this kind, and repeated to me a poem of the sort that you think I should like—which very likely is not the sort *you* like, as yet. It would do you good, whether you enjoyed it or not, for you would be teaching yourselves to like the better kind of books if you persevered with it, and your holidays would be pleasanter, as well as better, if there was some effort of this kind to give backbone to each day. Cooks say there should be a pinch of salt in everything you eat, and I am sure we ought to have a pinch of the moral salt of self-conquest in each day, just to keep it sweet and good.

Perhaps you will think I am always wanting you to read, and you would like to remind me that there are many other commendable pursuits. I certainly am rather of the opinion Lowell expresses in “Democracy.” He says, “Southey, in his walk one stormy day, met an old woman, to whom, by way of greeting, he made the rather obvious remark that it was dreadful weather. She answered, philosophically, that, in her opinion, ‘any sort of weather was better than none!’” I should be half inclined to say that any reading was better than none.

Yet you are quite right about those other pursuits, and I hope you will follow them; but at the same time, if you have not already got a taste for reading, it is the most important of all tastes for you to strive to acquire, as it is very doubtful if you will manage otherwise to do so in later life. I should pity you terribly if you failed to acquire it, for you will all find life hard in one way or another, and you will find that a love of reading is even more valuable than a sense of humour in helping you over rough places. And—over and above the minor, more “worldly” support of its power of amusing and interesting you, even in the most “set grey life”—it is linked to those higher helps, without which, neither reading nor anything else will do us much good. St. Hugh of Lincoln made much of good books because he said they “made illness and sorrow endurable,” and, besides this, they save you from many temptations. It



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has been well said, "It is very hard for a person who does not like reading to talk without sinning.... Reading hinders castle-building, which is an inward disease, wholly incompatible with devotion.... Towards afternoon a person who has nothing to do drifts rapidly away from God. To sit down in a chair without an object is to jump into a thicket of temptation. A vacant hour is always the devil's hour. Then a book is a strong tower, nay, a very church, with angels lurking among the leaves."

But although I must allow reading to be my special hobby,—one, however, which is run very hard in my affections by both cooking and gardening,—still I quite appreciate other hobbies, and I should be quite as much pleased next term if, instead of telling me about books read and bringing me a piece of poetry learnt (by-the-by, I do very much wish you would all learn Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty" during the holidays)—if, instead of this, you showed me collections of wild flowers or shells. A little time ago I saw a charming book of dried flowers, collected by a set of children just out of a kindergarten. Each flower had a page to itself, with its name neatly written, and any extra local names which it happened to possess. On the opposite page was written any verses of poetry that the children could find about it; and I was quite surprised to see what a good collection they had of bits from Tennyson and Shakespeare and Wordsworth, *etc.* Of course, the older sisters and the mothers must have helped them in this part, but such a book, made in the holidays, would be the work of the whole family, so you would have plenty of help; and you will notice that the poetical part of it is a special attraction to me, as it affords exercise to my own hobby both in reading and in verifying quotations.

I think I had better here give you warning that when you come back next term every one will have to write an essay, describing some one place they have been to during the holidays. I tell you now, that you may try to find out all you can of the real interest of the place; its historical, or legendary, or literary associations, or its flowers, or shells, or fossils.

There is one other point of holiday-making on which I should like to talk to you. Some of you may have read Charles Lamb's amusing essay on "Popular Fallacies;" I suppose every one could add to his list from their own experience of life. One of the popular fallacies I should like to combat is, that "holidays are 'the children's hour;'" though I quite allow that, like most popular fallacies, it has many grains of truth in it. The little victims consider that conscientious application to grammar and history deserves a compensating course of lying in bed in the morning, sitting up late at night, and general indulgence, with every right-minded member of the household waiting upon them, and making plans for their amusement. Now, I quite see their side of the question. It is not pleasant, day after day, to go on steadily with work, which you do not happen to care for; to be cut off from this or that expedition, because lessons interfere; to have to get up early every morning; to lose this or that visit;—and, therefore, I hope your holidays may

be full of fun, and that you may be richly rewarded for any struggles you may have made during the term.



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But there is another side of it all, and *term-time* is “the children’s hour,” from one point of view.

Instead of the term being, for children, a time of self-denial, and the holidays, a time of well-earned self-indulgence,—I feel that term-time means self-denial for the parents, and selfishness for the children. Do not misunderstand me; the selfishness which I mean is forced upon you,—it is your duty, in term-time, to put lessons first. It may very well be that some of you feel you were wrongly selfish in your way of doing it,—that you allowed school work and school interests to blind you to the helpful things you might have done at home without any injury to the lessons. I occasionally hear such things as, that school is “so bad for girls, because So-and-so gets so engrossed with her work that she is irritable when any demand is made on her time, and is deep in her books when any demand is made on her sympathies; and when she is not studying, she and her school friends are running in and out of each other’s houses, so that her mother might as well have no daughter at all.” I do beg that none of you will bring this discredit on school life, for the system gets blamed when it is really your individual shortcoming which is in fault; you ought to be big enough to hold both school and home interests! But, setting aside this form of term-time selfishness, which we shall all agree to condemn, there remains another form of it, which is a duty. You must put lessons first, or you will be wasting both your parents’ money and that leisure for self-improvement, which, as a rule, is only granted to us while we are young. You are not free, yet, to be as useful at home as you would like to be; your mother has to do without a daughter, to a large extent, or to avail herself of one with the uncomfortable feeling that the daughter is losing valuable time thereby, and probably is considering herself a martyr in having to do unscholastic duties. I dare say the daughter feels, “It isn’t to please myself that I slave at my lessons; mother would be vexed if I didn’t; and it’s very hard that I should be both hindered in them and made to do other things as well,—it’s quite bad enough in term-time to have to fag at lessons.” But just consider, for a moment, this “fagging at lessons:” *you* feel that in so doing you are making a concession to your mother, for which she ought to show unbounded gratitude by all manner of sweetmeats in the holidays. But who profits by these lessons,—your mother, who denies herself many a small luxury to be able to pay for them, or you, who are being fitted by them to take a good place in after-life? It seems to me that the gratitude and the sweetmeats ought to flow from you to her; I quite see the force of it, if any girl feels what I have just described,—I flatter myself I generally do see the force of my victim’s complaints; but it does not do my victim much good, because I generally also see the force of something else, which is of superior importance, but which the victim, very likely, will not see till she is older.



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If you have read that pearl of stories, “Cranford,” you will remember how Mrs. Jenkyns, to avoid explaining things to the small Deborah, “took to stirring the fire or sending the ‘farrard’ child on an errand.” Now, unlike Mrs. Jenkyns, I believe in explaining my views to the “farrard” children, as I think the superiority of girls over boys consists in the remarkably early age at which girls begin to be reasonable! After expressing such a high opinion of you, I hope you will all prove me right, by seeing the truth that underlies the theory I am putting before you, which I am sure you will all be inclined to reckon as a fallacy!

There is no need for me to dwell on the desirability of holidays being made pleasant for *you*—fathers and mothers are only too ready to do it; but there is a need for somebody to dwell on the desirability of holidays being made pleasant for fathers and mothers. They are too unselfish generally to speak for themselves, especially in holiday time. I hear them saying, in deprecation of my hard-heartedness, “Oh, let the poor children have a good time! they can only be young once; they work hard at school, let them have a little fun in the holidays.” I quite agree: I believe in as much fun as you can get: I should like to be able to insist as sternly on your all enjoying yourselves in the holidays, as I should on your working in term-time. There was a great deal of sound wisdom in that Eastern potentate, who proclaimed a general holiday, adding, “Make merry, my children, make merry; he who does not make merry will be flogged!”

At the same time, much as I care for your having fun, I do not see why “fun” should mean upsetting all the household arrangements, and doubling the servants’ work, by your late hours in the morning; at all events, after the first few mornings, when perhaps it is only natural you should wish to feel your liberty. But sooner or later you will have to learn that liberty, for reasonable beings, only means being free to forge your own chains,—being free to make such rules as you know are necessary, if you are to live a wholesome, health-giving life. Being late for prayers is hardly a form of self-government which we should admire in the abstract, though it is very tempting in practice; and keeping your mother waiting for her breakfast, or else letting her have a solitary meal, is hardly a good way of being that domestic sunbeam which schoolgirls are supposed to have time to be,—in holidays!

Holidays are sometimes spent in incessant excursions with young friends, leaving your mother at home to look after the little ones; and yet, perhaps, your mother had a very dull time of it in term-time, when you were either at work, and could not be spoken to, or were busy over school gossip with some friend, and, perhaps, she looked forward to the holidays as a time when she would get a little companionship from the daughter for whom she makes so many sacrifices. But she is too unselfish to be the least drag upon



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you; so she asks a school friend to stay with you, and, somehow, always has a good reason for really wanting not to join the expedition, and takes the younger ones off your hands with an air of its being almost self-indulgence on her part to do it. But, all the same, whatever she says, mothers like going about too, and, even if they do not, they like to feel that their presence makes part of their daughter's pleasure in the holiday pleasurings. You may think it very hard-hearted and mistaken of me to suppose that you would be so selfish with your mother, but I have, often and often, seen it done, and I feel like a little boy I know, who can hardly speak yet, but who is evidently born to be a general redresser of wrongs,—he is very quickly struck by any instance of the folly and injustice of the world, and his favourite remark is, "*Somebody* ought to tell them; why shouldn't I?" Now, *somebody* ought to say this about mothers, and the mothers who do the unselfish things are the last people who will ever remind you that they, too, have feelings, so I will usurp that little boy's office, and tell you myself, for I am quite sure that, if it ever struck you, you would be shocked at doing it, but,

"Evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as want of heart."

However, I do not intend to make this my closing quotation, as I am sure my children will have plenty of both heart and thought, and that they will shed around them a full supply of that sunshine which the weather seems so determined to deny us! I suppose we must allow, with Southey's old woman, that "any weather is better than none," but it is incontestable that we seem likely to have every opportunity afforded us, during these holidays, at all events, of

"Making a sunshine in a *shady* place."

Sunday.

In many ways this is a disquieting age in which to live, and yet it is also markedly hopeful. It is true that the power of authority and of custom is crumbling on many sides, but surely this should lead to the laying of deeper and truer foundations. In this very question of Sunday, the Fourth Commandment used to settle the question, whereas now we investigate its origins and claims in a way which sounds rebellious and unfilial. Yet it may be nearer the mind of Christ than unthinking obedience, for the servant accepts with blind obedience this or that rule spoken by his master; the friend, the son, strives to understand "his father's innermost mind." He may or may not be convinced that certain words spoken on Mount Sinai, about the Jewish Sabbath, were intended to refer to the Christian Sunday; but, in either case, he realizes the nature of the spiritual life, and perceives that worship and thought and time are essential to it. He sees that the old Jewish rule tends to develop this spiritual life, and therefore, until he finds a

better way, he feels it morally binding on himself; not because it was a Jewish rule, but because it assists his own growth.



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Suppose a master admired a bed of lilies and said, "Let me always find some here;" if a landslip destroyed that bed, a slave might feel absolved from further trouble about lilies, but the son would say, "No; we can give my father what he wants by growing them elsewhere—it was not so much the bed, as the lilies, that he really cared for."

God will look in us for the lilies of peace and spiritual-mindedness, which only grow where there is what the old Babylonians called "a Sabbath of the heart." Are we to feel absolved from responding to His demand because old Jewish ways have vanished? When St. Paul speaks so slightly of "times and seasons and Sabbaths," does he mean that the worship and meditation belonging to such seasons were valueless? No; he is rather saying, "How can you think that our Father values, not the lilies, but only the fact of their growing on this or that bit of earth?"

Every day, landslips are altering the features of God's great garden—this present world. We can no longer rely on definite instructions to plant in this or that place; many circumstances, as yet unborn, may hinder it. But we must get it well into our minds that the Master will certainly come down into His garden to ask for lilies, and that we must plant without delay; tools and methods may be improved upon, certain aspects which are now favourable may be deprived of sun by future buildings, but let us clearly realize that the end and object of having a garden is to grow flowers, though ways and means may vary with the times.

It is much easier to follow rules than to be inspired with the burning desire to produce flowers and the moral thoughtfulness which uses the best methods of the day.

But you can less well afford to do without moral thoughtfulness now than you could have done a generation ago. Thirty years ago a woman's path was hedged in by signposts and by-laws, and danger-signals, to which she attended as a matter of course; to-day, she has to find her way across a moorland with uncertain tracks, which she may desert at will. She needs to know something of the stars to guide her now—she needs nobler and deeper teaching than in the days of convenances and chaperons.

At present you have your home ways to guide, but you will find Sunday vary in almost every house you stay in, and when you marry you will have to set the tone of a household; if you are to keep Sunday rightly in the future, you must learn now to value it rightly, and that means moral thoughtfulness,—a realization of our need of an inner life and of what that inner life requires for its sustenance, and an appreciation of the teaching of the Church Catechism, which tells us that our duty to God begins with Worship.

What can we say as to the positive duty of keeping Sunday? We can hardly say we are literally bound by the Jewish Sabbath, since, for Jewish Christians, the Sabbath and Sunday existed for some time side by side, as separate institutions; Sunday being a day of united worship, while the Sabbath supplied retirement from the world.



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Gentiles kept Sunday only; but gradually there were incorporated into it all the spiritual elements of the Sabbath. In this point, as in all others, the underlying eternal meaning of the Law was recoined and reissued by Christianity; no jot or tittle of its spirit passed away.

In "The English Sunday,"[4] by Canon Bernard, you will find a short sketch of the history of the day; its universal acceptance through the decree of Constantine, which organized the popular custom of a weekly holiday; the resistance of Luther and Calvin to any idea of being bound by the Jewish Sabbath; the Anglican idea of Church Services combined with the Book of Sports; the Puritan idea of a day of retirement from worldly business and amusement; and, finally, the gradual acceptance of this last idea by the English national conscience, so that High Churchmen, like Law and Nelson, echoed the Puritan ideal, and the average business Englishman accepted it as the right thing.

I am convinced that the vigour of the nation and the health of our own souls depends on keeping Sunday,—not only by going to Church, but by so arranging it that we get into an unworldly atmosphere, and have leisure for the thought and reading which develop our spiritual nature.

Such a Sunday is the development of the Fourth Commandment, keeping it in the spirit though not in the letter.

I am inclined to think that the Fourth Commandment is the most important of all: if that is faithfully observed—if we spend due time in God's Presence looking at things as He does, judging ourselves by His standard—then the rest of our lives must in time get raised to the level of those "golden hours;" we are as certain to improve as a person who regularly goes up into bracing air is certain to grow stronger.

Bishop Wordsworth's hymn suggests the highest lines on which to take the subject, and I would ask, are you specially careful to come to breakfast full of sunshine on Sunday mornings, as on a "day of rest and gladness"? Is it a cooling fountain to you? Do you soak yourself enough in good thoughts to be more soothed and peaceful than you were on Saturday? Was last Sunday a Pisgah's mountain?—did you cast so much as a glance at the promised Land, at what will make the true joy of Heaven, the being like Christ? did you seriously think over where you were unlike Him and where you could be more like Him in the coming week? "New graces ever gaining:"—did you gain any grace at all last Sunday—or would this week have been exactly the same if Sunday had been wiped out? Make up a prayer, for Saturday's use, on the ideas in this hymn, or use the hymn in your prayers, as inspiration on Saturday night and as self-examination on Sunday night.

Sunday should, as the Warden of Keble says, be a day of new plans for using the coming week better than we did the last, and this implies quiet time for thoughtfully

considering both the past and the coming week. On Sunday we should breathe different air and see weekday vexations from a Sunday point of view.



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Our Sunday reading may well include all that is referred to in Phil. iv. 8: “Whatsoever things are noble.” I would not say this or that book is wrong on Sunday—a book which is good on Saturday does not become bad on Sunday, but, as is the case with many excellent weekday employments, it may very well be a misuse of Sunday time, because we could be doing something better. I strongly advise you to make your Sunday books—and as far as possible all your Sunday habits—different from those of the week, if only to give yourself a chance of getting out of grooves, of getting that complete change of air which is so conducive to a new start in one’s inner life and mental vigour. Lord Lawrence’s *Life* would be splendid Sunday reading, but if you are reading it in the week, you would be wise to put it away on Sunday in favour of a change of air.

It is quite possible that you are busy on Sunday, sometimes a father or brothers, hard at work all the week, want you to amuse them on Sunday. Or you may be busy with Sunday-school or Classes, which equally prevents the personal keeping of Sunday, while many household arrangements may make an old-fashioned Sunday impossible. (Let those who can have it be thankful instead of rebelling at its dullness!)

At the same time, I would suggest that the very young men for whose sake you are making the sacrifice—(the sacrifice of doing things which amuse you as much as them, sometimes more, since a young man occasionally likes to lie in a hammock and read, without having the girls always about)—those very young men need Sunday quiet whether they desire it or not.

Would it not be well also, if you do have games, to keep to those which allow of talk if the impulse comes, since a Sunday talk is often a help, and whether or no it is combined with boating or golf.

I do not say to you, stand out against household ways and make yourself disagreeable by carrying out a Puritan Sunday—the only kind I believe in. No; surely that would be a very unchristlike way of spending Sunday.

But every girl knows the difference between helping to make a pleasant family circle and lounging idly through the day in self-indulgent gossip and games. You must do what others do, and yet you must have a clear plan of the reading and prayer and thinking which is right for you personally. If you cannot do it at one time on Sunday, find another, or else get it done on Saturday. Nearly every one could find time for Sunday duties, only you would rather not, because they are dull. I am not surprised, it is not natural to like them till the spiritual nature is alive in you, but that will never be until you force yourself to take this spiritual food as a duty, or rather, as essential to your life.

“A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content
And strength for the toils of the morrow.”

Those are very old words by Sir Matthew Hale: I know them framed in the hall of an old-fashioned country house, and they bring back to me rest and quiet, and sweet sounds and scents—the bowl of roses and the pretty old chintz on the sofa just under the words.



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I hope Sunday-like Sundays are not only to be found in old houses, but we all feel that Sunday quiet is likely to be the first thing sacrificed in the rush and bustle of modern life. But if we have no time to eat, we cannot keep up to working pitch, we lose vitality: if we have no time for spiritual food, our souls lose vitality, and unfortunately starvation of the soul is a painless process, so we may unconsciously be getting weaker and weaker spiritually.

You are regularly on your knees night and morning, but are you ever two minutes alone with God?—and yet “being silent to God”—alone with Him—is, humanly speaking, the only condition on which He can “mould us.”[5] I am so afraid that the lawful pleasures and even the commanded duties of life, let alone its excitements and cravings, will eat out your possibilities of spirituality and saintliness: it is so easy to float on the stream of life with others—so terribly hard to come, you yourself, alone into a desert place to listen to those words out of the mouth of God, by which only your individual life can be fed. The self-denials of Lent are comparatively easy, but to gain that quietness, which Bishop Gore says is “the essence of Lent,” is a hard struggle at all times of the year. Do not let any one think, “this is all very well for quiet homes, but I cannot be expected to act on it, since ‘the week-end’ is always so busy.” It would be very unpractical to say, day after day, “I cannot be expected, for this and that excellent reason, to eat my dinner to-day.” You would soon find it advisable, for your own sake, to find some time at which you *could* eat. I do not say, though it would be true, “it is a sin to break the Sabbath, and, in order to avoid God’s anger, you must go to Church and read good books;”—I say, “for your own sake, you *cannot afford* to neglect these things, and if you cannot find time on Sunday, it will be not only a crime but a blunder if you do not make time on Saturday or Monday.” I only say, “if you do not eat enough to keep you alive, you will die; and if you do not feed on the Word of God, your soul will shrivel away.”

Dante saw some souls in hell whose bodies were still alive on earth,—their friends in Florence and Lucca had not the faintest idea that these men, seemingly a part of everyday life, were, all the time, “dead souls.” There is hardly a more terrible idea in all that terrible book, and yet it is a possibility in our own daily life—this atrophy of the spiritual nature, corresponding to the atrophy of the poetical nature which Darwin noted in himself as due to his own neglect. Mr. Clifford, in “A Likely Story,” forcibly depicts a soul awaking in the next world to find that through this unconscious starvation, there was no longer anything in him to correspond with God. “The possibility of death is involved in our Lord’s words about the power of living by the Word of God.”



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Sometimes we are too tired to keep Sunday properly, and we give to “private sloth the time which was meant for public worship;” but surely then the Sabbath breaking lay really in the week’s excess of work. If we allow ourselves to live so hard in the week, to be so late on Saturday, that we are sleepy and stupid on Sunday morning, then we are not keeping the Fourth Commandment, even if we force ourselves to go to Church; we are not serving God with a fair share of our mind and strength.

In these over-worked days of nerve exhaustion, it should be an inducement to remember how fresh and unwearied Mr. Gladstone was kept by his regular Sunday habits. He said, “Sunday I reserve for religious employments, and this has kept me alive and well, even to a marvel, in time of considerable labour. We are born on each Lord’s day morning into a new climate, where the lungs and heart of the Christian life should drink in continuously the vital air.”

Retreats and Rest-cures are nowadays found to be imperatively necessary; but are not both symptoms of something over-wrought in our system? Would it not be well for some if they tried, as Miss Wordsworth suggests, the effect of keeping one Sunday in the week?

I do not wish to dwell on the unselfish side of the question—the moral obligation of keeping to those forms of entertainment and games which give as little trouble as possible to servants,—I am sure that needs no enforcing on a generous mind.

Neither do I wish to discuss what employments are suitable for Sunday, though I should like to draw your attention to a suggestion, in the Bishop of Salisbury’s Guild Manual, that Sunday letters should always, as a matter of principle, have some Sunday element in them, and that we should refrain from writing to people with whom we were not on this footing. How often our Sunday letters only clear our writing-table, that it may be freer for Monday’s business!

Neither do I speak of our duty to God in the matter of worship, nor of the definite rules as to church-going which each must make for herself, if her religion is not to vary with every house she stays in; I do not speak of the obligation binding on every member of the Church to conform to her Church’s regulations as to united worship. Every one of these points need a chapter to itself, and I wish to keep to a single point which seems in great danger of being neglected in this hurrying age, when there is such terrible likelihood that we may “never once possess our souls before we die.”

It is not the duty of keeping Sunday on which I want to lay stress, but the fact that we dare not, for our own safety’s sake, neglect it. Our moral thoughtfulness, our spiritual growth, the very existence of our inner life, depends on our obtaining a sufficient supply of the air of Heaven to keep our souls alive. To use Dean Church’s words: “On the way in which we spend our Sundays depends, for most of us, the depth, the reality, the steadiness, of our spiritual life.”



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[Footnote 4: Methuen. 1_s. 6d.]

[Footnote 5: "Be silent to God, and let Him mould thee."—Ps. xxxvii. 7.]

Friendship and Love.

"The fountains of my hidden life
Are through thy friendship fair."

No word in our language has a nobler meaning than "friendship;" it is a pity that none is more often abused. Every hasty intimacy formed by force of circumstances—often merely by force of living next door—is dignified with the title; but a deeper bond is needed to make a real friendship. "By true friendship," says Jeremy Taylor, "I mean the greatest love, and the greatest usefulness, and the most open communication, and the noblest suffering, and the most exemplary faithfulness, and the severest truth, and the heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of minds of which brave men and women are capable."

"Friendship is the perfection of love," says the Proverb, and a certain James Colebrooke and Mary his wife, buried in Chilham churchyard, seem to have been of this mind, for the climax of their long epitaph is, that they "lived for forty-seven years in the greatest friendship."

Proverbs on this subject abound, and teach varied lessons: "A faithful friend is the medicine of life;" but it would seem to act differently on different constitutions, for, on the one hand, we are told, "a Father is a Treasure, a Brother is a Comforter, a Friend is both;" on the other, we hear the familiar exclamation, "Save me from my friends!" which is justified by experience from the times of Aristides downwards, and is endorsed by Solomon, when he said, "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him;"—words of which the wisdom will be felt by all who know what it is to feel unreasoning prejudice against some unoffending person, solely because of the excessive praise of some injudicious friend. Yet none the less are we bound to defend our friends behind their backs and to set them in a fair light. If we cannot aspire generally to St. Theresa's title of "Advocate of the Absent," honour demands that we should at least earn it with regard to our friends: though it requires infinite tact to avoid making your friend fatiguing, if not distasteful, to your listener in so doing. For Tact, as well as Honour, is a necessary condition of friendship, in speaking both of, and to, your friend. In this matter of tact, Courtesy covers a large part of the ground.

"We have careful thought for the stranger,
And smiles for the some time guest,
But we grieve our own



With look and tone,
Though we love our own the best.”

This applies most to brothers and sisters, but also to friends; it takes the delicate edge from friendship if we think ourselves absolved from the minor courtesies of manner and speech.



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We often say pretty things to an acquaintance, and omit them to a friend, "because she knows us, and we need not be ceremonious." But ceremony is not half such a bad thing as this age seems to think; it may be overdone, but so may its opposite. Why should we not give our friend the pleasure of this or that acknowledgment of her powers, which a stranger would give her, but which she would value far more from us, even though she "knows we know" it? Saying those things makes the wheels of life's chariot run smoothly,—we think them, why are we so slow to say them? Why should "the privilege of a friend" be synonymous with a cutting remark? Why should we all have reason to feel that "friend" might, without any violation of truth, be substituted for the last word in that acute remark on the "fine frankness about unpleasant truths which marks the relative"? Well might Bob Jakes say, "Lor, miss, it's a fine thing to hev' a dumb brute fond o' yer! it sticks to yer and makes no jaw." This question of making no "jaw" is rather a vexed one. Most people's experience would lead them to attend to a canny Dutch proverb, which observes that a "friend's" faults may be noticed but not blamed: since the consequences of blaming them are mostly unpleasant; but a braver proverb says, "A true friend dares sometimes venture to be offensive;" and we read that it is our duty to "admonish a friend; it may be that he hath not said it, and, if he have, that he speak it not again." But this earnest remonstrance which is sometimes required of us is very different from the small, nagging, and somewhat impertinent criticisms which pass so freely between many friends. But defending an absent friend is not the only point of honour essential in true friendship. At the present time the Roman virtues seem somewhat at a discount,—they are suspected of a flavour of Paganism; it is more in accordance with the Genius of our Age to show our interest in our friend by talking over his moral and spiritual condition (and *par parenthese*, all his other affairs) with a sympathizing circle, than to heed the old-fashioned idea, "He that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." How often do we hear, "I wouldn't, for the world, tell any one but you, but—;" and then follows a string of repeated confidences which the friend under discussion would writhe to hear; yet the speaker would be most indignant at being considered dishonourable, because "it was only said to So-and-so, which is so different from saying it to any one else"! The Son of Sirach made no exception in favour of "So-and-so" when he said, "Rehearse not unto another that which is told unto thee, and thou shall fare never the worse." If it be true of a wife, that "a silent and loving woman is a gift of the Lord," I am sure it is no less so of a friend; in friendship, as in most relations of life, silence, in its season, is a cardinal virtue.



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Girls are often tempted to retail their family affairs to some chosen friend, from a love of confidential mysteries; the pleasure of being a martyr leads not only to the communication of moving details of home life, but frequently to their invention. A friend of mine adopted a niece, who afterwards married and wrote from India asking her aunt to look through and burn her old letters. My friend found touching pictures of home tyranny in the letters from school friends and answers to similar complaints, which the niece had evidently written about her own treatment and since forgotten; possibly the home circles of the other girls would have found the same difficulty that my friend did in recognizing themselves:

“Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth.”

Equal with Honour, and before Tact, among the conditions of Friendship, I would place Truth, for there can be no union without this for a basis. We have touched already on the truth involved in what is called being “faithful” to a friend, but there are many other kinds required. Passing over the more obvious of these, I would draw attention to the subtler form of untruth, involved in endowing your friend with imaginary gifts and graces.

Yet the more we know of a true friend, the more we find to reverence in him, and the more ground for humility in ourselves: “Have a quick eye to see” their virtues; nay, more, idealize those virtues as much as you will, for this is a very different thing from endowing them with those they have not; this is only learning to see with that divine insight essential to the highest truth in friendship. “There is a perfect ideal,” says Ruskin, “to be wrought out of every human face around us,” and so it is with our friends’ characters.

And when we have found that ideal and true self, we must be loyal to it—loyal to our friends against their lower selves as well as against their detractors. Plutarch says, “The influence of a true friend is felt in the help that he gives the noble part of nature; nothing that is weak or poor meets with encouragement from him. While the flatterer fans every spark of suspicion, envy, or grudge, he may be described in the verse of Sophocles as ‘sharing the love and not the hatred of the person he cares for.’” Such a bit as that makes us forget the centuries which have rolled between us and Plutarch; his temptations are ours—how much easier it is to us to please our friends by sympathizing with their feelings, whether that feeling be right or wrong! How much pleasanter it is to us to gratify our selfish affection by giving them what they want, as Wentworth did King Charles, than to brace them to endure hardness for the sake of others!

We are so apt to give and to ask for weakening consolation. Sympathy in the ordinary use of the term is more weakening than anything, and it is pleasant to give and to take.

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But sympathy should be like bracing air: “no friendship is worth the name which does not inspire new and stronger views of duty.” We all care to be sons of consolation,—let us see to it that we brace others instead of giving mere pity. We all like to be pitied, but in our heart we are more grateful to the friend who puts fresh spring into us, by what perhaps seems hard common sense. Those are the friends whose memory comes back to us when circumstances, or years, or distance, have drifted us far apart.

The friend who fed the weaker part of us never gets from us the same genuine affection with real stuff in it. How much easier it is to sympathize with our friends’ unreasonable vexation—to join in their uncharitable speeches, or in laughing at something we ought not to laugh at, than to brace them

“to welcome each rebuff
That turns earth’s smoothness rough,
each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!”

We find it very hard, almost impossible, to live always up to our own best self, and we may be quite sure our friends do too, whether they talk about it or not, and our duty, as a friend, is to see their best self and help them to be it. Very often the mere fact of knowing that our friend sees our nobler nature, and believes in it, heartens us to keep faith in it and to go on striving after it. “Edward Irving unconsciously elevated every man he talked with into the ideal man he ought to have been; and went about the world making men noble by believing them to be so.”

It rests with each of us to draw out the better part in others; we all know people with whom we are at our best, and we have failed in our Duty to our Neighbour if we do not make others feel this with us. “Each soul is in some other’s presence quite discrowned;” let the reverse be true where we are.

It is a terrible thought that we have perhaps made others less noble, less pure, less conscientious, than they would have been. We can never repair the harm we do to one who loses faith in our goodness,—he inevitably loses some part of his faith in goodness itself. “Much of our lives is spent in marring our own influence,” says George Eliot, “and turning others’ belief in us into a widely concluding unbelief, which they call knowledge of the world, but which is really disappointment in you or me.”

Nobody, who has not watched or felt it, knows the laming of all spiritual energy, the hardening, the blighting of all noble impulse which comes from this sort of knowledge of the world; and who can say that he has never (more or less) been thus guilty?—it is more truly blood-guiltiness than anything else, for it helps to murder souls.

Perhaps the greatest of the innumerable blessings which friendship confers on the character, lies in this fostering of moral thoughtfulness produced by its responsibilities: “I know not a more serious thing than the responsibility incurred by all human affection.



Only think of this: whoever loves you is growing like you; neither you nor he can hinder it, save at the cost of alienation. Oh, if you are grateful for but one creature's love, rise to the height of so pure a blessing—drag them not down by the very embrace with which they cling to you, but through their gentleness ensure their consecration."[6]



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It needs a noble nature to be capable of friendship, or rather a nature which has carefully trained itself by discipline and self-denial, so as to develop all the possibilities of nobleness which were latent in it.

God gives each of us a nature with “pulses of nobleness,” and it rests with us whether this shall grow, or be choked by the commonplace part of us. To be noble does not come without trouble. Good things are hard, and “noble growths are slow.”[7]

He who would be noble must go through life like Hercules and the old heroes, working hard for others; not troubling about personal comfort and amusement, but practised in going without when he *could* have,—for the sake of better things.

To be noble means having your impulses under control, and this most especially where your affections are concerned.

Do you want to help others to go right in life? I need not ask, for every generous nature would care to do that, even if she did not care much about her own soul.

Now, you will not do much by direct effort, but you will do an immense deal by conquering your own besetting sin. In the “Hallowing of Work,” Bishop Paget says, “Increased skill and experience and ability are great gifts in working for others, but they do not *compare* with the power gained by conquering one fault of our own.”

Friendship can be the most beautiful thing in the world: it can be the silliest thing in the world. It can be the most lowering: it can be the most ennobling. Nothing excites so much laughter and hard speaking in the world as “schoolgirl friendships;” as often as not they are found among older people, but schoolgirls have given a name to this particular kind of folly, so it behooves schoolgirls to keep clear of it, and to deprive the name of its point.

But can you help being sentimental if you are made like that? Some are of good wholesome stuff, with an innate distaste for everything of the kind, while to some it is their besetting sin.

You can at least take precautions; for instance, do not day-dream about your friend,—brooding over the thought of her weakens your fibre more than being with her.

Make a rule of life for yourself about your intercourse; walk and talk with her more than with others, but at the same time sandwich those walks and talks by going with other friends,—it is a great pity to narrow your circle of possible friends by being absorbed in one person.

Do not write sentimental letters, and, finally, do not sit in your friend’s pocket and say “Darling.” (If you wish to know how it sounds, read “A Bad Habit,” by Mrs. Ewing.)



I must confess that I believe in what is so often jeered at as “kindred souls.” Love is not measured by time; often we are truer friends through some half-hour’s talk, in which we saw another’s real self, than through years of ordinary meeting. But this is so different from the folly I speak of, that I need not dwell on it; except to say that you will be spared many disappointments if you are content with the fact that such moments of sympathy have been, and do not look to have a permanent friendship on that basis. When people draw the veil aside for a minute they generally put it back closer than ever, and do not like to be reminded of the self-revelation.

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In the foolish friendships that make so much unhappiness, half the folly lies in expecting the other person to be always at high-water mark, and in being fretful and reproachful when she is not.

But to return to “schoolgirl friendships.” When you go out into society you may perhaps want to make private jokes among your friends, or to talk privately to them instead of helping in general conversation, and you may feel “I have nothing much to contribute to the general stock; why shouldn’t I enjoy myself? it’s very hard I should be so severely criticized for bad manners if I do.” But if you look into any such matter, you are sure to find that bad manners are bad Christianity. There is a want of self-restraint in this schoolgirlishness; and you ought not to be able to pick out a pair of great friends in general society, not merely because, if you could, it would show them to be absurd and underbred, but because it would mean that others were made to feel “left out.” Have you ever had some violent friendship—or laughed at it in others—which meant running in and out of each other’s houses at all hours—being inseparable—quoting your friend, till your brothers exclaimed at her very name—and making all your family feel that they ranked nowhere in comparison with her? In this matter of home and friends conflicting, I quite see the point of view of some: “My family don’t give me the sympathy and help that my friend does—they always tease or scold if I come to them in a difficulty, and yet they are vexed and jealous when I find a friend who can and will help.”

I do not say, Cut yourself off from your friend,—she is sent by God to help you; but, Remember to feel for your Mother;—see how natural and loving her jealousy is, and spare it by constant tact—instead of being a martyr, feel that it is *she*, and not *you*, who is ill-used. And in all ways, never let outside affections interfere with home ones. It is the great difference between them, that outside, self-chosen affections burn all the stronger for repression and self-restraint; while home ones burn stronger for each act of attention to them and expression of them; *e.g.* postponing a visit to a friend for a walk with a brother will make both loves stronger, and *vice versa*,—and your friendship will last all the longer because you consume your own smoke. Dr. Carpenter says that signs of love wear out the feeling;—every now and then they strengthen it, but their frequency shows weakness. Friendships are God-given ties when they are real, but inseparable ones are mostly only follies;—anyhow, family ties are the most God-given of all, and friendship should help us to fulfil family claims better, instead of making us neglect them. The best test of whether your love for an outside person is of the right kind, is, does it make you pleasanter at home? Mr. Lowell mentions an epitaph in the neighbourhood of Boston, which recorded the name and date of a wife and mother, adding simply, “She was so pleasant.”



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We realize that we ought to make the world better than we find it, but we do not realize how much more we should succeed in doing so if we made it brighter,—a task which is in everybody's power. We are all ready to bear pain for others, but we overlook the little ways in which we might give pleasure. "Always say a kind word if you can," says Helps, "if only that it may come in perhaps with a singular opportuneness, entering some mournful man's darkened room, like a beautiful firefly, whose happy circumvolutions he cannot but watch, forgetting his many troubles."

And there is one tiny little suggestion I would make to you, so small it will not fit on to any of my larger headings. Do not make fun of your friend's little mishaps, little stupidities, losing her luggage, having said the wrong thing, or having a black on her face when she especially wished to look well! Your remark may be witty, but it does not really amuse the victim. I know it is very good for people to be chaffed, and I do not wish them to lose this wholesome bracing. And yet we have a special clinging to some tactful friends who never let us feel foolish.

Another test you should apply to Friendship is, does it lead to idle words? Every one likes talking about their neighbours, and dress, and amusement, but we need to be careful that kindness and nice-mindedness are not sacrificed, and that all our interests are not on that level. Many think that a woman's interest can rise no higher, and many girls and many women give colour to what you and I think a slander on us! We all like these things, but we all like higher things too, and we need to encourage the higher part of us because it so soon dies away. You know better than I do how much of your own talk may be silly chatter—or worse—flippant or wrong talk, which you would stop if an older person were by. I have heard High Schools strongly objected to because they made the girls so full of gossip, about what this or that teacher said, or what some girl did, till their people hated the very name of school. If school friends talk much school gossip, they must weaken their minds and feel at a loss when out of their school set. It is very "provincial" to have no conversation except the small gossip which would bore a stranger, and yet I fear many friends confine themselves to a kind of talk which unfits them for general society. You prohibit "talking shop," by which you sometimes mean subjects which are interesting to all intelligent people, and yet you talk gossiping "shop" about the mere accidents of school life. But, unless you interweave thoughtful interests and sensible topics of conversation with your friendship, it cannot last. There must be the tie of a common higher interest—it may be a common work, or intellectual sympathy, or, best of all, oneness in the highest things—but without this a mere personal fancy will not stand the monotony, much less the rubs and jars, of close intimacy. A friendship, where the personal affection is the deepest feeling, is not a deep love, or of a high kind;—we must in the widest sense love "honour more." "Love is a primary affection in those who love little: a secondary one in those who love much" (Coleridge).



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A stool must have three legs if it is to support you, and two friends want a third interest to unite them, or the friendship will die away in unreasonable claims and jealousies; since “claimativeness” is the evil genius which haunts friendship, unless common sense and wholesome interests are at hand to help. It is difficult, but necessary, to learn that affection is not a matter of will, except in family ties; that our friends love us in exact proportion as we appear to them lovable, that “the less you claim, the more you will have,” as the Duke of Wellington said of authority. A very little humility would wonderfully lessen our demands upon our friends’ affections, and a very little wisdom would preserve us from trying to win them by reproaches. How many coolnesses would be avoided could we learn to see that friendship, like all other relations of life, has more duties than rights. Nothing so certainly kills love as reproaches; I do not believe any affection will stand it. Our hurt feelings may seem to us tenderness and depth of feeling, but they are selfish:—“fine feelings seldom result in fine conduct.” If our love were perfectly selfless, we should be glad of all pleasure for our friend; failure in his allegiance to us would not change us, nothing would do that except failure in his allegiance to his better self. We should love our friends not for what they are to us, but for what they are in themselves. Of course, it may be said that fickleness to us is a flaw in his better self, but if we stop to think how many tiresome ways we probably have, we shall be lenient to the friends who show consciousness of them.

It is a natural instinct with all of us to claim love; those who seem most richly blessed with it probably have some one from whom they desire more than they receive; every one has to learn, sooner or later, that “an unnavigable ocean washes between all human souls,”—

“We live together years and years,
And leave unsounded still
Each other’s depths of hopes and fears,
Each other’s depths of ill.

“We live together day by day,
And some chance look or tone
Lights up with instantaneous ray
An inner world unknown.”

We all have to learn, sooner or later, that nothing less than Divine Love can satisfy us, but because our natural longings are so often denied, some say they are wrong and should be crushed out. It is wrong to give way to them, to yield to the tendency which is so strong with some, to let all their interests be personal,—to care for places and natural beauty and subjects only because they are associated with people,—to let life be dull to us unless our personal affections are in play. Women ought to make it a point of conscience to learn to care for things impersonally. We are too apt to be like Recha in “Nathan,” when she only looked at the palm trees because the Templar was standing

under them; when her mind recovered its balance, she could see the palm trees themselves.

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“Nun werd’ ich auch die Palmen wieder sehen
Nicht ihn bloss untern Palmen.”

If God sends us the trial of loneliness, it may be that He has a special work for us, which needs a long and lonely vigil beside our armour. He may be depriving us of earthly comfort to draw us closer to Himself, that we may learn from Him to be true Sons of Consolation.

“When God cuts off the shoots of our own interests,” it has been well said, “it is that we may graft on our hearts the interests of others.”

Nothing but knowing what loneliness is can teach us to feel for it in others. Nine-tenths of the world do suffer from it at some time or other; you may not now, but you will some day; and, if you are spared it, nine-tenths of the sorrows of life will be a sealed book to you. “I prayed the Lord,” says George Fox, “that he would baptize my heart into a sense of the conditions and needs of all men.”

But our Lord, Who Himself suffered under the trial of loneliness, sends all of us friends whom we do not deserve. We can trust to Him to give us the friends we need, just when we need them, and just as long as we need them, as surely as we trust Him for daily bread. He may be keeping His best to the last; nay, the best may never come to us in this life at all; but it is as true now as when St. Anselm said it, eight hundred years ago:—

“In Thee desires which are deferred are not diminished, but rather increased; no noble part, though unfulfilled on earth, is suffered to perish in the soul which lives in Thee, but is deepened and hollowed out by suffering and yearning and want, that it may become capable of a larger fulfilment hereafter.”

The hunger of the heart is as natural, and therefore as much implanted by God, as the hunger of the body. Neither must be gratified unlawfully; but when God sends food to either we should accept it thankfully, without either asceticism or greediness, and use the strength it gives us as a means of service. Does not the essence of the wrong sort of love consist in our looking on the affection we receive, or crave for, as a self-ending pleasure, instead of as a gift which is only sent to us to make us happier, and stronger to serve others?

We do not need to be always self-questioning as to how far we are using our happiness for others. We do not count our mouthfuls of food, we feed our bodies without thinking of it, and so we should do to our hearts; but we are often not healthy-minded enough to go right unconsciously, though some happy souls there are—

“Glad hearts, without reproach or blot,
Who do God’s work, and know it not.”



The Fall brings us under the curse; the tree of knowledge of good and evil has entailed upon us the necessity of self-knowledge; and if we find our hearts out of joint, and craving for more love than we get, we should examine ourselves as to whether we use the love we do get, like the runner's torch handed on from one to the other; whether the glow of our happiness warms us to pass on light and heat to others, or whether we absorb it all ourselves.



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And if we know that we are selfish in the matter,—what then? We cannot make ourselves unselfish by a wish; we cannot win love at will. But, though we cannot gain love, we can give it; we can learn to love so well, that we are satisfied by the happiness of those we love, even though we have nothing to do with that happiness.

“How hard a thing it is to look into happiness with another man’s eyes!” but it can be done. People do sometimes live, “quenching their human thirst in others’ joys.”

Although our craving for sympathy is wrong if it be allowed to lame our energies, yet in itself we cannot say it is wrong. “To become saints,” says F.W. Robertson, “we must not cease to be men and women. And if there be any part of our nature which is essentially human, it is the craving for sympathy. The Perfect One gave sympathy and wanted it. ‘Could ye not watch with Me one hour?’ ‘Will ye also go away?’ Found it, surely, even though His brethren believed not on Him; found it in St. John and Martha, and Mary and Lazarus:”—

“David had his Jonathan, and Christ His John.”

Some people are quite conscious that they do not “get on” with others; and they are tempted to be morbidly irritable and exacting, or else to shut themselves up and say, “It’s no use, no one wants me.” If no one wants you, it is your fault; for if you were always ready to be unselfish and thoughtful for others in small ways, you would be wanted. You need not fret because you are not amusing to talk to, and think that therefore you cannot win affection. As a rule, people do not want you to talk; they want you to listen. Now, any one can be a good listener, for that requires moral, and not intellectual qualifications. Sympathy to guess somebody’s favourite subject, and to be really interested in it, will always make that somebody think you pleasant; but the interest must be real: if you only give it for what you can get, you will get nothing.

The right person always is sent just when needed. I do not believe in people missing each other—though it may very well be that we are not fit to be trusted with the affection we should like, and that God knows we should rest in it if we had it, and never turn to Him, and so He keeps it from us till we are ready for it. The longer we live the more we are struck by the apparent chance which threw us with the right people.

There is a Turkish proverb which says, “Every only child has a sister somewhere,” and F.D. Maurice, in his beautiful paper on the “Faery Queen,” declares his belief that all who are meant to be friends and to help each other will find each other at the right time, just as Spenser’s knights, though wandering in trackless forests, always encountered each other when help was wanted.



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And if all this is true of ordinary friendship—if it calls for so much high principle and self-denial and prayer—what of love, “the perfection of friendship”? It is usually either ignored or joked about. The jokes are edged tools always in bad taste and often dangerous, but it is a pity the subject should be ignored. When it becomes a personal question the girl is sure to be too excited or irritable to take advice, so that there is something to be said for that discussion of “love in the abstract,” which Sydney Smith overheard at a Scotch ball. It is surely better, in forming her standard and opinion on this most important of all points, that a girl should have the help of her mother and older friends. Girls do not go to their mothers as they might, because they wait till they are sore and conscious and resentful. Most girls would rather be married, and quite right too,—in no other state of life will they find such thorough discipline and chastening!—it is the only life which makes a true and perfect woman. But if they wish it, let them not be so untidy, so fidgety, so domineering, that no man in his senses would put up with them! And if she be a “leisured girl” with no duty calling her from home (or very possibly many duties calling her to remain at home), let her think, not twice, but many times, before a wish for independence and Bohemianism (which she translates into “Art”) leads her into grooves of life where she is very unlikely to meet the sort of man who can give her the home and the surroundings to which she is accustomed. Harriet Byron’s despair and ecstasy about Sir Charles have passed away, but girls still dream of heroes (not always so heroic as Sir Charles). Their dreams cannot fail to be coloured by the novels they read and the poetry they dwell on; do they always realize the responsibility of keeping good company? Read love-stories, by all means, but let them be noble ones, such as show you, Molly Gibson, Mary Colet, Romola, Di Vernon, Margaret Hale, Shirley, Anne Elliot, The Angel in the House, The Gardener’s Daughter, The Miller’s Daughter, Sweet Susan Winstanley, and Beatrice. It is impossible to dwell on the mere passionate emotion of second-rate novels and sensuous poetry, without wiping some possibility of nobleness out of your own life. Every influence which you allow to pass through your mind colours it, but most of all, those which appeal to your feelings. You take pains to strengthen your minds, but you let your feelings come up as wheat or tares according to chance; and yet the unruly wills and affections of women need more discipline than their minds.

Perhaps the individual girl feels commonplace and of small account. Why should she restrain her love of fun, her Tomboyism, her tendency to flirtation? She is no heroine! But, let her be as commonplace as possible, she will represent Woman to the man who is in love with her, as surely as Beatrice represented it to Dante.

Every woman, married or single, alters the opinion of some man about women. Even a careless man judges a girl in a way that she, with her head full of nonsense, probably never dreams of;—he has a standard for her, though he has none for himself.



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It is small wonder that chivalrous devotion should decrease when women lay so little claim to it. Miss Edgeworth needed to decry sentimental and high-flown feelings,—the Miss Edgeworth of to-day would need to uphold romance.

Women may still be “Queens of noble Nature’s crowning,” but they too often find that crown irksome, and prefer to be hail-fellow-well-met, taking and allowing liberties, which give small encouragement to men to be like Susan Winstanley’s lover.

Dante never watched the young man and maiden of to-day accosting each other, or he would not have said—

“If she salutes him, all his being o’er
Flows humbleness.”

I am afraid Dante would now be left “*sole* sitting by the shores of old Romance,” unless indeed he went to some of the seniors, who are supposed to have no feelings left! “If you want to marry a young heart, you must look for it in an old body.”

Are you, then, to reject all suggestions of a sensible marriage with any man who is not Prince Perfect? I once read a very sensible little poem which described the heroine waiting year after year for Prince Perfect. He came at last, but unfortunately “he sought perfection too,” so nothing came of it! Cromwell’s rule in choosing his Ironsides is the safest in choosing a husband: “Give me a man that hath principle—I know where to have him.” If he comes to you disguised as one of these somewhat commonplace Ironsides, and recommended by your mother, consider how very much the fairy Prince of your dreams would have to put up with in you, and you will probably find it heavenly, as well as worldly wisdom, to “go down on your knees and thank Heaven fasting for a good man’s love.” You will tell me that many happy and useful lives are now open to women, and that they need not be dependent on marriage for happiness,—and I shall quite agree with you; you may go on to say that marriage can now be to a woman a mere choice amongst many professions, a mere accident, as it is to a man,—and there I shall totally disagree with you. It is quite possible that Happiness may lie in the narrower, more self-willed work of the single woman, but Blessedness, which is higher and more enduring than happiness, can only be known to the married woman whose whole nature is developed, and *fully* known only to the “Queen of Marriage: a most perfect wife.”

Are you, then, to spend your lives making nets, or, following Swift’s wise caution, even in making cages, waiting, like Lydia Languish, for a hero of romance, and beguiling the interval with reading “The Delicate Distress,” and “The Mistakes of the Heart”? Not at all! The best way to prepare for marriage is to prepare yourself to be like Bridget Elia, “an incomparable old maid.”



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“The soul, that goodness like to this adorns
Holdeth it not concealed;
But, from her first espousal to the frame,
Shows it, till death, revealed.
Obedient, sweet, and full of seemly shame,
She, in the primal age,
The person decks with beauty; moulding it
Fitly through every part.
In riper manhood, temperate, firm of heart,
With love replenished, and with courteous praise,
In loyal deeds alone she hath delight.
And, in her elder days,
For prudence and just largeness is she known;
Rejoicing with herself,
That wisdom in her staid discourse be shown.
Then, in life’s fourth division, at the last
She weds with God again,
Contemplating the end she shall attain;
And looketh back, and blesseth the time past.”—*Dante*.

[Footnote 6: James Martineau.]

[Footnote 7: Channing.]

A Good Time.

We sometimes hear people lamenting the dangers of this age as regards unsettled views in religion, while others lament that girls neglect home duties for outside work.

I am not at all sure that our greatest danger does not lurk in that most modern invention, “a good time,” which, as a disturbing element, is closely related to that other modern institution “week-ends.”

Fifteen or twenty years ago, a self-willed or self-indulgent girl escaped from the monotony of home duties by the door which led into slums and hospitals. Nowadays the same girl finds that duties can be evaded by the simpler plan of staying at home and having “a good time.” I do not think this will last, any more than slumming, as a mere fashion, has lasted. I hope not, for it means that girls have had very full liberty given to them, and that their sense of responsibility has not yet grown in proportion to their freedom. Just now, pending the growth of that sixth sense, “a good time” is very easily to be had—at the cost of a little want of consideration for others—since the elders of today are curiously large-hearted in giving freely and asking very little in return.

But it would be an ungenerous nature which took advantage of generosity, and was content to take much and give little.

Surely it is utterly ignoble that any living soul sent into the great battle should ask to pick flowers, while every one worth their salt was hard at work fighting the foe, protecting the weak, nursing the wounded. I do not believe a girl would do it if she thought twice; every generous instinct would cry out against it. But a girl may drift into a very selfish pleasure-seeking life, and the tendency of the day is to regard this as a defensible and lawful line of life. Duty will hold its own with the morally thoughtful and with generous natures, but it is no longer an unquestioned motto for every one as it used to be in Nelson's days.



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I have heard a girl rebel against her life, on the ground that she had a right to a good time; youth was the time for pleasure, she would never again have such a power of enjoyment, and it was absolutely criminal on her parents' part not to provide her with more. I thought she already had more than most; but in any case, I did not agree with her in saying that she must enjoy now, or not at all. In case it should be any comfort to those of you who may have a dull life, I can tell you that it is not so. I am convinced we all have a certain power of enjoyment, and if you can get your fill of pleasure in youth, you do not find as much keen enjoyment in middle life as if you had been kept on a shorter allowance. It is true you do not enjoy quite the same things—there are youthful amusements which you can only enjoy at a certain stage; but take comfort, if you do not get as much as you would like now, it will only mean keener enjoyment of the pleasures of the next stage of life.

But what struck me most was her fundamental assumption that Pleasure was a valid object in life, and that she was sent into the world to get as much as she could.

If so, I think the world is a great Failure. I often hear people saying, "I cannot believe in God, because of the Pain in the world;" and if this world was the end of things, that would be reasonable; if Pleasure is the object of Life, it would be better never to be born! But if we are sent here to grow, then I cannot understand Pain being a reason for doubting God's love. Looking back on life, I am sure each will feel, "I could not afford to miss one of its shadows, no matter how black they were at the time." And the fact that you and I each feel that the key of God's love fits the lock of our individual life, should be one valid reason for believing that all Life is ordered for a right and noble purpose; our happy lives are as real a bit of Life, and as good a specimen of God's government, as sad ones.

People say to me, "Yes, I feel as you do about myself, but others have such terrible shadows that I cannot feel God is good!" Well, some sufferers tell me they would not change their life, for they feel God's love in it: surely they have a right to speak. We learn from them that Pain works rightly into life.

What makes a woman's life worth living? That she has had this or that pleasure—that she has riches or poverty—that she is married or lonely, that she married the right man or the wrong?

No! What matters is, whether she is growing more and more into tune with the Infinite? Is she learning God's lesson, and fitting herself for the still nobler life He wants to give her?

You and I came into the world to do our part in a noble battle—

"'Twere worth a thousand years of strife,
'Twere worth a wise man's best of life.

If he could lessen but by one
The countless ills beneath the sun.”

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Besides, you will not find Pleasure-seeking pays in the long run! If you are feeling that Pleasure with a big “P” is your due, then all the little annoyances prick and irritate. If you pay heavily for a new dress which hangs badly, it is trying; if you never expected a new dress at all, and that same dress was unexpectedly given you, the drawback would be looked at very differently.

It would pay pleasure-seekers to try the old plan of looking on life as a Duty, where pleasures came by accident or kindness, and were heartily and gratefully enjoyed. Do you remember in the “Daisy Chain,” how Ethel says, after the picnic, that the big attempts at pleasure generally go wrong, and that the true pleasures of life are the little unsought joys that come in the natural course of things? Dr. May disliked hearing her so wise at her age, but I think it must have been rather a comfort to Ethel to have found it out. No thought of that kind damps your pleasure when the dance or the picnic turn out a great success! And when they do not, it is nice to feel there are other things in life. Every one knows how often something goes wrong at a big pleasure; the right people are not there, or your dress is not quite right; you are tired, or you say the wrong thing; while, if you get much pleasure, a certain monotony is soon felt, and you envy the vivid enjoyment of the girl who scarcely ever has a treat.

It stands to reason, that if you are deliberately arranging to get pleasure, and plenty of it, you cannot (from a purely pleasure point of view) enjoy it as much as if your life consisted of duties, and your pleasures came by the way. But there is a deeper reason why a life of amusement fails to amuse. It is not only that we are so made that nearly all our sensations of pleasure depend on novelty, the keenness wearing off if a sensation is repeated.

The reason lies in a fact which militates against the Pleasure-seeker’s foundation idea:—the fact that we are made for something else than pleasure, failing which we remain unsatisfied. “There is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness.”

Here is the point I should like you to think clearly out for yourselves. Fifty years ago, Carlyle taught this truth as with thunder from Sinai. Let us imbue our minds with his passionate scorn for those who come into this noble world to suck sweets,—to have “a good time.” “Sartor Resartus,” one of the Battle-cries of Life, and “Past and Present,” which has small mercy for idlers and pleasure-seekers, are character-making books:—

“There went to the making of man
Time with a gift of tears,
Grief with a glass that ran,”

and there also go, to the making of man and woman, certain books.

These may vary in each case and in generation. Tom Brown and Mr. Knowles' "King Arthur" may not do for you what they did for me; "Sesame and Lilies," "Past and Present," Emerson's "Twenty Essays" may be superseded, though I can hardly believe it; but see to it that you find and read their true successors, carry out Dr. Abbott's advice to his boys—to "read half a dozen de-vulgarizing books before leaving school."



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Surely R.L. Stevenson should be on the list, for he speaks so splendidly on Carlyle's great point that man was born for something better than Happiness. He says, over and over again, "Happiness is not the reward that mankind seeks. Happinesses are but his wayside campings; his soul is in the journey; he was born for struggle, and only tastes his life in effort." He sounds the same note as Marcus Aurelius, another of the de-vulgarizing man-making books of the world.

The message of all these men is, "Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein who walks and works it is well with him."

Surely, when we look into things and leave our hungry wishes on one side, it seems clear to the best side of our nature that we are born, not with a right to Pleasure, but with a right to opportunity for development on our own highest lines.

A pig has a right to pigs-wash—he has no higher capacity. You and I have a capacity for courage and helpfulness and friendship with God. Our life will be a success if these things are developed, and a failure if they are not. This is the success we have a right to, but as likely as not it may need Pain, not Pleasure, for its achievement; and in this case you and I are born with a right to Pain, and we should be defrauded if any one saved us from it.

I know you want Happiness and pleasure, and I sympathize with you; but it makes all the difference to your whole life if you go out into the world like a vulture screaming for prey, or if you start out hoping, in the first place, to be brave and helpful, and, only in the second place, ready to take any pleasure as a good gift to be happy and grateful about.

"How needlessly mean our life is; though we, by the depth of our living, can deck it with more than regal splendour!"[8]

Do you feel that this is very tall talk for quiet lives like yours and mine? Yes, it is; but we need great ideals to live even small lives by. Probably no one of us will ever get near living a noble life, but we can make our lives of the same fibre as those of the heroes. We can live on noble lines.

How?

I.—Let us *work for others*: which may mean no more than being the useful one in the house and perhaps taking a Sunday-school class.

II.—Let us live with noble people, *i.e.* read steadily books which keep us in touch with larger minds—if you are constantly meeting clever people that does instead, but if you lead quiet lives with not much to talk about, except gossip and family events, then secure a daily talk with people worth talking to.



III.—Let us live part of each day with God. St. Christopher is the patron saint of those who want to lead a noble, helpful life, and yet feel that in them there lies no touch of saintliness, save it be some far-off touch to know well they are not saints.

You know his story: how he sought to serve the strongest, first the Emperor, then the Devil, then the Crucified; how he went to an old hermit and said, "I am no saint, I cannot pray, but teach me to work for the Master;" and how at last he found that in his common work he attained to the service of the Crucified.



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You and I are sent into the world to serve the strongest, and we know that means the Crucified.

What makes Life worth while, and increasingly worth while, every year you live, is that He does not offer us Pleasure, though He gives it to most of us in overflowing measure: He offers us a share in His work. Think of all we owe to others, to all who love us—to all who make life easy to us—and feel what a debt we owe. Think of the work He is doing—of the work He died for. Think how He calls each one to His side to be His friend and helper and fellow-soldier. Think of the possibility which belongs to each one of us, of being one of His great army of those whose name is Help.

Let us thank Him for our Creation, in that such possibilities are before us. Verily, Life is well worth living.

“Go forth and bravely do your part,
O knights of the unshielded heart.”

[Footnote 8: Emerson.]

THE END.

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