

HOMELY HINTS

FROM

THE FIRESIDE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "LITTLE THINGS" ETC .

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PREFACE.

IT has been said that "there is a class of readers—and a large one too—who like to find in books rather what they know already, than what they have yet to learn." The hope of finding such readers has been felt as an encouragement by the writer of this little book.

If any one meets in the following pages with aught that conveys a useful hint of advice, or a ray of comfort or even pleasure, the design of the Author will be amply fulfilled.

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HOMELY HINTS.

ENCOURAGEMENT IN WELL-DOING.

WHEN laid aside from much active exertion, it is not unnatural to feel one's-self very useless, and perhaps that humbling lesson is the very one required. Still, a desire to help others in some way or other will arise; the privilege of being able to do so is hard to forego, and many a time have I recalled a speech I once heard of as having been made by one who for years had been a confirmed invalid. She said that one comfort in being thus laid aside was, that she had so much more time to think for her friends, and the person who told me this, added that she knew no one to whom she was more indebted for judicious counsel, as well as kind sympathies, than to this invalid friend. While thinking of the discouragements and disheartenings so frequently met with by those who labour for the good of others, the wish arose that I could cheer them up a little, and so I have been thinking of all that might be urged

in the way of encouragement to such to "be not weary in well-doing."

Take the words I have just written, or rather those which follow them, as my first comfort,—“For in *due* season ye *shall* reap if ye faint not.” Truly it is often the waiting for this *due* season that we feel so disheartening; we would so like to see the good effects of our labour now, to get the harvest whenever we have sowed the seed; but all good is slow in progress, and it must be in faith on the word, “ye *shall* reap if ye faint not,” that we go on. This slow growth of good applies to our own progress in the spiritual life as much as to our endeavours to benefit others by word or deed, temporally or spiritually, and often when impatient at our own inability “to do the things that we would,” we feel as if it were hopeless to strive any longer. Nay, in *due* season we shall reap, so faint not. Then remember that although you do not see any good arising from your labour, you are not therefore to conclude that no good is doing. Some seeds are longer in springing up than others, but they are not lying dormant; they are slowly, very slowly it may be, germinating, but they will appear above ground in “*due* season.” It may be that you will not see the fruit of your work; sometimes, you know, God takes this method

of "hiding pride from our eyes," but it is not lost labour for all that. You may be but the means of preparing the way, and another may come and seem to do all the good, but your part was as necessary first as his was last; "one soweth and another reapeth."

You say "that it is most discouraging to find that you have done harm where you wished to do good, and that sometimes you feel as if it were so difficult to do any real good that you are tempted to give up attempting it." Many a time indeed we are reduced to the thought that if we ourselves have derived benefit from making efforts for others, that is all we can say. Well, is not that something? first, a little humbling, very good for us, but not pleasant I grant, and then some good to ourselves in the way of self-denial, consideration for others, and the desire to help them, so it has not been all harm that has resulted from our unsuccessful efforts. Then you cannot deny that you do every now and then get a little encouragement to go on; why, only remember how many you may have been the means of stirring up, both by your example and by interesting them in your sick poor, so that they, too, are entering the field of useful labour, and you may thus feel encouraged and cheered on. The little beginnings of

good seem too trifling to count, but they widen, and spread around, and include in their circle both the helpers and the helped, for it is indeed "more blessed to give than to receive." As has been well said, "we may do our least actions as we sow small seeds, knowing that a self-multiplying power is in them. Dorcas is no more, but the influence of her example is gone into all the earth. Instead of working with one pair of hands in her solitary room, she is now sitting in a thousand places, making garments for the poor with many thousands of hands."* I can give also my full sympathy in your confessions of finding too often that it is dull work, that you fear you are losing your interest in it, and that you feel you are indeed wearying in well-doing. Perhaps you do need a little rest and variety, and when thus weary, why should you not take it? But even when conscious that you are not weary, but simply uninterested, and therefore apt to get spiritless, do not reproach yourself too severely for this. There is necessarily a good deal of what may be called routine work about everything we undertake, and it is not possible to feel the same interest in it as in other parts of our occupations, but it must be done nevertheless, and somebody must do it; so take heart

* *Quiet Hours*, Second Series.

again, and remember that by undertaking the dull tasks occasionally, or even regularly, you may perhaps be setting free others to get on with more important and imposing parts of the work, others better fitted to do them than yourself. After all, these are but secondary motives, and cannot at all times be turned to for encouragement, and for reviving our flagging energies. We need deeper as well as higher sources from which to draw, and may we not find them in the messages sent by our Lord to the churches in the opening chapters of Revelation? The oft-repeated "I know thy works," may well cheer our hearts, when we thus learn that our Saviour himself looks down with interest on what His servants do; and the high and holy motive he ascribes to the Church of Ephesus, may well be our strength in days of despondency. "For my name's sake thou hast laboured and hast not fainted," for the love you bear to Him, for the honour of His name, not for the praise of men, not for the gratitude of those you served, not even for the reward of seeing your work crowned with success, but "for his name's sake thou hast laboured." Well may those whose motive this is turn again and again to the blessed words, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience," and draw thence solace and strength.

Whatever your work be, He knows it; conscious you are that "you have but a little strength," He knows that too; or, it may be that sometimes all you can say is that you "have borne and have patience," He knows that it is so, and since it is all done or suffered for "his name's sake," fear not that you shall ever find this reason fail you as a reviving cordial and an animating motive; and doubt not that even the cup of cold water given in His name shall not go unrewarded.

Perhaps one reason for your present discouragement may be, that you expected to find it always easy and pleasant to work for your Lord, and are angry at yourself for the sloth and selfishness that too often make duty a burden. You feel that since you dare so seldom say, "For Thy name's sake I have done it," so you have no right to the comfort of thinking that He knows your works. But look again at all these gracious messages and warnings, and see if it is pleasant easy work there commended. Is it not rather sympathy expressed for labour, work, service, patience, and not fainting? and are not all the gracious rewards promised to "him that *overcometh*," and how can we overcome without striving, how win a victory without fighting?

I feel that in thus endeavouring to encourage

others I have "drawn the bow at a venture," but even if my words are not what you require, and fail to cheer you, I cannot have erred in giving you these passages of Scripture to think upon. Often have I felt when able to visit among the poor, how feeble and insufficient were all my attempts to speak a word in season, but it always was a comfort to recollect that if I had read a passage from God's Word, or even quoted a text from it, I might then plead the promise, "my word shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that whereunto I sent it." So let the command and promise I began with, and the gracious words of sympathy and counsel I end with, be refreshing springs to you; and when you drink thereof, may you indeed "run and not be weary, and walk and not faint."

WARNINGS AND EXAMPLES.

NO. I.

Few friends, and frequent intercourse with them, is certainly a style of society more to be desired than a large circle of mere acquaintance, even should the toil of calling on them be limited to once or twice a year. I do not deny, however, that this *toil*, as I have called it, is sometimes a duty, and it is occasionally even an amusement, from the variety and peculiarity of character and manner displayed. Far be it from me, however, to give this last as a reason for extending our intercourse with our fellow-creatures beyond the intimate friendly socialities which are so pleasant, for it is not a good habit, to say the least of it, to go into society to pick out the weaknesses and ludicrous points of our acquaintances.

But what are we to do with our observations and discoveries of the peculiarities and weaknesses and wearisomenesses of our acquaintances? Why should we not make use of these as warnings to ourselves

to avoid the same? I certainly did feel this to-day when visiting our old friend — —. We had not met for nearly two years, and much that was interesting to both had occurred in that time, but not a word or a thought had she to bestow on anything except herself and her own concerns. She was, even when young, apt to be egotistical, but being a member of a large family, with all of whom we were intimate, and having also some pursuits in common, this peculiarity was not so striking as it is now, when it amounts to a degree of self-engrossment that is as unpleasant as ill-bred. Not a question was asked about mutual friends; no interest seemed to be felt in any subject not immediately connected with herself; and though I was glad to hear she was well and happy, and disposed also to discuss with her the various employments and duties she is now called to, yet it was irksome to hear only of what *she* did, said, or felt, or of what was said or thought of *her*—not of those among whom she now dwells, not of the occupations themselves that she is interested in, nothing but *ego*. I tried in vain to draw her attention to the subject of friends, to her own family, or to any of the usual topics of the day; the weather even, was only remarked on as wet or dry, according as *she* had got out or been kept in-doors: as to

any reference to myself or my concerns, that was out of the question, even had I wished to introduce these interesting topics. I confess, however, I *do* like to be allowed my own share of conversation, and I do like to find an old acquaintance still interested in what I am doing or suffering, and I do like a talk about old times ; and I don't like, and I know no one who does, such utter self-engrossment as I met with to-day. Well, I came away somewhat chilled and disappointed, and then arose the thought, —Have I never done this myself? Have I never met my friends in so self-engrossed a spirit as to pour out a stream of egotism, unheeding alike their want of interest in it, or their desire to communicate something that had occupied or interested them? If conscience did not answer in the affirmative, it was at least sufficiently awake to the danger of so doing, and I felt that — — was a *warning*. How is this fault or habit to be cured or guarded against? By cultivating sympathy with others, by striving after the spirit which becomes,

“ Through constant watching, wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And to wipe the weeping eyes.”

Another cure for this self-engrossment would surely be found in a real interest in the subjects spoken of,

for themselves, and not on account of the share *I* have in them. Whether it be studies, pursuits, occupations of any kind, or friends or relaxations or amusements, let it be these you are occupied with, rather than your own actings and feelings with regard to them; and then, though there may be a danger of being too much engrossed by these things, it will at least not be the self-engrossment I am speaking of. When you meet one of a kindred spirit on any matter you are thus interested in, you will derive mutual satisfaction from conversing on it; but even then, remember that others like to talk of what interests them. Thus musing and moralizing, I bent my steps to the residence of Miss —. It is, I confess, somewhat of a penance to pay a visit there; but she is old and lonely, and a kind, good-hearted, unselfish being, yet wearisome exceedingly. I sat nearly an hour with her, listening patiently to her long never-ending stories and reminiscences, yet I came away as wise as I went of all I wished to hear or she to tell. How she diverged from her narrative, how she pursued every idea, started and then returned to the original track, only to start off again, as each person, day, or date named in the narrative, suggested something totally irrelevant to the matter in hand. Then such prolixity of detail; the

day and hour anxiously insisted on; what she was doing and why she was doing it; when such and such a letter came; what so-and-so said to her when she met her in the street,—“*that* day you know that I had to go out, because I had just heard that somebody or other was ill;” then the whole history of that somebody; the marriage of his or her parents; and so on and on, or rather so off, off, and away, till you begin to forget that you are really anxious to know the contents of the letter named at the beginning of the conversation, and only after you have said good-bye, and the street-door has closed upon you, do you remember that she had never got the point she wished to tell divulged at all. She is certainly a warning against prolixity and unnecessary details; but a visit to her is a capital exercise of patience, and when one has time to spare, it is not unamusing to watch how she branches out, and when you think she has got inextricably confused, to find her back again at the main story, then off and on again, till you are not quite sure whether she is not the best and clearest teller of a story you ever heard after all! As a little rest and refreshment after acting listener so long, I betook myself to the M—s, where, go when I like, I always feel the better of my visit. They are really examples not

warnings, and in nothing more than in this, that they never meet you with a reproach for having been so long absent, and yet seem, and I believe are, truly glad to see you when you do come. They, however, being *friends*, perhaps this is not to be wondered at, but it is a pleasant peculiarity, either in a friend or an acquaintance, for there are few things more agreeable than to know that you will meet people again on the same kindly footing you did the last time you met. It is not of the deeper feeling of trust that real friendship gives that I am now speaking, but rather of that kindly, unsuspicious, unexact nature, that certainly characterizes the M—s, as well as some others of my acquaintances. The opposite of this spirit, an exacting, jealous demand of attentions, and a watchfulness to suspect and resent neglect, is so foreign to the idea of real friendship, that I can hardly fancy that feeling arising or remaining towards those who exhibit such unamiable dispositions. But even amongst one's visiting acquaintances, where one, so to speak, has no right to expect the same allowances and trust that a friend ought to show, it is both pleasant and winning to feel sure of your ground, to interchange even the common civilities of life in a frank, courteous manner, feeling that both parties are glad to

meet, and are alike interested in each other to be able to listen to the minor details and events that have occupied or interested each. Then the M—s have also the cheering habit of looking on the bright side of things, or at least of not dwelling on the dark view; and yet one never feels that they are putting aside sorrow, or that this arises from want of deep feeling; it is really Christian cheerfulness, derived from that strength which is given according to the day.

My next lesson during this day's visiting was derived from a different source, being neither more nor less than a hint taken from Mrs. —'s excuse for her little barking dog! You know the animal, and you must remember the annoyance caused by the noise it makes at the entrance of every visitor, when fully five minutes is passed in vain endeavours to quiet it, threats and coaxing being alike unavailing, and all attempts at welcoming her friends being thus effectually precluded. I am accustomed to this reception and do not mind it; but while calling there, other friends came in, and the same scene was of course repeated, till at last, one lady seeming somewhat alarmed, Mrs. — laughingly assured her that, according to the old saying, "the dog's bark was worse than his bite." I do not know how far this is

a legitimate excuse for keeping barking dogs in a drawing-room, but the use of the proverb set me thinking upon how often I had heard it pleaded, or pleaded it for myself, as an excuse for a morose manner, or a sharp setting-down of some one for a trifling fault. It is all very well and charitable for the maker of the excuse to say,—“ So-and-so means nothing; it is all manner; he or she is really kind-hearted and obliging, and would not hurt any one for the world; their bark is worse than their bite.” It may be all very true, but why should they bark at all, if it annoys their neighbours? It is true Mrs. —’s little dog did not bite any one; nay, he even went round the circle wagging his tail, as if pleased to see his mistress’s friends; but they had all been a good deal annoyed by their reception, and some evidently put little trust in his overtures towards more intimate acquaintance. So, I suspect, do most people feel towards the human beings who indulge themselves in gruff or snappish manners under a like excuse; and I should suppose, also, that when any one has a favour to ask, or a kindness to desire, it will not be to our *barking* friends that application will be made, even though the bark be known to be worse than the bite. A kind heart may not always accompany a kind manner, but surely a kind manner

should always go along with a kind heart ; “ out of the abundance of the heart the mouth should speak.”

If I have drawn some good lessons from my day's visiting, they will give opportunity for a good deal of self-application when thus moralizing at the fireside.

WARNINGS AND EXAMPLES.

NO. II.

Among my "warnings," I have not yet classed a gossiping acquaintance, about the worst of all; for I do not think that even egotism, or self-engrossment, or prosiness, is so offensive, so wearisome, as gossip and tittle-tattle about our neighbours' concerns. Do not suppose, however, that I have never suffered under this annoyance; for though it is partly true that those who are not gossips themselves do not hear gossip, still in the country, or rather in small country towns, there really seems no possibility of avoiding this style of conversation. Sometimes it is disguised under the name of a friendly interest in those around you, and I have felt as if it were only because being a stranger to the people spoken of, I could not feel the interest shown by those discussing them, in all their domestic arrangements, till I discovered that the gossips knew as little personally of those they talked of as I did. How the know-

ledge of the private affairs and the home life of those thus unknown is acquired, is often a mystery to me, still greater than why it is sought after and retailed; and were it not that it is so unpleasant, it would be amusing to see the importance conferred on or assumed by the happy possessor of some private source of correct information on such topics.

I shall not soon forget how painful it was to hear a sad case of mental derangement thus canvassed, commented on, and discussed by all the gossips of —. Few knew the family where this sad trial had occurred; but in a small idle village, every one seemed to feel that a subject like this was far too interesting and exciting to be left, as it ought, to silent sympathy, and often did I feel my heart sicken at the eagerness with which particulars were repeated, the conduct and supposed feelings of the family commented on, their doings blamed, and the most sacred sorrows of a household thus made the matter for the gossip of a morning call. This was an extreme case, you will say, and I admit it; but even when tittle-tattle is confined to more petty matters, is it not offensive to good taste, to say the least of it, to hear nothing spoken of but such matters as the dress and domestic arrangements of every one around? What possible interest can Miss B.

find in the fact that Mrs. C. gets in a washerwoman once a fortnight, which *she* thinks unnecessary, because Mrs. D., with a larger family, never gets in one, but helps on the ironing day herself? Why should she distress herself so upon the subject of Miss L.'s extravagance in having had two new bonnets in so short a time, and in buying that new cloak, while she is equally astonished at the length of time Miss H. has worn that shawl, or Mrs. T. that gown? Where did Miss D. learn that the —s do not pay their accounts regularly, or that there is not much domestic peace in such or such a household, the causes for such unhappiness being freely surmised and repeated as facts; or why should she or any one else care to know that the poor F—s are reducing their establishment to two servants, or that some one else has enlarged hers by the addition of a footman? I suppose this is what is called harmless gossip, and it may be that sometimes the worst that can be said of it is that it is frivolous and idle; but that is bad enough, and I fear it too often proceeds from, as it certainly encourages, a spirit of prying and impertinent curiosity about what concerns them not.

It is one argument in favour of cultivating intellectual tastes, that these may supply safe topics of

conversation; and what a relief such subjects are, let those tell who, living in small towns or villages, have their spirits daily chafed with the incessant gossip and small talk that goes on around them. When making a round of visits or receiving a succession of visitors at —, I used often to be struck by the wearisome reiteration of one topic; every person seemed to have but one and the same subject of interest, and whatever it might be, it was worn threadbare before it was done with.

A real heartfelt interest in others would do much to stop this habit; for the more true and earnest your feelings for your neighbours are, the less can you bear to hear their conduct canvassed and their affairs discussed by mere acquaintances; and where we have not this interest, let us leave them alone.

Let me now turn to a visit paid to an invalid friend, Miss —, and surely if any one merits to be held up as an example it is she. She is now confined almost entirely to bed or to the sofa, and suffers much both from pain and the weary restlessness that is almost worse to bear than pain; yet when able to see her friends at all, she receives them with so much cheerful kindness, that one is apt to forget how great a sufferer she is. I do not speak here of the strength of Christian principle that alone could

enable her to bear so meekly and patiently this trial, but rather of the freedom from all the little selfish invalid ways that are so apt to grow upon us when thus laid aside from active enjoyments and duties. Her room is bright, and her love of all that is beautiful still finds indulgence in flowers, and in the exquisite neatness of all around her. I believe she is seldom able to do much, but she has always books and work beside her, and keeps up her interest in her old pursuits in a remarkable degree. Unless in answer to questions, she never talks of herself or of her illness; yet she is so grateful for sympathy, so willing to make the best of everything, that one leaves her sick-room ashamed of ever having grumbled at trifling ailments. I never saw any one so free from being *exigeante*, so grateful for the trifling attentions of a nosegay or any little gift, and so ready to enter into the joys of others, even when laid thus aside from partaking in them. It is indeed, as I said before, the grace of God which thus enables her to "glorify God in the fires;" but she is not the less exemplary for that, and much of her sweet unselfish cheerfulness must be a cultivated spirit, the result of earnest striving against the engrossing feelings her long illness would naturally produce.

It is wonderful, too, to see how much she does for

others even when thus laid aside : her own sufferings suggest palliations for others, whose cases she has heard of, and her luxuries and comforts are all shared as far as possible with poorer or less favoured invalids.

I never was of Charles Lamb's half-playfully expressed opinion, that " he hated sick people." I rather like to believe, for the honour of my sex, that there is in most of us an innate love of sick-nursing, that makes a sick friend rather more than less attractive to us ; but I cannot help admiring and wishing to imitate ——'s freedom from all the querulous complaining, restless discontent, and self-engrossment so frequent among invalids. There is really danger in visiting her of forgetting to show the sympathy one really feels, and of losing the benefit of thus sharing in the sorrows of another ; but this is so seldom the case that one need not complain, and I must keep my reflections on the subject of sympathy for some other occasion.

ON WORRY.

You have, indeed, my sincerest sympathy in your various little annoyances, all the more annoying, perhaps, because they are so little. Pray, do not suppose that because I am now so much removed from these domestic disquietudes, and must indulge myself in the quiet comfort of an arm-chair and the fireside, that I have at all forgotten the feeling of being worried, or have not the power of sympathy on such occasions. Among the first papers I turned to in that charming book, *Friends in Council*, was the one devoted to this subject, but it gives only a man's view of the matter, and leaves all our minor miseries untouched; and I do think one of the ladies introduced into these meetings might have given a few words upon the worries of women. Few of these are more provoking than the one you are suffering under, that of having workmen in the house, aggravated by the general inefficiency of all whom you employ. Each workman, as he comes, seems in the first place to destroy some part of the work of

the one who went before him, and, when expostulated with, excuses himself by saying his work should have been done first ; or he takes a methodical fancy, and sits idle all day till some other workman comes to get matters ready for him. The plumber can't work till the carpenter has been sent for, the carpenter destroys what the painter has just finished, the locksmith spoils both, and the upholsterer seems to think that doors and windows are of little consequence compared to carpets and curtains, and so he lays down the one and hangs up the other without the least concerning himself whether the door will open or the window-shutters close. Yes, of our domestic worries, workmen in the house are about the worst ; and yet, if you leave the house, and hope that matters will get on in your absence, you find on your return the equally great worry awaiting you, that of finding almost everything done wrong. It really seems as if, now-a-days, the workpeople only engage to send the hands, but the employer has to be the head and to give all the directions, not only of what he wishes done, but also of how it is to be done. The upturning, too, of all the usual order of a household is a worry in itself ; nothing is to be found when wanted, the servants grow unpunctual as to meals, and when expostulated with, throw

all the blame on the workpeople: the plumber put out the kitchen fire with melting lead on it, so dinner is late; the spoons and forks are locked up for safety, and could not be got at till the painters had gone away, and so on. We must confess, however, that the worry of losing things,—the keys, for instance, occurs too often when we have not the pretext of workmen in the house to excuse it, and a grievous worry it often is. There is one peculiarity about it, too, which you must have noticed, namely, that nothing is ever out of the way when it is *not* wanted. You have been sometimes days and weeks without requiring a particular book, or paper, or key, and during all that time you frequently see the article in question quietly reposing in its own place. Let but an urgent and immediate call, however, be made for any of these, and, lo! it has vanished, and often, after hours of worry in searching in all possible and impossible places, the missing culprit comes to light just where you last put it. I say “the missing culprit,” for it is hardly possible not to believe that the lost book, paper, or key, has not been hiding itself, in a fit of perversity, till it was no longer wanted, and very probably has been much amused at the state of worry its absence has been causing. I often used to try to look and feel quite

unconcerned as to whether I found the missing article or not, feeling as if I had a much better chance of doing so if I kept cool, and, at all events, this plan disappointed the malicious goblin of worry which possessed the lost key and prompted it to hide itself! Something of the same kind seems to apply to worries of other kinds, such as worries with children, viz., that they never occur when you are prepared for them, or are indifferent to them, or are able to bear them. No, no! Mr. Worry knows better than that; but come home tired and, it may be, a little cross, and you are sure to be met with tidings of a nursery accident or piece of mischief; or invite a friend to see your children, and it will be a wonder if they do not take that time, and that time only, to be noisy and troublesome or shy and peevish, or to be caught in all the happy freedom of dirty faces and hands, torn pinafores, and touzy heads. Then there are "the accounts,"—dread source of worry to all conscientious persons who endeavour to keep them regularly, and to make receipts and expenditure balance each other. Sometimes the figures get into the wrong column, and woful disorder ensues; sometimes there is a deficiency on the expenditure side, and no racking of the brain can recal what has been done with the

money; and sometimes there is an excess of "balance" over, and it is still more hopeless to find out how this has occurred. Really, sometimes, when thus harassed, I have thought those persons in the right who never keep account-books, and so escape the worry of the balancing thereof.

At no time, however, is this imp more active and successful in his attacks than when he comes in the train of his twin-brother Hurry. How he revels then; pulling out a pin here, snapping off a button there, breaking the lock of the trunk just at the last moment, hiding the key or the address when all is ready, pushing footstools so as to make you fall over them as you rush wildly out of the room, knocking over the ink-bottle, hooking your dress on every door-handle, putting your gloves and parasol back into the very place you had just taken them out of, or slyly placing another book in the place of the one you meant to read in the railway, and letting you find out, when too late, that you have snatched up some dull law-book instead of that charming novel. But bad as Worry is when attending on Hurry, he is sometimes quite as unbearable when his brother has taken himself off, and left one to sit and wait for some one who is in no hurry. Think of the sensations of a punctual person waiting for a cab to

take him or her out to a very particular friend's house to dine, when half an hour elapses and no cab comes; recal what you may have felt when you found the coach or steamboat that ought to have been in time for the last train, just ten minutes too late; nay, just think of your feelings at almost every hour of the day, if you have ever had a sauntering, trifling, loitering, acquaintance, whom you were obliged to wait for, and could neither go away and leave nor induce by any effort to be punctual. I confess to thinking the worry of waiting, about as bad as any. Then, when you are annoyed and fretted about anything, it is sometimes a great aggravation to see others taking it coolly, seeming to think all you are suffering of no consequence, expressing themselves confident that all will come right in the end, and evidently rather amused than otherwise at your distress. Worse, still, however, is it to be one of those who thus "take it coolly," when obliged to be with one who is always in a worry; no arguments avail, no persuasion sways, no sympathy consoles, they harp over and over the same strain, they persist in being sure all is going wrong, they delight in being unhappy, and are alike a torment and tormented. The next worst thing to being in a worry one's-self is to see another in one; but there is

this benefit to be derived from it sometimes, if it does not infect you it cures you. Do you never find this true? Have you not frequently resolved, after having been with some one of this description, that you will henceforth strive to take things coolly, and, for the sake of others as well as for our own, it is a wise resolve, if we could always keep to it. We must learn, too, to bear in mind that what annoys one person has no such effect on another, before we condemn the worries of others, or allege that they are self-inflicted, though I suspect sometimes they are so, or are cherished as little pet worries. Laughable enough these last sometimes are. Only fancy being worried by some one perpetually coming in and going out of the room you are settled in, *leaving the door open* each time. This last is my own pet worry; but there are many almost as trying, caused by the extra-tidy members of the household insisting on and persevering in putting all one's little odds and ends out of the way, hiding them in fact, never allowing them to remain where you put them, taking your keys out of your desk, putting your scissors and thimble into the wrong work-box, and never allowing you a moment's freedom in laying down a book where you can get it again, or placing a chair a few inches out of its

place. To be sure it is some comfort to know that these extra-tidy ones suffer far more from worry themselves than you do; from their conduct they really make one think sometimes that they would be happiest in a petrified house, where, every article being unalterably fixed in one situation, no disturbance could ensue.

What an incessant source of worry the newspapers are in most houses, the ladies generally putting them out of sight as litter, the gentlemen tormented by not finding them when wanted, the postman blamed for not bringing them in time, the servants blamed for not bringing them up-stairs, or for taking them down-stairs, and woe betide the unlucky wight who is convicted of having torn up or sent away a newspaper that had not been read or was intended to be kept. If in the varied contents of a newspaper there are frequent and serious sources of annoyance or distress to many, their very existence seems a constant source of worry to all.

ON RUBBISH.

Do you really expect *me* to congratulate you on having got quit, not only of your wearisome workmen, but of what you irreverently term "a vast mass of rubbish besides?" I thought you knew that I belonged to the genus of hoarders, and never yet parted from anything I had been accustomed to see beside me, without a pang, so that now the thought of even *your* house being all new furnished, and no old acquaintances left, is scarcely a matter of congratulation. It is a curious tendency (disease, you will say), this love of gathering up and keeping things. I plead guilty to it, and that not only when some association has made the articles in question almost sacred, but often when I can give no other reason for it than just that I like to keep them. I verily believe it is inherent in some people, call it acquisitiveness, or what you will; and those who have it not can no more understand where the pleasure of doing so lies, than we who have it can explain it. Since the days of reading and believing in Aladdin

and his lamp, where the awful consequences of giving away old lamps for new were set forth, up to the present hour, when inanimate things grow almost into friends, I can recall having this tendency; and I will not let you laugh at it as altogether absurd without an attempt to set forth its merits. In the first place, having this propensity does not hinder us from enjoying new things, so there we are equal, although I allow we have sometimes feelings of regret for the superseded articles, as if their feelings were hurt at being thus cast off. Did you never in your youth linger in an old lumber garret, and can you not even yet recal the feeling of awe, and pleasure, and amusement then produced? Even before the age when the *sentimental* comes into play, and sets one a dreaming over the scenes witnessed by those old records of days gone by, there is to most children the greatest pleasure in being allowed to rummage among the rubbish, now no longer considered of any value. A sort of Robinson-Crusoe feeling comes over them, of how useful this chair or that table would be to them; delightful boxes with rusty keys are discovered, queer old desks with sliding lids and pigeon-holes and secret drawers are looked through and longed for; and all of a sudden the usual desire to break up and destroy leaves them, and they feel

sure that they could so mend up any piece of furniture that it could be made quite as useful as ever. All unsophisticated children delight in a hunt among lumber, and are believers in the old saying, "Keep a thing seven years, and you will find a use for it." You must not say that this desire to keep argues a covetous disposition, for when our hoarded treasures are found to be useful, the pleasure of giving them away is great, and the feeling is almost one of triumph when suddenly some want is discovered, some blank felt, and some long laughed-at hoarded article fits into the blank and fills up the want. Thrift we may plead guilty to, but not covetousness. Then please to remember that it is not always old lumber and rubbish that this tendency leads us to keep; it is the self-same faculty that makes some people collectors, whether of autographs, relics, books, or scientific curiosities, and which causes them to value and cherish and enjoy these collections, in a way and to a degree you spendthrifts cannot conceive. It is true that in these cases you do not laugh at the collector, sometimes you even condescend to admit that our treasures are worth collecting and looking at; but even when a similarity of taste leads people to enjoy seeing the collections of others, they have often no desire to collect for themselves, no

wish to acquire property in that line, and, accordingly, these people never have anything they can call their own, except necessary articles, as dress or furniture. I do not think this can be accounted for except on the supposition that it is a natural tendency in some natures thus to make collections of aught they value; and I suppose it is a modification, or perhaps a corruption, of this inclination, which gives the love of what you call "rubbish." Of course I do not expect you to sympathize in the interest I confess to feeling in looking in at the window of an "old curiosity shop," *alias* an old furniture broker's; but it is far more attractive to me than an ordinary gay upholsterer's wareroom;—there is always the hope of finding something quaint or queer, the desire to try if a little rubbing up and cleaning would not make "the auld things look amaisht as weel's the new," to say nothing of the interest attached to the fancied histories of what were once household treasures. Laugh if you like, it does us no harm to have our hobbies or our follies laughed at, and, as I said before, we have our revenge sometimes, when we hear a wish expressed that such or such a thing had not been so rashly parted with, and our triumph, too, if we have kept the cast-off valuable, and can produce it when its worth is thus

recognised. You must confess that *sometimes* you have regretted the results of one of your thorough clearings out, and wished that you had not burned all those old letters and papers, some of which were worth looking over and showing to a friend; or that you had not sent away, in the anxious hurry to get quit of rubbish, many a piece of old furniture that you would gladly now have to give away to some poor person in need of the very so-called rubbish. You have no desire, you will say, to keep a private broker's shop, for such I have heard you call a lumber-room, and I know you profess the horrible heresy that there is not any necessity for having lumber at all. Well, I can only comfort myself with the belief that you will find out your mistake some day, for I am convinced that the possession of lumber and rubbish (temporarily it may be) is the inevitable fate, sooner or later, of poor humanity, and surely, therefore, it is better to make a virtue of necessity, and enjoy having it as I do. I began my letter with a feeling of pity for your desolate condition in having an empty lumber garret, but I close it in a more cheerful mood, because I feel sure that ere long, do what you will, I shall see it gradually filling up again. I hope some day to be allowed a rummage among its relics.

ON SYMPATHY.

I WAS struck lately, in reading a domestic tale, with the remark, that one of the characters therein introduced greatly preferred when in distress being *condoled* with to being *consoled*, and I cannot help feeling that she had some reason on her side. Did you never feel annoyed if not hurt by some people, who will persist in endeavouring to make you take the bright view of things, as they call it, and who make vain, though perhaps well-meant attempts to console you, by representing how much worse off some one else is, or how much worse your own case might have been? It may be that it is you who are sullen and wish to nurse your grief, or it may be that you feel that these would-be consolers cannot enter into what makes your grievance a trial to you; but from whatever cause it arises, there is sometimes more sadness than comfort felt from these consolers, and you turn away with a feeling of want of sympathy that closes your heart. Surely it were well to meet sorrow with condolence, with an admis-

sion that it is sorrow, and that as such it must be felt and mourned over, with *sympathy*, in short; remembering that though to give consolation to the sorrowing is a delightful privilege, it must be *well-timed* to be of any avail. In the case referred to in the story, the causes of annoyance were chiefly petty domestic cares and small fretting worries; and when the mother is described as worn out with these and seeking sympathy from her daughter, that daughter will persist in treating them lightly, and taking most aggravatingly hopeful views of all her mother's distresses. I suppose I had been in one of the mother's moods when I read the tale, for I could not help feeling provoked with the model daughter, though she was meant to be a representation of that "sunshine in a shady place" which is so delightful in domestic life. I suspect you must condole with before you can console, and that it is sometimes a mistake to try to do the last without the first having been attempted. It is a mysterious thing this sympathy and the comfort of receiving it; the feeling of being understood even when little or nothing is said. Had Job's friends done no more than they did at first, when "none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great," the ironical term of "Job's comforters" had never passed into a pro-

verbial expression. Certainly it is about the worst way to comfort or console, this same plan of showing one in distress that it is all his own fault, and that he has no one to blame but himself; and yet it is not an uncommon way. I have heard it said that there are some people who dislike to be sympathized with, but I think this is a mistake; they may draw back from the offered sympathy of those they feel cannot understand them or their sorrow, or they may shrink from having a sacred tender feeling abruptly or it may be coarsely condoled with; but real unobtrusive sympathy is surely soothing to all, and though it may not be sought for by some so earnestly as by others, yet it is valued when received and felt to be genuine.

The power of feeling and showing sympathy seems to vary in different individuals even more than the desire for receiving it does, and I sometimes think that this variation arises more from the individual character, mental and moral, of the sympathizing person, than from the nature of the sorrow or joy sympathized with. It is surely not altogether true that we cannot sympathize with what we have never felt, for we may and do imagine what others are feeling, and thus enter into their joy or grief; it is this I mean when I say the mental

character of an individual partly determines his power of feeling for others. This use of imagination is a high and holy one, not to be lightly esteemed, profitable for ourselves and comforting to others. Unimaginative commonplace minds can rarely enter into the feelings of those differently constituted or differently tried from themselves, and much of the defective sympathy met with arises from this. Still it is not to be denied, I fear, that selfishness is the chief root of this defect of character, as it is of so many other forms of evil; for the selfish are the least able to feel for others, and they are the last from whom we ever think of seeking sympathy. They are, moreover, not unfrequently the most morbid cravers after it themselves, and the most obtrusive of their own joys, sorrows, or cares, on their fellow-creatures.

Can we cultivate this most desirable power in ourselves, or is it one of those gifts which we only gain slowly and, alas! sadly, by the "discipline of years," by suffering ourselves? Not altogether so, for in proportion as we are enabled to strive against selfishness, and to obey the command, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,"* so surely will our powers of sym-

* Phil. ii. 4.

pathy be increased, as well as our desire to comfort others, and really the latter is often a vain attempt unless we can and do sympathize with them first. What is it but selfishness that makes the young and light-hearted so often averse to witness suffering, or visit the bereaved and distressed? What is it but another, though more excusable form of the same evil, that makes those in distress turn away or feel pained by the natural and innocent happiness of others not then under the same trials as themselves? We must not forget that sympathy with others implies "rejoicing with those that do rejoice, as well as weeping with those that weep;" and if we are feeling it to be a truth that—

"We have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate,"

we shall certainly not turn away in morose sadness from the happy any more than we shall avoid the sorrowful, lest their grief should mar our enjoyment.

There may be selfishness in those who too eagerly or morbidly crave for sympathy, as there may be pride in others who refuse it, it being sometimes felt as one of those things which "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" but should not the first strive to recollect that others may have joys as well as griefs to be shared in by them; and truly in doing

so, they will often find their own hearts comforted, whilst the latter must guard against the danger that lurks under a too fastidious or proud rejection of kindness, of becoming cold and even repulsive to those who certainly mean well, although they may express themselves erroneously. If we feel it delightful to be "sons of consolation," why should we not allow others the privilege of feeling that they too can comfort, or soothe, or sympathize? Alas! how often is the last all *we* can do, except to commend our friends to Him who, while "touched with a feeling of our infirmities," is also able to give "grace to *help* in time of need."

The following passage from the *Autobiography* of *M. A. Schimmelpenninck*, struck me as I read it, from its agreement with what I mean when I say we must condole in order to console. She is speaking of some one called Miss P—, and says of her:—

"She had the admirable art, so far as it can be attained independently of religious influence, of dealing with persons under sorrow or nervous depression. How often have I observed that persons depressed in spirits would cheer and brighten under her influence! She often entered the room as if accidentally, listened to the sufferer's sorrow, consoled with it, even enhanced upon it; then she would suggest

some slight alleviation for the moment, which could be obtained without labour or occupying much time; then she turned perhaps to indifferent matters, in which the patient might feel self-complacency in interesting himself to oblige her: gradually her conversation assumed a more lively tone, till at length the patient's mind was entirely carried into some other channel, and not unfrequently have I seen a smiling sun burst forth from the thickest cloud. Truly it was a gift for blessing." Do not you agree with me in feeling that in real sorrow or care, as well as in nervous depression, you would prefer having a visit from one like Miss P—, rather than from one who, as it were, tried to force you into cheerfulness?

ON THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

NO. I.

It is not easy to recommend any method of reading the Bible as being the *best* method, my feeling being that there is no *one* method of doing so that ought to be adopted to the exclusion of others. Do you not find, for instance, that it is sometimes more profitable to read a smaller or a larger portion, a passage on some specified subject, or just the chapter that comes in course, according to the mood of mind you may be in at the time? Most people seem agreed that it is the best plan to read the Bible straight through, though I have seen this condemned as being apt to lead to formality, and what may be called reading on a subject recommended instead. Reading straight through, however, need not necessarily be formal; and I am sure you will agree with me that every means should be used to prevent ourselves from falling into a cold, dead habit of reading, as it were, our daily task of Scripture. In

trying to give you a few hints as to how this may be avoided, you will not misunderstand me so far as to suppose that I mean for one moment to imply that any method of reading or studying God's Word will be profitable, unless it is begun and carried on with prayer for, and in dependence upon, the aid of the Holy Spirit, who can alone "open our eyes that they may behold wondrous things out of God's law."

I daresay you have often been struck with the fact that some people find so much more meaning in passages of Scripture than you do, and have felt humbled and ashamed to think how carelessly you must have read that very passage or verse without discovering the depth that there was in it. How did the other find it out? I suppose the general answer would be, "By studying the passage, as he had to write on it, or preach on it, or teach from it." Well, let us try the plan for ourselves, as if we had to teach others, by taking either a portion or only a verse of the chapter that comes in course, and see how much we can get out of it. Look at it in its literal meaning first, and its application to those to whom it was primarily addressed, then try how it may apply to yourself; seek out, by the marginal references, other passages where the same idea, or even the same word occurs; see if these do not extend the

application or throw a new light on the meaning, and then try to bring out some practical application of the whole. If you have time, you will find it useful to write down as you go on, the parallel texts and the ideas they suggest. In preparing really for teaching others, this is, to most people, I think, indispensable, it gives one so much more clearness and conciseness: in daily study for one's-self it may take up too much time, but I am sure it is a profitable plan. Another way of getting at the full meaning of a text is by taking it literally word for word, reading it again and again, with the emphasis laid each time on a different word; in doing so one feels as if one had indeed got a jewel out of the mine so cut and polished that, turn it which way we will, it flashes out a brilliant light. I think I first got the idea of reading a verse thus from a sermon on the words used by Satan in tempting Eve, "Ye shall not surely die;" in which it was shown how varied the meaning was when thus read, "Ye shall not surely die,"—you, the favourites of the Lord God; He will not punish you; thus tempting them to presumptuous confidence: then, "Ye *shall not* surely die,"—an open denial of God's word; or, "Ye shall not *surely* die,"—perhaps your sin will be overlooked or forgotten; and finally, "Ye shall

not surely *die*,"—such a severe punishment will never be inflicted for such a small instance of disobedience. Now suppose this text to have been thus the subject of your day's study, you might follow up the train of thought thus suggested by looking out passages in which God's truth in executing threatenings as well as promises is declared, or where other temptations of Satan are recorded, noting when they were yielded to, when and how they were resisted. I am sure one text a day thus studied would yield us more profit, and give us a deeper insight into Scripture than reading chapter after chapter without a pause. At other times it is well to consider texts generally quoted separately, along with the context; frequently a new light seems thus thrown upon them. How frequently, for instance, we hear the text in Hebrews x. 30, "Vengeance is *mine*, I will repay, saith the Lord," quoted as a proof that it is sinful in *us* to take vengeance on any one; but read it in its place, where it follows the awful threatenings against those who have "trodden under foot the Son of God," in the 29th verse, and you will then see that the emphasis should be laid on the words "*I will repay*," and that the lesson to be learned is that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I think it was Philip

Henry who preached a course of sermons on the questions in the Bible, beginning with "Adam, where art thou?" and though such a method of finding instruction may require the ripe experience of such a man, to prevent it tending to puerile or strained *accommodations* of Scripture, it is frequently useful, and almost always interesting, to search out all that we can find said on some one subject, or written in some one style. Take, for instance, the figurative expressions used in many parts of the Bible, especially in the Psalms; collect together all those applied to the Lord, such as "my refuge," "a strong tower," "a hiding-place," and see if in pondering over these you will not find that each brings out some gracious or glorious attribute of God in the most refreshing and strengthening manner. I do not think we need be so afraid as we sometimes are, of enjoying the poetry of the Bible; the allusions to and the similes drawn from natural objects are exquisite, sometimes so tender and touching, sometimes so awful and sublime; surely we do well to fix them in our thoughts, so that they may abide with us, and enhance our delight in the works of our God when thus connected with His Word. Let us then fearlessly seek out, and enjoy, and apply these poetical passages, remembering that God himself has

told us that "the world is His and the fulness thereof;" and that even where there is a deeper spiritual meaning to be found in the words, we may also take them in their literal meaning as descriptive of what we see around us. It is the bringing of God's presence and power and love into all natural scenes and objects, that makes the scriptural allusions to them so precious: thus when the mountains round about Jerusalem are referred to, it is to illustrate the guardian care of the Lord over His people; the stormy wind is mentioned as "fulfilling His word;" he is compared to "rivers of water" in a dry place. I fear I am writing too discursively to be of much use. I have not and I must confess I cannot lay down any rules for reading God's Word; any way of reading it is better than reading it carelessly, with an inattentive mind and cold heart; every other way of reading it will increase our wonder at the infinite fulness, the inexhaustible variety and depth contained in it, but certainly studying it ought to be a daily practice, even if but of one passage or one verse. The Psalms are such a never-failing treasury for personal use, that they ought to form a portion of every Christian's daily reading; the promises, the prayers, the praises contained in them are so expressive as almost to seem as necessary

to our inward life as food is to our outward existence. This personal reading, this self-application is indeed to be gone into with all Scripture: this command is to me, do I obey it? this promise is to me, do I believe it and go forward in its strength? this threatening is to me, am I warned by it to stand in awe and sin not? Take again all these subjects, and say to yourself, not only this is to me, but "Who is it that has thus spoken?" and let the remembrance that it is God the Lord now speaking to you in His Word, keep you ever awake to the importance of commands and threatenings, and trustful and dependent on promises,—“Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”

One word more before I close these desultory hints. Do not, when employed in turning up texts or passages from the marginal references, guess them. Always turn to them; you will often find that the context throws new light on the words, even when they are literally the same as those in the passage you are studying; they are used in a different sense or to illustrate a different subject, and though you may have recollected the words correctly enough, you may not probably recollect as accurately the circumstances under which they are used in the passages referred to.

ON THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

NO. II.

SINCE writing these somewhat unconnected remarks on the Study of Scripture, I have been looking into different writers with a view to find some better help or advice than I could offer, but which may be derived from the following extracts on the subject. In the life of Philip Henry it is said:—

“He advised the reading of the Scriptures in order, for though one star in the firmament of the Scriptures differs from another star in glory, yet whenever God hath a mouth to speak, we should have an ear to hear; and the diligent searcher may find much excellent matter in those parts of the inspired writings which we are sometimes tempted to think might have been spared. How affectionately would he sometimes bless God for every book, and chapter, and verse, and line in the Bible.

“Once pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised to take a verse of Psalm cxix. every morn-

ing to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in the year; 'and that,' said he, 'will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures;' and he often said, 'All grace grows as love to the Word of God grows.'

"He sometimes set his children, in their own reading of the Scriptures, to collect such passages as they took most notice of, and thought most important, and write them down.

"In his expositions of the Old Testament he industriously sought for something concerning Christ, which is the true treasure hid in the field, the true manna hid in the dew of the Old Testament."

In the introduction to Dr. Chalmers's *Daily Scripture Readings*, he says:—"In reading the life of Sir Matthew Hale, I find that he employed the pen to aid him in his spiritual meditations. He wrote as he thought, and hitherto my attempts at the sustained contemplation of divine things have been so confused and unsatisfactory, that I am glad to try the same expedient."

His biographer says:—"He used the pen in this instance for his own private benefit alone. Seeking to bring his mind into as close and as full contact as possible with the passage of the Bible which was before him at the time, he recorded the thoughts

suggested, the moral or emotional effects produced, that these thoughts might the less readily slip out of his memory, that these effects might be more pervading and more permanent."

In the memoir of a much more humble and unknown believer, the Rev. W. Rhodes, I was struck by what he says as to his method of studying the doctrinal passages of Scripture :—" I examine in the Word of God what particular effect is ascribed to any particular doctrine, and then by all the efforts of prayer and meditation try to let this doctrine have this effect on me. Paul says, ' By the cross of Christ the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' Now I am endeavouring to make the death of the Saviour do the same thing for me, to raise me above the world, and to make me regard the world as a dead and insignificant thing.

In another place he says :—" Be honest and upright to the Bible. Trust it as a plain, sincere, and honest book. God means what He has said.

" At the outset of your inquiries into the testimony of Scripture, resolve to keep in mind that the certainty of any religious truth does not depend upon the *quantity* of Scripture by which it is established. A few explicit statements are quite enough. Many passages on a point may enlarge our view of it but

do not augment its certainty. 'God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God.' This satisfied David. Our sovereign commanded his followers, 'Let your yes be yes, your no, no.' If the disciple be entitled to belief on one simple affirmation, surely his Master is; surely it is presumption to demand more than this from the 'God that cannot lie.'"

I would advise you to read *The Lamp and the Lantern*, by Dr. James Hamilton, if you wish to have your mind awakened to a sense of the variety, the fulness, and freshness of these "living waters." I shall only give you one quotation from this valuable little book, the idea being, I think, one not often met with. After alluding to the beauty of old illuminated manuscript Bibles, he goes on to draw the following practical reflections:—"We do not print our Bibles in silver and gold, nor have we verses marked out from the others by their vermilion ink or their bolder character. And yet we have sometimes thought that every careful reader can illuminate his own copy as he proceeds. The book is all bright with passages which at one time or another have stirred and strengthened him; it is all radiant with texts which have accused, or rebuked, or consoled him. On this verse he heard a sermon which

he can never forget; this chapter is associated with some affecting event in his domestic history; and here is a paragraph which gave rise to a dialogue or meditation ever memorable in his religious career.

. . . Suppose that each man were to mark in vermilion the verse that first convinced him of sin, or first made him anxious for the saving of his soul. In the Bible of the Apostle Paul, the tenth command would be inscribed in red letters; for, as he tells us, 'I had not known sin except the commandment had said, Thou shalt not covet.' In the Bible of Alexander Henderson, it would be, 'He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber;' for that was the shaft which pierced the conscience of the unconverted minister. . . . Or suppose that each were to mark in golden letters the text which has been to him the gate of Heaven, the text through whose open lattice a reconciled God has looked forth on him, or through whose telescope he first glimpsed the cross. The Ethiopian chamberlain would mark the fifty-third of Isaiah, for it was when reading about the Lamb led to the slaughter that his eye was directed to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, and he went on his way rejoicing. The English martyr, Bilney, would in-

dicate the faithful saying, ' Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;' for it was in sight of these words that the burden fell from his back which fasts and penances had only rendered more weighty."

The following remarks, on reading the Scriptures with an honest heart, are from a little work called *The Scripture-Reader's Guide*, by Caroline Fry:—

" With an honest heart, then, we should go to the perusal of God's Sacred Word. . . . We go to the Bible for holiness. Perhaps we do not advance so much as we desire in the ways of God. We find no increasing subjugation of our tempers or detachment of our hearts from earth; no growing love of things divine, and nearer communion with God. We would inquire what is the matter. Scripture would tell us there is a defect in our creed: we have set out wrong; we are depending too much on ourselves, and too little on Jesus; we have not a clear view of the means of salvation, the only source whence sanctification of the heart proceeds. But, ah! we will believe nothing of all that. Doctrines cannot signify; better go on in the path of duty than fill the head with notions. We know many good people who believe nothing of this. We do not see at all how such doctrines should be produc-

tive of holiness. Or it may be that we desire direction in some particular points of conduct, some habits, some pursuits, some long-cherished feelings, now first suspected to be sins; some bosom gods, now first suspected to be idols. We go to the Word of God, the only way-mark; but we go determined not to see which way it points. There it is; but it condemns those we love; they cannot be in the wrong. There it is; but it forbids us something we cannot by any means perceive the evil of. . . . We recur to Scripture in search of happiness; and, alas! we are not honest even there; for we come determined not to be made happy. Cares that we have deposited at our chamber-doors we are determined to take up again as soon as we emerge from them. Sorrows and regrets that we have brought with us we are determined to take away, whatever remedy be proposed for them."

I thought I might have found some passages for quotation in the *Memoirs of Adelaide Newton*, but I would rather advise you to read the book; her whole life and letters are so pervaded by her deep study of the Word, that I think you will find many suggestions both as to the meaning and application of texts, and also learn how thus to draw water for yourself out of the living well.

Among other writers on this subject, I must mention the name of Andrew Jukes, as one to whom I feel indebted for new and deeply interesting views on the typical meaning of Scripture; but I am not quite sure whether the study of his works (and you must *study* not merely *read* them) will suit your mind or not. It is not easy to give you any idea of the depth and extent of his views by extracts, and so I will only give you the following from the introductions to two of his works :—

“The difference is immense between looking upon God’s work and looking into it. . . . God’s Word is like God’s work; yea, God’s Word is his work as much as creation; and it is its infinite depth and breadth, and the diverse and manifold ends and aim of all we find in it, which make it what it is, inexhaustible. To look, therefore, on the mere surface of the Bible is one thing; to look into it quite another; for each part may have many purposes. The very words which, in one dispensation and to one people, conveyed a literal command, to be obeyed literally, may, in another age and dispensation, supply a type of some part of God’s work or purpose; while in the self-same passage the humble believer of every age may find matter of comfort or warning according to his need.”*

* *The Law of the Offerings.*

“ Do I then despise the letter? God forbid. With sincerest faith I receive it, and thank God for it, throughout Scripture. Most precious is it, speaking to all the words of truth, showing how the outward daily life on earth may be sanctified, and is watched and cared for by God. Especially now, when so many act as if the earthly calling were a path of which God took no notice, and in which faith availed us nought, most precious is the letter, as showing God, for He changeth not, in all His providence over the outward path of those who love and fear Him; showing how the path of lowly men, if they walk with Him, their wells, and sheep, and feasts, and wars, are all His interests; that not a marriage, birth, or death; not the weaning of a child, or the dismissal of a maid; not the bargain for a grave, or the wish respecting the place of burial, but He watches and directs it. Thus precious is the letter; a daily guide and comfort to us as dwellers here.”*

* *The Types of Genesis.*

ON LETTER-WRITING.

THE command to do all to the glory of God has been too seldom thought of in the matter of letter-writing, and when we read how others have employed their pens, and how God has been pleased to honour them by making their letters useful, we may well feel humbled. I admit that the ability of writing *well* on religious subjects is a rare epistolary talent, and perhaps it is owing to this rarity that so many religious letters are felt to be neither very useful, nor always agreeable to receive. They must not be formal, but from the heart; and then how refreshing is an earnest, cordial, Christian letter, whether confined to the subject of the one thing needful, or having its secular news and familiar thoughts seasoned with this divine salt. *Seasoned*, be it remarked, not *interlarded*; written, not composed. The appearance of anything like composition in a letter, especially one on religious subjects, is so unpleasant as almost to prevent any benefit being derived from it, and one feels inclined to say that they prefer

sermons from the pulpit, and letters from the post. I remember, however, being amused, some years ago, by finding a family in the lower ranks so much delighted with a volume lent them of formal *sermonesque* letters, that they made the youngest son copy them out and send them as his own to his grandfather! There was no idea of deceiving the old man; the book was evidently regarded as a model of the *Complete Letter-Writer*, but I did sometimes wonder what grandfather thought of young hopeful's religious experience.

Did you ever know any one look out a text of Scripture referred to in a letter? I doubt it; therefore I think the verse should be either quoted entirely, or so indicated by the first words being written, as to avoid the temptation to this omission.

In alluding to the duty of endeavouring to make our correspondence useful, I am far from meaning that all letters should be religious ones, or that all that are not such are either unprofitable or foolish. One object in writing should be to give pleasure to your correspondent, and amongst all the variety of letter-writers, I know few more meritorious than those who always write *pleasant* letters; letters you like to read; letters that leave no little sting behind; letters that contain no hits, that are neither

filled with excuses for not having written, or blame for not having received letters. They are not pleasant letter-writers whose epistles one opens with a slight twinge of fear, from the consciousness that the perusal of them will probably leave an uncomfortable feeling behind them. I believe people sometimes write these uncomfortable letters, without any idea that the hits and insinuations conveyed in them are so unpleasant; and, in general, it is the best as well as the kindest way, to take no notice of these in the reply, for of all abuses of correspondence, there are few more irksome and annoying than a petty paper war.

Not that we may shrink from writing letters that must give pain when duty clearly calls us to do so; "faithful are the wounds of a friend:" but all who have ever had this painful task to execute, will agree that they hardly know which has the most disagreeable part—that of the writer or the receiver.

Letters may often be what has been termed obliquely beneficial rather than directly so. How often has comfort or strength been derived from what seemed a chance remark; from a verse of Scripture or of a hymn quoted, the very message you felt you needed thus sent unawares; and may we not hope that as we have thus felt it blessed to

receive, so may we have been sometimes privileged to give.

Among the indirectly useful letters I would class those of a playful or facetious kind. ' " A merry 'letter' doeth good like a medicine," is a true (mis)-quotation sometimes. There are times in every one's life, when wearied or harassed with petty cares, or languid from illness, ay, or even tired with long days when

" It rains and the wind is never weary,"

when the reception of a letter filled with lively nonsense is felt as a reviving cordial, and perhaps a more serious one would have been oppressive. Let those who have the talent for writing such letters cultivate it by all means; but let them also beware lest instead of being " a word" written " in season," and therefore good, it may chance to be like " vinegar upon nitre, singing songs to a heavy heart." No one, however, would be guilty of writing merry jokes and playful badinage to any one known to be in distress, so if a *contre-temps* of this kind ever occurs, it should certainly be taken in a kindly spirit, and allowance made for the mistake.

The following extract from a book I lately read struck me as good advice on this subject:—

" If letters are a pleasure at home they are a

priceless boon out here (India). No one can tell how precious each trivial item of intelligence can sound till he has read it in exile. Ah! good correspondents at home, never let your benevolent exertions flag because you deem your absent friends will have lost their interest in local news; this is just what you must try to prevent. Always keep constantly before them continual fresh details of home affairs, and do not balance your debtor or creditor account too rigidly."

The last hint might be applied sometimes to home correspondence also; at least it must be a very formal friendship that will only write a letter when due, and that never indulges itself in this intercourse merely because half an hour's intercourse with an absent friend is desired and felt to be agreeable.

ON INTERRUPTIONS.

So long an interval had elapsed since I last had received a letter from you, that I was almost beginning to fear you had forgotten your old correspondent, but what you say of the difference between your present mode of life and your former one, accounts for your long silence. I can quite understand that the removal to town, and the variety of duties and engagements now pressing upon you, must often make you look back with regret on your quiet, regular country life, where your time was chiefly at your own disposal; and it is not to be wondered at if you do sometimes feel disheartened by the difficulty of getting leisure to do many things that you used to consider as necessary duties. You need not, however, reproach yourself so bitterly for neglect, or accuse yourself of frittering away your time; at least as these were not your faults formerly, so I believe they are not the causes that now make you grieve over much left undone that you wish to do.

Of course, in the matter of letter-writing, and in

some of your own pursuits, allowance must be made for the claims of other duties upon you, and I, for one, am not so unreasonable as to expect that our correspondence should be quite as frequent as of yore, but from what you say, I suspect you are allowing or yielding to unnecessary interruptions and encroachments on your time. Now, if a little firmness and resolution of purpose at first will set you free from these, why should you not make some effort to check the evil which will assuredly increase? It is no doubt true that it is often the duty of women to bear frequent interruptions in their pursuits, and to turn from them readily and cheerfully to help others; and somehow it seems to be taken for granted that we are never engaged in anything that cannot be thus interrupted, or that we ought never to object to being thus at the mercy of every one less occupied than ourselves. Now, I begin to think that we ought not always to yield to claims of this kind however unreasonable, and that if we really value our time as we ought, we may teach others not to make such inroads into it, as from mere thoughtlessness they often do. For instance, no good housekeeper would submit to have calls made upon her at all hours of the day, for orders about this or directions about that, to demands for this article out of the store-

room or that out of the cellar, but she attends to all the household duties at some one set time, and servants and others soon learn to know this, and to come for what is wanted at the right time, and thus interruptions of this sort during the day are put an end to. No doubt, if you *like*, you can extend your household work over the whole day, and so never find time for anything else, only do not complain in that case that you are constantly interrupted, and all your other work interfered with, for it is your own fault or your own choice that it should be so. Now, in like manner, may you not put some check upon many other and more trifling causes of interruption, by having regular times at which you will attend to their claims, and by then refusing to allow them to intrude when you are otherwise occupied? I am glad to hear that you have made a step in this direction already, by resolving to have some days on which you do not receive visitors, and on which the true answer of "being engaged," is given to friends and acquaintances. I am sure this will not only relieve you of the hurried, bustled feeling that must arise when you never have a day to attend to your many home duties, but will make you enjoy your friends' society with double zest when it suits your pursuits as well as your pleasure to receive them.

I cannot conceive any one taking offence at your so doing; if any do so, it can only be those who, having nothing to do themselves, have no idea of the value of the time of others, and it is rather intolerable to be liable to long visits at all hours and seasons, from those who have no other object in view than just to while away an idle hour. I daresay your country habits made this arrangement seem inhospitable to you at first, but there is a great difference between receiving visits from one's friends in the country and the constant influx of mere callers that seems in some houses to be the chief and only occupation of the day, and from which there is no other way of release than that of honestly stating that on some days you "are engaged." We are very apt to fancy that constant interruptions are unavoidable, and therefore we do not set resolutely about reducing them to their smallest limits; indeed we frequently make them for ourselves by want of method or diligence or perseverance, and then wonder why we have never a minute to spare. I am not advocating absorption in our own pursuits, or a fidgety attention to a scheme of spending our time, or any fostering of the selfish dislike we are all too apt to feel of the many calls on our time and thought for others, that must occur frequently and interrupt us in what we might wish to be doing; but I do think it is our

duty not to allow our time to be frittered away by others any more than by ourselves, and I am sure that many of the interruptions of which we complain so much, might be put a stop to by the exercise of a little resolution on our part. Perhaps you will think I am carrying this too far when I ask you if you could not, for instance, sometimes secure to yourself the benefit of a quiet evening at home, by resolving not to accept more than a certain limited number of invitations? If you fear that by doing so you would offend your friends, then I can only say, Defend me from the tyranny of friendship! Why it should be thought an absolute necessity to accept every invitation one receives, unless we have a prior engagement, and why this *conventional* necessity should be allowed by us to break up all home enjoyments, and to fetter all liberty, and to interrupt our often much-needed leisure, are questions that puzzle me sometimes in my quiet retreat, all the more so because I observe most persons complain of this necessity as a grievance, and few, except the young, admit that they accept every invitation they receive because they like constant visiting.

But I did not intend when I took up my pen to enter into such a wide field as the consideration of what are called duties to society; all I intended was to endeavour to give you a friendly warning not to

allow your good nature and obliging disposition to lead you too far in indulging others in making unreasonable demands on your time. Did you observe Miss Nightingale's remark in her admirable *Notes on Nursing*? She says,—“I have never known persons who exposed themselves for years to constant interruption, who did not muddle away their intellects by it at last.” So be warned in time! You will not misunderstand me so far as to think that I mean to advise you to turn away from all interruptions; nay, rather would I remind you of John Newton's saying, that when he heard a knock at his study door, he took the interruption as a message from God. It is often a wholesome discipline for us to bear with cheerfulness and a kindly wish to help others, the little daily unavoidable interruptions that occur; but with all this, we may and should combine some steady purpose and plan of living, and should endeavour at least to train others to respect some part of our time. It is the idle who make others idle, and perhaps some of these unhappy individuals would be forced sometimes to find occupations for themselves, if they did not so often find people too willing to allow them to interrupt their pursuits, and give up their time to help them to amuse themselves.

ON DEPRESSION.

YOUR last letter was received with much interest, and has filled my heart with the deepest sympathy for you. Would that I could write anything that would cheer or comfort you under what is one of the most difficult trials to bear, for true indeed is the word which says, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?"* You say that "you feel as if your state of mind were sinful, because your depression is causeless;" that "your reason tells you that you are surrounded by blessings, alike numerous and undeserved, but that do what you will, your heart remains sad and oppressed, or utterly and selfishly indifferent." These are heavy charges to bring against yourself; but before you write such bitter things, will you not consider that the very fact of your depression being *causeless*, shows that it is probably from a physical reason, and therefore an infirmity, not a sin; and an infirmity, moreover, that by the blessing of God on

* Prov. xviii. 14.

the means, may be cured by medical skill? I know those in your state find it hard to believe this; there is a strange morbid love of the very sadness that oppresses you, that makes you unwilling to admit that you will ever feel otherwise; and you cannot realize that the change that seems to have fallen on all things around you is not in them, but in your own mind. I know that you have far too much common sense still left to permit you to slight or neglect the care of your bodily health, or the prescriptions of your physician; but I see you fear the disease is "almost wholly mental," or else you turn against yourself and say, "perhaps it is not a diseased state of mind at all, but a work of the Spirit of God on your heart, to convince you of sin and to humble you." Well, let it be granted for the argument's sake that you may be right, *are either of these states incurable?* You know they are not; you know that in the very passage you quote from the Scripture, of the Spirit's work being to "convince of sin," He is called "the Comforter;" you know that the "blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," and that it is only by casting your burden on the Lord that you can find peace or rest. Remember, however, my dear —, that I do not admit that you are altogether right in thus

thinking your state one of a spiritual kind ; but I do admit that " every trial comes to God's people from God's hand," and that they ought to seek rather the sanctified use of it than its removal. What I wish to get you to believe is, that your Heavenly Father does not intend that a mourning state (even for sin) should be so habitual and depressing as to unfit you for the work of believing in Him whom he hath sent ; that even in the Slough of Despond there are stepping-stones, " great and precious promises," if you will but look out for them and set your feet on them, and trust that " the joy of the Lord shall yet be your strength."* Struggle on, then, but struggle as Christian did, to get out of the slough on the side farthest from his own house and nearest to the wicket-gate ; do not look *just now* so much to your own sinfulness as to your Saviour ; seek at present for comfort, for promises, not for threatenings, otherwise you will be acting like one who in a beleaguered town should open the gate on the enemy's side, while he closes the one by which alone succour can enter.

Do not apologize to me for what you term your " selfish, self-engrossed account of your feelings and fears." I trust you feel assured of my sympathy,

* Nehem. viii. 10.

and I cannot think that thus seeking to relieve your heart is either selfish or morbid; indeed I believe that if sufferers under depressed spirits were more frequently to confess their state both to friends and a physician (I am decided on the latter), they would be more easily comforted as well as cured. It will be, I fear, a work of time, but will you not try to let "patience have her perfect work;" and even if speaking of hope seem to you almost unkind, yet remember there is "a patience of hope" spoken of. Ah! I can remember the time when, unless hope was speedily turned to certainty, it did not seem like hope at all; but you, too, have lived long enough, and suffered enough, to know now the strength as well as the sweetness of these words, "the patience of hope." 'Not one without the other, but both combined: one to endure; the other to cheer under all endurance.

As to the tendency of your present state, and of the kind care taken for you by others to foster selfishness, I do not see the same danger you do, as long as you do not wilfully yield to your gloomy or morbid views. The very struggle against selfishness, the striving to take thought for others, the forcing yourself to take an interest in their joys or sorrows, will help to cure you, but I suspect, like

all the other remedies, it will for some time prove a most distasteful one. I am afraid you must make up your mind to this, that sad and distressing as you feel the now depressed and indifferent state of your mind to be, you will find everything that is proposed as a remedy, every exertion and effort that conscience urges you to make, still more disagreeable. It does at the time seem more soothing and pleasant to be allowed to yield to the depressed state, and to let the mind wander at its own will and ruminate on sad and bitter fancies. But if you believe that "he that hath not rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls," * even in ordinary circumstances, be assured that the danger of this condition is much greater to you in your present state, and do not yield to this indulgence, even though the struggle against it be severe. As you alluded to the danger you feel of being "selfishly engrossed," may I say that here is one opportunity given you to conquer this selfishness; for you must be aware that your gloom depresses others, and for the sake of those around you, will you not struggle to keep some mastery over your own mind, that so you may again attain to

"A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize."

* Prov. xxv. 28.

I hope you do not neglect the usual remedies prescribed by friends for a state of mind like yours; such as change of scene, occupation, or cheerful society, merely because you dislike them, and therefore feel inclined to deny their efficacy. For the *sake of others* strive against your disinclination, and even if you at present feel no benefit, try to believe that that benefit will come, and wait patiently and in prayer for relief. It may be that you are thus tried, to enable you, when set free yourself, to sympathize with and comfort others in like distress, not merely to *bear with them*, as perhaps you, as well as I, have sometimes felt was all we could do. I wonder if I am wrong in one piece of advice I feel inclined to give you, as it is against what is generally recommended. I refer to indulgence in light reading, fiction for instance, or any kind that does not require much exertion of mind.

Though I am far from denying that this kind of reading is not only allowable, but positively beneficial in some cases and at some times, I would still say to you, do not give up your steady reading, make conscience of endeavouring to compel the mind to attend, if but for a short time daily, to some book that will exercise it, and I think you will eventually derive more benefit from such a mental tonic, than

from hours spent in merely amusing reading. Even if this style of reading had not hitherto been habitual to you, I think it would be advisable to try it now, however disagreeable; but I know you have till now enjoyed it and appreciated it, and therefore I say with more confidence to you, do not either starve or enervate your mind now that it is ill, any more than you would your body in like circumstances. Try my remedy as medicine, at least, if not as food. Do not be disheartened if after every exertion you make, even after feeling at the time lightened up and better, you fall back into your now saddened, depressed frame, just as if an incubus which had lain heavy on you, and had been removed for a short while, yet lay in wait for you at your own door, then and there to spring upon you and weigh you down once more.

Every such lightening up does good, by breaking the habit of depression, and the previous exertion of going out of yourself to find relief either in study, or work for others, or society, will break the habit of self-engrossment in which you fear your present state may result. Are you rather surprised at my allusion to *society* as one of the remedies to be tried? I can believe it to be one of the least pleasant, but nevertheless I suspect it is, next to

change of scene, one of the most efficacious. Of course I do not mean that you are never to enjoy the luxury of solitude, and are to be engaged always in a round of company or gaiety or sight-seeing, or any of those socialities which even in health you have no great relish for; but at present much solitude is bad for you, and I am sure you will find relief, temporary it may be, but still relief, when mingling in pleasant society and sympathizing with the interests of others. If it does nothing more for you than to lessen the risk of your mind getting possessed with *one idea*, it will be much; but it will also keep your heart from being too much shut up, and give you something else than yourself to think of. If the advice of the great clerical humourist does not always prove efficacious, "pretend to care and you will soon really care," it is still useful as a check upon giving up exertion altogether; a great deal may be done for others, and for ourselves, even with half a heart; at least it is better to try it, especially when, as in your case, half-heartedness is an infirmity, not a sin. Truly a man is accepted according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not.

ON DAY-DREAMS.

I WAS half amused, half surprised, at the remark in your last letter, that one of the reasons for which you pity people who are old, is "that they can never amuse themselves by day-dreams or castles in the air." Are you not afraid of drawing down a lecture from your old friend on the unprofitableness of such an occupation? for certainly such a remark is tantamount to confessing that *you* so amuse yourself sometimes. Much has been said, and well said, against this rather fascinating practice; perhaps something might be said, if not in its defence, at least in its excuse; but I am not going to give you the benefit of any such palliations, though I feel rather inclined to let you into the secrets of the old, by confessing that day-dreams do sometimes form part of our lonely musings. Different, very different they generally are from those we have dreamt in our early days; indeed they are not dreams at all, though sometimes we feel as if they were,—they are the recollections of the realities of the past; and dwelling much among

these is like going into a picture-gallery, and gazing on one and another of the scenes and characters there depicted till they seem to start into life before you. There is a deep but strange fascination in these thoughts ; strange, because so many of the pictures thus gazed on are sad, some painful, and all tinged over, more or less, with the half mournful hue that Foster expresses by the word "pensive." Sometimes we bring out one of our pictures and let you young ones look at it, and you are amused, or it may be interested, by having part of the past thus brought before you ; more rarely, when we meet an old friend and pass a quiet evening together, we bring out others, more sacred it may be, sometimes more trifling or more cheerful, and feel the pleasure all do feel in these recollections when thus understood and sympathized with. I daresay most of us however have some pictures in this gallery that we never bring forth, some which we turn with their faces to the wall, but which when alone, and in some peculiar moods of mind, we turn round and gaze at till the eye fills and the heart swells, and we hastily or reverently, as the case may be, turn them again to the wall, and feel that no eye but our own may look on them. These last are often the most vivid pictures, whether portraits or events or scenes,

whether painted in sunshine or shadow ; they come out in all their minutest details, more like a photograph than a painting, and often when we think they have become obliterated, and have even deemed other paintings had been executed over them, they will flash out upon us, and seem as if it were but yesterday since we hung them there, not then as now, with their faces to the wall.

What say you now ? do you still pity us for having no day-dreams, and will you exchange your castles in the air for my picture-gallery ? If you live to grow old, you must do so whether you will or not ; for, judging from my own experience, the tendency to let—

“ Each in their hidden sphere of joy or woe,
Our hermit spirits dwell,”

does not decrease with added years ; it only changes its style and subjects, the young look forward, the old look back. In one respect we have the advantage, for while you ponder on what may be, we do so on what has actually been : to you belong dreams and fancies ; to us remembrances of realities, and both are not alike unprofitable. It may be that you endeavour to put a check on these wandering thoughts by recollecting that “ you know not what a day may bring forth ;” and I hope you sometimes

follow Dr. Chalmers's rule, "When I detect myself in unprofitable reverie, let me make an instant transition from dreaming to doing." Now, inasmuch as our thoughts concern facts and not fancies, we may, and I trust often do, make a good use of them; for is not this looking back, in reality, just "remembering all the way by which the Lord God led us," and often seeing even here, what we shall know more perfectly hereafter, that it was by "a right way" He has thus led and guided us. Thus to look back, thus to look over pictures of bygone days, whether bright or sad, is surely no unprofitable and no displeasing way of spending time occasionally, and wonderfully does the review quicken our faith and animate our love, even while it humbles us. I am not pleading for a murmuring, repining view of blessings past; I am not seeking to excuse a morbid dwelling on sins and sorrows, nor even pensive living over the happy days gone by; but I cannot, I will not think that we are ever intended to forget the past and its precious memories of joy and sorrow, nor can I think that it is altogether a vain use to make of the quiet leisure of old age thus to muse.

Then the old have also their looking forward, not to castles in the air now—there are too many of these in ruins in the picture-gallery already—but to

"a city which hath foundations," to "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Enough has been revealed of the happiness and of the occupations of the "spirits of just men made perfect," to allow of our filling up the outline with many details, and it may be that this tracing back, and reviewing all the Lord's dealings with us on earth, will constitute one source of our happiness hereafter. I shall quote a little hymn on this subject which I like much.

Now I fear that since I have made all these confessions, you will feel excused at least, if not justified, in your idle musings, and perhaps be glad to have escaped a lecture on the subject. I suspect conscience tells you that you deserve one, and I must, ere closing, give you a friendly warning to beware of letting castle-building become *habitual*. I know you will say that you indulge in it only as an amusement, but even as such it is dangerous. Did you never observe, after having spent some hours in a picture-gallery, that on first coming out everything looked cold, grey, stiff, and commonplace? It is some time before the eye gets accustomed again to what before entering seemed bright enough, and we cannot help wishing for "the light that never was on sea or shore" to warm and colour this everyday world. So is it if

we dwell much on our day-dreams, whether they be like yours, castles in the air, shining in the morning sun, or like mine, pictures of the past, softened and sometimes glorified by the evening light. The transition to everyday life and duty seems harsh and cold, and it is not without an effort that we recover our interest in what is going on around us, and again realize how much of poetry and painting too may be felt and seen and enjoyed while "diligent in business."

WHEN we reach a quiet dwelling
On the strong eternal hills,
And our praise to Him is swelling
Who the vast creation fills ;
When the paths of prayer, and duty,
And affliction, all are trod,
And we wake and see the beauty
Of our Saviour and our God :—

With the light of resurrection,
When our changed bodies glow,
And we gain the full perfection
Of the bliss begun below ;
When the life that "flesh" obscureth
In each radiant form shall shine,
And the joy that aye endureth
Flashes forth in beams divine ;—

While we wave the palms of glory
Through the long eternal years,
Shall we e'er forget the story
Of our mortal griefs and fears ?

Shall we e'er forget the sadness,
And the clouds that hung so dim,
When our hearts are filled with gladness,
And our tears are dried by Him ?

Shall the memory be banish'd
Of His kindness and His care,
When the wants and woes are vanish'd
Which He loved to soothe and share ?
All the way by which He led us,
All the grievings which He bore,
All the patient love He taught us,
Shall we think of them no more ?

Yes ! we surely shall remember
How He quicken'd us from death,—
How He fann'd the dying ember
With His Spirit's glowing breath.
We shall read the tender meaning
Of the sorrows and alarms,
As we trod the desert, leaning
On His everlasting arms.

And His rest will be the dearer
When we think of weary ways,
And His light will seem the clearer
As we muse on cloudy days.
Oh, 'twill be a glorious morrow
To a dark and stormy day !
We shall recollect our sorrow
As the streams that pass away.

ANON.

ON OFFERING ADVICE.

It is certainly a good general rule not to give advice till it is asked for, though, like all general rules, it has exceptions, and should not be allowed to interfere when it is a plain duty to act otherwise. The question is, when is it our duty? And I begin to suspect that it is less often so than we are apt to think. In the case of those who are under our charge in any way, whether as young people or servants, and for whose conduct we are in some measure accountable, the course is comparatively clear, and to give kind advice is a duty, and it is generally well taken even when not followed. In other cases, unasked advice is so often felt as unnecessary interference that it is doubtful if it does much good; it sometimes irritates, and even when it is received as a friendly action, it has little effect. It is often said that advice is seldom asked except when the person has already made up his or her mind as to the course meant to be followed; so what can advice unasked for hope to effect? Some people are like our friend A—,

who really seems to have such a desire to advise that she cannot see an easy chair placed at one side of the fire without recommending you to put it at the other ; and it were well if she always confined her counsel to such small matters, for really sometimes it requires a little exertion of good temper to bear with her perpetual interference. Now, she is not dictatorial, nor are her counsels erroneous ; she seems rather to have got into a bad habit of giving good advice ! I daresay my opinions may seem cowardly, but so few people take unasked advice without resenting it, that I would shrink from offering it, unless I had strong ground for believing it to be a duty to do so, or was in possession of any information that might alter the grounds upon which they were acting.

If it has to be done, do it openly and directly, never give mysterious hints or make *hits*,—these generally hurt far more than direct advice, and do no good ; but do not be in a hurry to take the responsibility of an adviser on your shoulders. It is somewhat sad, yet somewhat amusing too, to see, ay, and to feel, how touchy we are all apt to be on this subject, and often the smaller the matter for advice the touchier we are. Few can bear to have their dress animadverted on, others feel their house-

hold arrangements a tender point, and it is a well-known old saying, that "there are two things every one likes to do for themselves,—to guide their ain gear, and to wheep their ain weans." I do not forget Solomon's words,—“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel;” but I suspect this sweetness arises from the counsel being encouragement to go on as we wish, not advice to leave off or change our cherished habits. Does not the text apply to that hearty and cheering counsel, which flows from sympathy and kindly interest, which it is alike pleasant to give and to receive, and which most of us have it in our power to bestow oftener than we think. There are few of us who have not felt the power of a kind word, sometimes even of a look, to encourage our hearts and cheer us on in some steep or lonely part of life's pathway; and most of us may also have felt how, at times, we are chilled and discouraged by some careless remark or gloomy prognostic. Let us then look out for occasions, even though trifling ones, to give *hearty* counsel of this kind; and as much as may be, let us refrain from unnecessary advice or interference in other people's concerns.

ON CONVALESCENCE.

THE dislike of being put out of our way is one of those little selfishnesses that are apt to increase by indulgence, and yet sometimes we feel that it is not altogether from selfishness that we dislike it so much, but that it arises from being neither so young nor so strong as we once were. During recovery from illness this feeling, however, needs to be more guarded against than we are aware of, and I suspect that it is sometimes very wholesome discipline for an invalid to be occasionally "put out of his way." It is not very easy to define in what this consists; it is a totally different thing from not getting our own way, and certainly, in general, it concerns such trifling matters that it seems absurd to consider it as any annoyance at all. Whether it is so or not let those judge who have been sufferers under it. No doubt both the aged and the invalid ought to have the privilege (and a privilege it is of its kind) of not being put out of their way, and it is doubtless very good for others thus to study their comforts and

even their fancies, but the question now to be considered is, when is this indulgence to be relinquished by those receiving it?

No great danger is likely to arise to those who habitually and from principle thus study the little comforts of others, it is those thus indulged that need to fear and to keep watch over themselves, lest by degrees they are led on to think only of their own preferences, and to exercise what has been called "the tyranny of the weak over the strong." I have known instances where the sick-room was indeed the rallying-point in the house; where the weary came for rest, the perplexed for advice, the sorrowful for sympathy, and where the invalid seemed to feel that being laid aside from active duty, it became more her or his province thus to aid and cheer others; and where, from having quiet and leisure, as well as inclination, thus to think for others, much real help was given to friends. Still, I fear, it cannot be denied that too often those who are not, perhaps, seriously ill, but are what is called in bad health, are apt to grow troublesome and selfish, and to afford some cause for others joining Charles Lamb in saying, "I hate sick people." It is not pleasant certainly to find one's-self peevish and querulous about trifles, or touchy and apt to take things amiss, or

unsympathizing in pleasures one cannot now enjoy. Yet there is some risk of excusing these faults by saying, "I am not well; I was not so formerly," and then yielding to the very things that when in health we blamed some invalid for indulging in. There is, no doubt, a certain luxury of sickness in being studied and watched over and cared for, and having allowances made for all one's fretfulness or selfishnesses, though at first even this, I think, requires an apprenticeship, for it is humbling to feel that we need so much indulgence, and difficult to submit to being laid aside; but when once accustomed to it then comes the need of watchfulness, lest we become altogether selfish and unwilling to abate an iota of our claims, even when returning health might enable us to do so. I daresay we have all sometimes thought, when attending on or observing others in this *transition* state, that we would remember the lessons we were then learning and take them as warnings, though the application of them to our own cases, and the practising them, is not always easy. Amongst all the good advice lavished on the sick, why should none be bestowed upon the convalescent? I am sure it is not so easy as people think to get well cheerily. The sick are petted and comforted, the confirmed invalid is coun-

sed and cheered, but the poor convalescent is left to struggle on unwarned and *unneglected*! Ay, I suspect a "little wholesome neglect" would do some of us a world of good. So, as our kind friends won't give it to us, let us take it in spite of them, and rouse ourselves up to share again in the daily cares and occupations and interests around us. It is excellent discipline this getting well again. I declare I am beginning to think it the hardest of the three stages; there is some difficulty in submitting to being a useless invalid, there is more in being a patient sufferer, but there is also, if we would all frankly confess it, considerable difficulty in being almost well again. I am quite serious in saying so, and no longer wonder, as I once did, at recovering invalids being less eager than was expected to resume the powers and privileges of health; some seemed unable to be left alone, others unable to occupy or amuse themselves, others unwilling to be put out of their way, though now able to bear this, some feeling every attention to others a slight or neglect to themselves, all of us feeling, and most of us showing, the weakness and selfishness of our hearts. Don't you think it is as much of a duty to get well as cheerfully and as actively as you can, as it is to suffer patiently when ill, and to

receive gratefully the tender care and trouble then bestowed upon you? So don't grumble over any little outward annoyances that may help you on in your present lesson, all the more difficult because it is one we convalescents must *teach ourselves*. Our friends are too kind to do it for us, and perhaps they are right; at least I know I shall henceforth feel a stronger sympathy, and be able to show greater indulgence to "half-sick folk" than I ever could do formerly.

ON THRIFT.

"Thrift, thrift, Horatio."

How comes it that this good old-fashioned word has fallen into disrepute, and that it is too often considered synonymous with parsimony and meanness? This contempt surely does not result from the thing signified being at a discount now-a-days, from lavish expenditure being thought a more generous quality, and prudent economy being considered tiresome and stingy. Let us see what can be said in favour of our old friend Thrift, to redeem it from undeserved disgrace, and restore it to its rightful place as a virtue. The word was originally made use of in opposition to waste, and then every one admitted that it was good and right to be thrifty. It signified prudent management, making the most of things, thoughtful foresight, and suiting the means to the end desired. These excellent qualities are applicable to many matters besides money, for thrift may be exercised in time, in occupations of any kind, in materials made use of, from the works of creation down to the "baked

meats" the thrifty use of which called forth the sarcasm of the royal Dane.

In contemplating and studying the works of God, there are few things more striking than the combination of infinite variety with minute adaptation of the means used to the end designed, and of boundless profusion with the most careful use of everything, not an atom being lost or wasted ; so that, with reverence be it spoken, if God in his works has regard to economy both of plan and material, shall we, His creatures, think it beneath our attention to endeavour to follow His example ? This is a more serious strain than I intended when proposing to see what could be said for the homely virtue of thrift, but certainly the absence of anything approaching to waste in the natural world is too striking to be passed without some allusion.

Disapproval of wasting anything is almost universal, but our theory and practice on the subject do not always agree, and it is even somewhat rare to find two persons who agree with each other upon what is waste, the one deriding the other as parsimonious, niggardly, and mean, or using the word thrifty with a somewhat contemptuous air, as if it included all the three. Now it is a fact that real true thrift is as necessary for those who have much

at their command as it is for the very poorest, yea, even more so, for if neglected, the waste would be so great as to be injurious, while too often "the destruction of the poor is their poverty," as they think it impossible to benefit themselves by thrift or injure themselves by waste. In a large commercial establishment the crooked nails that had been pulled out of casks and boxes were gathered up, straightened, and made use of again; and in all large establishments, whether manufacturing, commercial, or domestic, the very magnitude of the work done, the very plenty of material dealt in, and the very profusion of the supplies required, gives not only opportunity for the exercise of thrift, but makes it indispensable, if profit be desired, thus to "gather up the fragments that nothing may be lost." At the extreme end of the social scale again, we find persons who make a livelihood by gathering up what others have thrown away as useless, so that it would almost seem as if nothing could be actually lost even in the works of man. Wretched as are the lives of the poor creatures who day by day thus prowl about among dust heaps, and pick up there and elsewhere refuse and rubbish, there is still a sort of satisfaction to the lovers of thrift that by such work all waste is avoided, and it almost seems as if the workers them-

selves must sometimes feel a pleasure in arranging and assorting their treasure-trove such as none but cinder-wenches can know. No doubt if more was known of the chiffoniers of Paris, and the Cinderellas of London and Edinburgh, it would be found that there are diversities of tastes among them, some preferring to collect rags, others bones, others corks, while old iron, broken pottery, gallipots, or old shoes, may each and all be the special *penchant* of some individual altogether irrespective of the profit derived from the articles. The æsthetics of cinder-gathering are yet to be written!

Between the highest and lowest extremes, however, there is much opportunity for the exercise of thrift, and much diversity in the manner of doing so. When I speak of a thrifty use of time, I do not mean making use of it as a source of profit merely, for although of many it may be said that their time is their money, yet there are numbers who complain of want of time to do anything, of never having a minute to themselves, and so forth, who would find that by a little thrift they would waste less and so enjoy more of this valuable possession. It is generally those who have most leisure that have least time, they being more apt to squander it than those who are actually engaged from hour to hour. If they do

not saunter away their time, they are apt to do what is almost as bad, namely, to *potter* it away, by which I mean a kind of busy idleness, taking an hour to do some trifling work that might have been despatched in ten minutes, and making work out of such frittering devices that they can only be said to kill time, not to employ it.

The rule of putting everything to its right use is a truly thrifty one, for there are few more wasteful ways than the slovenly trick of making anything serve our need. Indeed the families of Anythings, Anytimes, Anyways, and Anyrates are too frequently found acting as servants and handmaidens to the waster, as well as to his brother the slothful man. Making use of what we have is a different thing from thus making anything do; it implies a knack of finding a use for everything, which, especially among the poor, is invaluable. There are certainly some persons to whom this seems to come naturally; everything given to them is turned to some use, clothes not made for them, fit them, contrivances of an ingenious kind are fallen upon to obviate any want, they are neither shiftless nor *slieveless*, they waste not, so they want not,—in short, they are thrifty.

Others again have a knack of doing everything in the most expensive way, all the time wishing to be,

and sometimes fancying they are, most economical; while, either from want of calculation or foresight, or from mismanagement of some kind, their expenditure always exceeds their expectations, whether it be of money, materials, time, or trouble. Let no one say that it is disobliging or indolent to class *trouble* among the matters to which thrift may be applied; few things are more worrying than useless, unnecessary, misapplied trouble, either for ourselves or others.

To conclude, it is not thrifty to save where we should spend, any more than it is to spend where we should save; it is not thrifty to expend time and strength either upon that which "satisfieth not," or in a way in which failure is certain; it is not thrifty to throw aside anything just because we are tired of it; it is not thrifty to wear unsuitable garments for the work we may have to do; it is not thrifty to lay aside and keep things till they become useless; it is not thrifty to neglect repairs till articles are past repairing, and it is not thrifty to substitute the abuse of anything for the use thereof.

ON THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVANTS.

THERE is no doubt that the proper direction and management of servants is the most difficult and troublesome part of housekeeping duty, whether the establishment be large or small, but it is also the most important. While they ought to be treated with kindness, they ought also to be trained with care, and not allowed to leave work undone or ill done from idleness, sloth, and want of regularity. This cannot be done unless the family habits are in some measure punctual, early, and methodical; if these characteristics are wanting in the heads of the household, it is incorrect and unfair to put the blame of bad management upon the servants.

We are but too apt to regard servants as good or bad merely as they fulfil their mechanical duties to us; and if we are well served, it matters little to us whether they are training in our service for another world, or living without a thought or care beyond this present sphere. There are some impressive and suggestive thoughts on this subject in a small volume

called *The Claims of Labour*, which are well worthy of a thoughtful perusal. In urging these *Claims*, the author says:—"You who have but a few dependants, or perhaps but one drudge dependent upon you, whether as servant, apprentice, or hired labourer, do not think that you have not an ample opportunity for exercising the duties of an employer of labour. . . . The Searcher of all hearts may make as ample a trial of you in your conduct to one poor dependant, as of the man who is appointed to lead armies and administer provinces. . . . The moral experiments of the world may be tried with the smallest quantities."

I hardly know whether it is a more difficult task to find a good servant for a place or a good place for a servant, but as we are all ready enough when on the look-out for the former, to expect "perfection for ten pounds a year," it were well if we sometimes viewed the matter from the second point, and asked ourselves the question, Is mine a good place? I think all who have any experience in the difficult business of getting a first place for a girl, will agree that good places are fully as rare as good servants.

First then I would say, *Do not expect your servants to be different from yourselves.* It is often remarked that servants who have been long in

one family acquire somewhat even of the manners and appearance of their employers. Whether it be so or not, be sure that they will not be even a short time in your service till they will copy your faults. If the hours are late and irregular, the family unpunctual or untidy, it is vain to expect that the servants will be active, punctual, or tidy, while rudeness or carelessness of their comfort will be met with corresponding sauciness of manner and neglect of duty. A good mistress in general makes a good servant.

Do not expect too much. I have heard people complain of ingratitude from their servants, when all that had been done for them was no more than their due. They had given their work and been paid their wages, but there was not and never had been any kindly interest taken in them, or any extra kindness shown them, so that really gratitude did not seem called for on one side more than the other. But even when you have faithfully endeavoured to do your duty to them in the fullest meaning of the word, still I say do not expect too much from them. Remember how early young girls are sent to service, and therefore how soon their own interest is the chief motive they have for doing well; remember how seldom they can keep up even the domestic affection for their own family; recall to mind how seldom they

are trained to consider the interests of their employers as their own, and you will not expect that all should be models of disinterested fidelity.

Do not trust too much. If you have good and faithful servants do not make that an excuse for neglecting your duty to them. It is a help and an encouragement to such to have their good service overlooked and commended, and even the best are somewhat like children in requiring to be looked after,—“He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence.” It is only a slothful mistress who trusts that all will go on like clock-work in the establishment without being looked after. At the same time remember the old saying about its being better to govern a house by the head than the heels, and though the domestics should feel that there is a governing and superintending power over them, they ought not to be harassed by perpetual and petty interference. A strict mistress, if she be consistent and reasonable, is generally both better liked and better served than one who may be lavishly indulgent and easy at times, but who teases by an incessant direction and fault-finding when not in a good humour.

Be careful not to put temptation in their way. Many a young servant has had her first feelings of integrity weakened if not destroyed by carelessness

in this respect. Keys may sometimes be safer guardians when fairly intrusted than when thoughtlessly left, while odd pence left lying about apparently unheeded, may tempt to dishonesty on the plea that "what's not missed is not mourned." Caution should also be observed as to what shops or places they are sent to, as well as to the hours in which they are permitted to be abroad, for there is many a temptation to evil lurking for a servant where the heads of the household might go unharmed themselves. Find fault faithfully, though in a kindly way. How many young domestics have been ruined by the self-indulgence that will rather bear a fault than rebuke it! Serious faults, such as intemperance or dishonesty, are not what is meant so much as the more petty ones, which, however annoying, are too often passed over. Who has not had to deal with a servant, for instance, who could not keep her hands from picking although she did from stealing? Who has not felt ashamed to rebuke so small a fault lest they should be thought mean or unlady-like? But it is to be feared this is but a cowardly evasion of duty; and when the servant is young, and the temptation of course greater, it is all the more incumbent on those who have the charge of the household to take notice of, and find fault with such a habit. You are putting

a servant into temptation if by careless unwatchfulness you enable them to say as a comfort when they have done wrong, "It was never found out;" and you are surely doing the same thing when they are able to add, "She never said naething to me about it."

There is another temptation to act dishonestly which may be referred to here, namely, letting the orders to tradesmen be given, and the paying of accounts be done by the servants. It is a good general rule to give your own orders and to settle your accounts yourself, and it is the plan preferred by the tradesmen themselves. The receiving a *douceur* under the name of discount is not the only bad practice a servant may be tempted into, but it is to be feared that too often the beginning of intemperate habits may be traced to their receiving on these occasions the so-called compliment of a dram.

When we do possess good servants, it is surely right to try to keep them so; and more than that, we ought to improve them if we can.

Many a servant is willing to go into and follow out the plans of her mistress when explained and set before her, who might never have thought of them herself. This is particularly the case with regard to helping the poor, for it is seldom indeed that we find any unwilling to do what they can, though

it is frequently found that there is both waste and want of judgment in their ways of helping. If it is shown to them that by careful and cleanly economy of scraps they can make broth or soup once a week for poor people, surely it is better they should do so *under superintendence*, than be allowed to give away broken bread or meat to beggars at the door. If they were shown how by being willing to save any little delicacy and take it to the sick, they were really doing what in them lay to fulfil the Saviour's words, "sick and ye visited me," surely few would grudge the trouble, or regret that these delicacies did not fall to their share. Much may be done, and should be done, in training servants to consider the poor; they quickly catch up the spirit of the family in this respect, and if sometimes employed as almoners, their feelings get interested, and their suggestions are often more practical than those of persons further removed from the poorer classes.

As to the question, whether or not visitors should be allowed, much must depend on circumstances. Where the families of the servants are known to be respectable, some intercourse at proper times is certainly desirable; but receiving many and frequent visitors is assuredly a thing to be checked, as is the too frequently repeated request for leave to go out.

Do not let the vulgar fear of being thought a hard mistress, keep you from doing your duty on this point; the *parents* of your servants will thank you for it, for in general they are well aware of the danger of much visiting and receiving of visitors among domestics. I need not say that the Sabbath-day should at all events be a day of rest to our servants, and if conscientiously kept holy by the family themselves, there can be no reasonable complaint if its observance be enforced upon those under our charge. Give them leave to visit their friends or to receive visitors on the evening of any other day; but if you wish the blessing of God on your household, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." In hiring servants, care should be taken not only to get those with good characters, but also to let *them* know what duties will be required of them, and to what rules they must conform. It is a good sign when a servant is as particular in her inquiries about a situation, as you are about her character and capabilities. In paying wages, also, there should always be advice given as to placing part in the Savings' Bank; a kind hint of this sort is always well taken, and the prudent habit once acquired, servants are kept from the common temptation of squandering their money so soon as it is received.

HINTS ON HOUSEKEEPING.

THERE is sometimes to be met with among young people a great dread of housekeeping, on account of its supposed difficulties,—marketing, keeping accounts, and even ordering dinner, are looked forward to with as much awe as if they were parts of some mysterious science, or at least a life-long drudgery to be encountered. There is really nothing very formidable in modern times in this work, nothing certainly that requires more than an ordinary portion of common sense, and a desire to learn. The latter is the difficulty sometimes ; it *is* easier to trust to others ; it *is* pleasanter to read or work or amuse one's-self ; it *is* occasionally troublesome to look after others, or to learn how things should be done ; but it is a woman's duty to “ look well to the ways of her household,” and no one ordinarily gifted can pretend incapacity to learn how to do so.

Some of my young readers may have amused themselves by a fanciful use of the last chapter of the book of Proverbs ; the character of each person

being supposed to be indicated in the verse corresponding to the day of the month on which he or she was born. If they have ever thought of it except in this light, it has been probably only as a description of what a diligent frugal housewife was in the time of Solomon, but which in no way applies to them. Look over the chapter again thoughtfully and see if this be indeed the case, consider the *spirit* there ascribed to the virtuous woman, and then ask yourselves if the same qualities are not as much required now as then, even though modern tastes, habits, and pursuits differ from those practised by King Lemuel's mother. She is described as trustworthy, and one that will exert her influence for good (see v. 11, 12), as diligent (13, 19, 22); as active and an early riser (15), as judiciously superintending others and seeing that they do their duty (18, 27), as charitable to the poor (20), as wise and kind (26), as a good wife and mother (28). In short, she is described as one who, while never neglecting the higher duties, at the same time thinks it no hardship to overlook and keep in order all the smaller springs of domestic comfort. She is not a mere household drudge, for she is *wise*, *kind*, and *benevolent*; but neither does she, under the excuse of cultivating her mind or of devoting

herself to charitable enterprises, neglect either the happiness of her family or the diligent care of household economy.

It certainly would be desirable that some knowledge of the details of housekeeping were acquired among the younger members of a family, even when the "housemother" feels no need of their assistance, and sometimes finds it more a hindrance than a help. For their own sakes, each should take in turn some charge of household matters, and though it may be true, that till they have the responsibility of the *whole* charge, they will not learn much, still they never can be so ludicrously at a loss as young people sometimes are, when the awful charge unexpectedly falls upon them. It is true that in this country they can never be quite in the dilemma one has read of, where an American lady in the backwoods suddenly finds herself called upon to superintend and assist in cutting up a pig for salting; to bake bread without an idea where to get "fixings," which she is told are necessary, and with as little idea what these "fixings" may be. But I have known of ludicrous distresses felt, and mistakes made by young ladies, when, through the illness or absence of the usual superintending power, they needed to take a charge. I recollect one instance where Sunday morning

dawned upon a household without either tea, coffee, or sugar, because the looking after the supply of these necessaries had been intrusted to one who had never entered a store-room save on a predatory incursion. I could tell of another young house-keeper, who, determined not to show her ignorance to the cook, boldly ordered imaginary and till then unheard-of joints of meat to be prepared for dinner; and to save the wear and tear of mind consequent upon having also to order a second course, directed six apple-pies to be baked at once, and then felt relieved of half the responsibility of dinner for a week to come!

In many families it is the custom to get in a certain quantity of meat at fixed times, so as to save the trouble on ordinary occasions of sending orders to the butcher. Before this plan be commenced, it is of course requisite to ascertain as nearly as possible the proper quantity required by the family, and even then there will always be scope for good management and economy, from the varying plans of the household. In some families, the regularly ordered supply of meat is only that which is to be used by the servants, while the supply for the family is ordered and varied as required. Whichever plan be followed, the lady of the house should make it a

rule that when she goes to give her daily orders, both the cooked and uncooked meat should be set out for inspection. This affords an opportunity of seeing that there is no waste or giving away of provisions, and prevents all danger of careless forgetfulness of what is in the house, what should be first used, etc. There should also be a frequent investigation made as to the order and cleanliness observed in all pantries, closets, and drawers. There is a strong tendency even in good servants to allow accumulations of rubbish, to keep things in the most unfit places, and to put things to wrong uses. It is not a pleasant consciousness that the cook keeps her brush and a bit of broken comb in the drawer of the kitchen dresser beside the rolling-pin and kitchen spoons, nor is it agreeable to find the oven filled with the blacklead and still blacker cloths used for cleaning the grates. In large establishments where a housekeeper takes the charge, if she do her duty conscientiously, this overlooking of minutiae and also the due regulation of the servants' work, may be better done than when a lady is her own housekeeper. This careful surveillance is no doubt rather an irksome duty, for it leads necessarily in some cases to frequent fault-finding, but there are no responsible situations without that drawback, and to

feel the necessity for it lessening daily is one of the rewards of a diligent ruler.

Be regular in your time for giving orders, be as early in doing so as possible, state your wishes precisely, and as far as possible, let one winding-up of the domestic clock do for the day. Neither watches nor households go on well when they are perpetually interfered with, interrupted, and altered as to time. Pay all accounts weekly, or monthly at the farthest. "Short accounts make long friends," is a true saying, and many a mistake as well as wilful overcharge will be prevented by paying at short intervals. This method has also the advantage of enabling you sooner to discover and guard against over-expenditure on your part. Pass-books are generally kept with the tradesmen regularly dealt with, and the various items entered into these books should always be looked over before payment, so that any deviation from the usual quantity or price may be observed, and accounted for or guarded against in future. There is no particular mystery about keeping household accounts, they should be kept regularly, minutely, and legibly, and a balance frequently made out. It may be found useful also to have a small memorandum-book in the pocket, wherein to enter small sums when paid, as these are apt to be forgotten when the more

regular marking-down time comes, and then what complaints are heard of the difficulty of getting accounts to balance, and how frequent and useful becomes the mysterious entry of "Paid for *sundries*," so much! The small pocket-book is a useful auxiliary in such cases, but alas! in these degenerate days there is seldom a pocket to keep it in. Hence also arises the frequent inquiry, "Where can the keys be? Key-baskets and key-boxes are useful and necessary, but they too require to be locked away, and the key will often be mislaid when it is kept behind jars, or sofa pillows, or any of the *supposed* secret hiding-places, instead of in the pocket of the housekeeper.

It is not possible to lay down any general rules on the details of household economy, for as incomes, circumstances, and situations vary, so must both management and expenditure. The difference between town and country housekeeping is often so great, that a person accustomed to the former, where orders could be executed daily, and supplies sent in when wanted, would often feel puzzled to arrange matters comfortably and economically when all stores must be laid in weeks before they are wanted, and when you must often take what you can get or go without. It is more easy to avoid waste, and there

is also less to do or think of in town; you can get just what you want, as much and no more than you want, and you can get it *when* you want it, and all this is convenient and pleasant. In the country, on the contrary, the store-room must be kept well supplied, emergencies must be foreseen and provided for, more calculation and foresight is required, and more trouble is necessary. A well-stocked store-room and larder need not however lead to waste, though if not looked after they are apt to do so. A calculation of how long such and such stores ought to last can easily be made, and the proper quantities should be weighed and given out at intervals.

This weighing out is a useful check as well as a guide for future orders, and even in town where fixed quantities are ordered to be sent in, it does no harm to either party that it be understood that your servants occasionally weigh the meat, etc., thus ordered.

Besides this weekly weighing out of stores there should be a frequent and regular looking over and comparing of inventories; this is usually done at half-yearly intervals, but frequently not at all except when there is a change of domestics. A more frequent inspection would promote care, especially of those articles of comparatively small value, such as kitchen-towels, dusters, bowls, and cups, and would also pre-

vent the misuse and loss of many things in everyday use. There is often great annoyance experienced, and expense incurred, when these reckoning days come at rare intervals, and woful and unsuspected blanks are found among crystal and china, hardware and napery, all the loss and damage, of course, being the fault of "Mr. Nobody." One proof that this endless source of expense is mainly to be attributed to carelessness, may be found in the fact that it is seldom the more valuable or expensive articles that are broken or lost. The plate, china, cut-glass, damask napery, all answer to the roll-call; the defaulters are of lower degree, of less value, but in daily use (or abuse?), and must be replaced. A monthly or quarterly review-day, when all articles, however torn or maimed, must be produced, might be the means of greater care being taken, and at all events, the necessary renewals will not fall so heavily on the purse as they do when almost a new stock has to be purchased. It has been found a good plan to give to each servant an inventory of the things she has under her care belonging to her department, so that she can look over her stock now and then to see that all is right. This plan seems to give them a sense of responsibility, and a feeling of interest in what they have charge of, greater than they feel when it

is *your* inventory only that has to be compared, and by degrees they learn to feel an honest satisfaction in requiring little to be replaced when your time for examination comes round.

It is not easy to define economy or to teach it by rules. It is as different and as opposed to parsimony as it is to extravagance, though it is frequently confounded with it. How frequently do we hear those who are careful to allow no *waste* stigmatized as mean or stingy, while careless profusion is miscalled generosity. Economy does not consist in a love of cheap bargains, nor does it show itself by grudging or stinting necessary expenses. It certainly does not follow that because you only buy what you can pay for, that therefore you may buy *all* you can pay for. True economy will moderate our desires as well as our expenditure, but be the means placed at our disposal small or great, the duty of economy, of avoiding all waste, is imperative on all. Is it taking too serious a view of this subject to remind the reader that it was He to whom the fulness of the earth belongs, who commanded his disciples to "gather up the fragments that nothing may be lost?" Much depends no doubt on the servants of a house, for this is one of the matters in which they require both training and superintendence, but much may

be done by a careful eye over them. One person, for instance, by neat carving, will make a joint go farther than another who haggles it; a clever cook will serve up several dishes out of what another would consider scraps; a little extra trouble and nicety will often make an elegant and economical appearance when lazy unthrift will spoil and waste. It is not recommended that a lady should herself either cook or superintend cookery, but the presiding *head* will often find it desirable to suggest hints on the subject to the labouring *hands*, and these suggestions may be picked up not only from cookery-books, but from observing the plans pursued in other households. Where there is little company kept, or only a small family to serve, a cook has fewer opportunities of showing her skill or of improving herself, and thereby adding to the comfort and convenience of her employer. It would not be a bad plan in these cases, for the lady of the house to make it a rule that not only shall the table be served as neatly, however plainly, when alone as when company is expected, but that she should occasionally order *experimental* dishes, so as to give practice to the cook and variety to the table. Even in families where very plain living is necessary, this may be done without infringing on the requisite economy, and

there is no doubt that a table thus managed is more pleasing to most people than where one dish or one style of cookery prevails.

While alluding to hints derived from books, it may be remarked that in general receipts are given on too expensive a scale for families where economy has to be studied; and even when the object is professedly "cheap cookery," there is much difference in English and Scotch ideas on the subject. For instance, it is amusing to those to whom the making of broth is an every-day matter, to be gravely told never to allow the cook to throw away the water in which meat has been boiled! In looking over lately some estimates of cheap living for the working classes, I was struck by the large allowance for flour (exclusive of bread), and the scanty supply of oatmeal. I suspect few of our Scotch labourers or their children would exchange their porridge for hard dumplings, and probably those used to the latter would be as unwilling to make the change. I doubt indeed whether any practically useful estimates of living can be made, for not only the habits of living, but the materials used, differ so much even in one county from another as to prices, etc., that it must always be a difficult matter to lay down rules that will apply to all. The only rule that holds good in

all cases where economy and retrenchment are necessary is strict self-denial, but this is unfortunately the most unpalatable of all.

It has been said that cleanliness is the only cheap luxury, and something of the same kind may be said in favour of good taste and elegance of arrangement in household affairs. These cost nothing, except perhaps a little more trouble, but it must be admitted that if a little attention is not paid to these things, bad habits of slovenliness, or a dull *ugly* routine is too apt to become the order of the day. The arrangements of the sitting-rooms, the dress of the family, the manner of serving the meals, the training of the domestics, are all subjects whereon this good taste ought to be exercised; the much-talked-of sense of the beautiful ought to be cultivated and encouraged in domestic affairs, and there are few who do not prefer this attention to nicety of appearance, whether it be exercised in cookery, in setting out the table, in dress, or in any domestic affairs to the easy, indolent, "do-weel-eneuch" system. There is a popular fallacy, I suspect, in the saying, that it is as easy to do a thing the right way as the wrong; it would not be so often done the wrong way were this the case; but however this may be, there is no doubt that there *are* two ways of doing a thing, and it is

better to do it the right way. There is no reason because a family live quietly, and have a small income, that they should not indulge in the inexpensive luxury of making things look nice; and much may be done in this way, by attention to the plate and glass being kept bright, to dishes being set down straight and properly matched, to serving up on napkins, and in short to all those minutiae which, spite of their trifling and insignificant nature, do affect the eye, and make the difference between elegance and good taste or careless slovenliness. It is true that there are many tidy, methodical people who have no taste or liking to have pretty things about them, and who may feel such attention to these trifling niceties as waste of time; they are quite contented if everything is clean and in order, and look upon the little adornments of domestic life with a suspicious eye, as unnecessary "*fykes*," or as liable to degenerate into trashy knickknacks. Their rooms bear marks of their want of taste, for while scrupulously clean and neat (thanks to the housemaid), all ornaments are put away lest they collect dust, and the furniture is of a dull colour, or covered up with brown Holland bags, while, if any books or work are allowed to be visible, both are sure to be of the most uninteresting and unornamental character.

In the superintendence and keeping in order of a household, it will generally be found a more economical plan to get repairs made and losses replaced when the damage is done, than to wait till it seems more worth while on account of the extent of the evil. It is annoying enough to have frequently to pay small sums for such necessary repairs and replacements, but it is better to do so than to have a heavy sum asked unexpectedly, when a whole array of breakage requires to be made up, or to find yourself driven to straits on account of the diminished stock of crystal or china. This hint applies also to repairs that can be executed without cost, to the stitch in time that will keep the household linen in order, as well as to the occasional necessary filling up of blanks in the inventory thereof, from articles being withdrawn from service on account of their age and infirmities.

HINTS ON NEEDLEWORK, &c.

Good old-fashioned plain "white-seam" has gone so much out of fashion as ladies'-work, that it almost seems unnecessary to offer any hints on the subject.

Perhaps it is as well that plain sewing is less laboriously pursued as an occupation than it used to be, for a source of *employment* (alas! not always of *profit*) is opened to industrious women in the lower ranks of life. It is much the custom now to buy ready-made clothing at outfitting shops, and as the most respectable of these give a fair remuneration to the workers employed, it is right as well as convenient to deal with such. Let all beware, however, that "the love of a bargain," said to be inherent in some of our sex, does not lead them to encourage any one who sells cheap, because of the miserable pittance too often given for work done.

This useful art has, however, got out of fashion with others besides those whose circumstances make such an occupation unnecessary, except as an amuse-

ment. It is a common complaint now that few servants or women in the lower ranks of life can sew well ; and how frequent is it now in schools for the instruction of young persons of the humbler ranks, to see crotchet and fancy knitting, and even worsted work, allowed to usurp the place of plain, useful sewing. This is an error in more views than one, for besides that few will afterwards find fancy work useful even as a means of gaining their livelihood, there is a want of the training to quiet steady work which is obtained by regular instruction in plain sewing. It may seem absurd to talk of the moral effects of such a mechanical occupation, but there is something in the habit acquired of patiently and diligently finishing a dull piece of useful work, that is likely to make more steady servants abroad, and more keepers at home in their own families, than the fluttering, half-idle, half-amusing style of taking up, when inclined, a bit of tawdry crochet trimming, or a useless piece of gaudy worsted work. These remarks are not intended for those whose circumstances make work of any kind an amusing occupation merely, though every one, be their fortune or rank what it may, will find it sometimes an advantage to have been taught and to be able to sew well and steadily themselves, and thus at least to be

qualified to judge of work done for them by others. There is no doubt that when it can be afforded to be done, giving out work to poor females is one of the best ways of bestowing charity, and this makes it allowable for those whose circumstances enable them to do so, and whose tastes lead them to other pursuits, to employ their leisure hours in ornamental work. In favour even of this apparently useless labour much may be said; it may be made useful to others either as gifts or as contributions for charitable purposes, or at all events it is a source of innocent amusement to the person occupied, and may be a means of exercising both taste and industry. In times of recovery from illness, also, how often are the tedious hours of confinement to the same apartment beguiled by the amusement afforded by light and ornamental work. I remember hearing that after the publication by Mrs. Gaugain of her well-known receipt-books for knitting, etc., she had received a letter of thanks from an invalid lady for the new source of usefulness as well as of amusement these books had opened up to her. She had often felt as if useless to her fellow-creatures, but having learnt the ornamental work described by Mrs. Gaugain, she had been able to teach it to poor girls in the neighbourhood, who were thereby enabled

to gain a livelihood. Knitting certainly claims a higher place as a useful art than either crotchet or worsted work, for while it can emulate them in the variety and beauty of its productions, it lays sole claim to the old-fashioned manufacture of stockings, which it also has brought within the limits of ornamental work.

Knit stockings are generally considered more durable than those wrought by the loom, and since fancy stitches have been invented and applied to this art, the prosecution of it now ranks as a drawing-room occupation, and the little fancy sock may even be superseded by the plain homely stocking, without any surprise being expressed. Beginners in this work should commence with socks or children's stockings; they are less tedious, and have the advantage of bringing the mysteries of *intakes* and *turning heels* much more quickly back to the learner's hand than would be done by one of a larger size, so that she is less liable to forget them. One thing that is puzzling to a beginner is the size of the knitting needles and quality of the wool; as a receipt, worked with different materials from those used in the pattern, or ordered in the receipt, varies of course in size.

Something like the following proportions may

assist in this adjustment. If you wish to work a sock of a similar size to one already done, but with needles one size finer, then add, in casting on, one stitch to every ten of the pattern; if with needles one size coarser, then cast on one less in every ten; if with needles *two* sizes finer or coarser, cast on or keep off *two* in every ten. Thus if the pattern sock has been worked with needles No. 16, and has sixty stitches at the commencement, and it is wished to work one of the same size, but with finer needles, say 18, then by adding two stitches to every ten, you will cast on twelve more, or seventy-two in all; or if it is to be worked with coarser wires, say 14, keep off two in every ten, and forty-eight stitches will be sufficient. If the same size of needles is to be used, but with finer or coarser wool, about the same number of stitches added for the fine, or diminished for the coarse will be required, but this must be more of a guess, as the quality of wool is not indicated by fixed numbers, as is the size of knitting needles. If both needles and worsted are to be *one* degree coarser or finer, the proportion will then be two stitches in every ten, and so on. Coarse wool requires large needles, and fine wool requires small ones, but the above hints (not very intelligible it is feared) may be of some assistance. The pro-

cess of knitting a stocking, though really a simple affair, seems to a beginner very complicated, and it is sometimes amusing to see their embarrassment, between the desire to learn some slightly different manner of turning the heel or closing the foot, and the dread of departing by a single stitch from some written formula, which they consider like the law of the Medes and Persians,—which changeth not. They will learn by experience that in this, as in nobler arts, some rules are only necessary for beginners, and that, by and by, while the principles remain the same, the working out of details varies, and each acquires the same end by different means. By a little perseverance, the art of plain knitting becomes so mechanical, that it can be pursued while talking or reading, and as it requires little exertion of sight from those expert in its exercise, it becomes invaluable as an occupation and resource to the aged, to those with weak sight, or to those confined to the darkened chamber of sickness. After the first difficulties have been overcome, it would be a good plan to knit sometimes with the eyes shut, or resolutely kept off the work, till the power of knitting thus mechanically were obtained. It is not half so difficult to acquire as what every beginner in music has to learn, viz., to play the notes without

looking from the music-book to the hands, and yet we see this done daily by children.

“ Think twice before you cut once ;” and if there is a pattern upon the material, or it has a right and wrong side, you will sometimes find that your second thought has saved you from mistake and waste of material. Experienced cutters-out not only rarely forget to attend to these matters, but by a little thought, they also contrive to make the most of their materials, by what is technically called “ cutting one thing out of another,” and thus in some cases two pieces of dress can be made from a number of yards which, divided into two, would not have served the purpose. Patterns cut out by an experienced hand are useful to beginners in this art, for it is not always easy to tell by a dress made up how the different pieces should be cut, and sometimes it is almost as puzzling to know how to make it up after it has been cut. In cutting out, due allowance must also be made for the shrinking of the cloth in washing, especially in flannel; linen or cotton may be washed first, which makes it easier to sew afterwards.

THE SICK-ROOM.

It may be thought going too far to call nursing the sick a *popular* employment, and one that most of us rather like, but I suspect this is the case. Some are no doubt born to be good sick-nurses; they seem to have a natural vocation that way, and fall at once into all the quiet and thoughtful ways of those who have had long experience to teach them. Few who have had much to do with professional sick-nurses will deny that something more than experience is necessary to make a good sick-nurse, but as it is a duty that is sure at one time or another of our lives to devolve upon us, it should be every woman's endeavour to fit herself for it. The cases in which the assistance of a hired nurse is required are far fewer than those in which the cares of the sick-room can be undertaken by the members of the family; and even when this aid is requisite, it is seldom indeed that these duties are entirely devolved upon the nurse. To the credit of our sex it must be said that most of us feel it a sacred duty, and oftentimes

a privilege, to share in the labours, anxiety, and fatigues of the sick-room. There are lights as well as shadows in the chamber of the invalid, and these fall on the attendants as well as on the patient. It is true that in one sense these duties must always be painful, because the very occasion for them infers the suffering of some one we love ; but I think I may appeal to the experience of most people who have been frequently employed about the sick, whether it is not the case that they have spent not only many profitable and peaceful hours by a sick-bed, but even many grateful and cheerful ones. It must not be supposed that I am undervaluing experience, when I say that the chief characteristics of a good nurse are tenderness, common sense, and self-possession. The first is the most common, the two last are less frequently met with, and so seldom in uneducated persons, that it is rarely, if ever, safe, to trust the whole management of a sick-room to hired attendants, however experienced they may be. Without unduly interfering with the hired nurse, where such is necessary, there ought always to be some watchfulness and superintendence exercised, and it is as well on such occasions that the orders given by the medical attendant should be delivered to whoever takes this superintending care as well as to the nurse.

The superior skill in the mechanical work, and the greater strength of a hired nurse, are sometimes their chief recommendations, but even if these are their only merits, much may be learnt by observing their way of doing their work, and the *handy* manner in which from practice they can administer to the comfort of the invalid. Many good hints may be thus received for future use, and one may benefit much by thus, as far as possible, putting one's-self to school, as it were, under experienced persons. It is a good plan to keep a book in which to insert such simple remedies, neat-handed plans, or judicious contrivances as have been found conducive to the comfort of the patient, the order of the sick-room, or even the welfare of the sick-nurse.

When there are several members of a family able to take the sick-room duty by turns, they ought to do so, both to prevent any one being overworked, and to enable them all to acquire some degree of skill in this necessary work. Even when these cares fall on one individual, she should make it a rule to take rest and regular exercise out of doors, and not to allow herself the false indulgence of refusing all aid, and even taking a pride in injuring her own health, and marring her real usefulness, by this over-devotedness. It is true that sick persons often prefer the attend-

ance of some one individual, and that one generally feels it a sort of privilege to be thus employed, and can, in reality, generally do the duty better than others. But still a due regard for her own health should induce her to attend to this counsel. None who have tried it will deny the refreshing influence of a walk, however unwillingly undertaken, or even of the slight change of air and scene obtained by joining the family meals or occupations for a short time. One returns with the mind as well as the body strengthened and refreshed, and with renewed spirit to resume the quiet watch, or it may be harassing attendance on the poor sufferer. Were I not writing more for the benefit of those in attendance than for the sick, I might give a hint on this subject; for sometimes it is to be feared they are apt to forget the trouble they give, and because it is indeed a labour of love, they may become selfish and exacting, even when really grateful for all that is done for them. If it be true that to be a good sick-nurse one ought to have been ill one's-self, I am sure it is equally true that to be a good patient one ought to have been a sick-nurse.

In cases where the illness is serious or sudden, it is scarcely possible to avoid the inconvenience caused by the neglect for the time, of the usual order of the

family arrangements, but when attendance in a sick-room is likely to be prolonged, it is well that, as far as possible, all domestic matters should be attended to as usual. No doubt this is sometimes harassing to the anxious attendant, who is apt to feel as if everything should give way to the indulgence and attention required by the invalid ; but it is in reality more real kindness to the sufferer thus to attend also to the comfort of others, as doing so will prevent the distressing feeling that the illness of one member of a family necessarily entails discomfort on all the others.

Quiet occupations may be carried on in a sick-room with advantage, especially when, as frequently happens, the mere presence of some one in case of need is all that is required. Knitting is especially useful at such a time ; it can be carried on in the darkened chamber, it can be laid aside and resumed with facility, and it does not, like some descriptions of work, require space for its materials. It is seldom advisable that two persons should be in attendance at the same time. Sometimes the invalid, out of consideration for others, alleges that two talking to each other but not addressing himself, is rather an amusement than otherwise ; but in general it will be found that the patient gets fatigued and heated, and that the necessary quiet of the sick-room is best preserved

by one attendant at a time. In alluding to quiet, it may not be unnecessary to remark, that frequently small noises cause greater annoyance to an invalid than those of a louder nature; the crackling sound made by folding a newspaper, for instance, is so universally disliked, that this description of reading should seldom be carried on in a sick-room. All noises made by mending the fire, removing ashes, etc., are also peculiarly irksome, and should be avoided as far as possible; a glove should be kept ready, so as to allow of the coals being put on with the hand, and a wooden poker used, as it makes much less noise than one made of metal. The rustling of a silk dress or the creaking of shoes ought never to be allowed to annoy a sick person, and fanciful as some of these little annoyances may seem to those in health, they become more serious in illness than we are aware of. Knitted wool shoes or boots are useful to draw over the shoes, both from the quietness they produce, and from the warmth and comfort felt by the wearer, especially while sitting up during the night. Where this is requisite, the dress altogether ought to be warm, for even in summer, or in a room with a fire, there is a sensation of peculiar cold felt about the time of early dawn. Shawls are not suitable or useful as wrappings-up

for the attendant in a sick-room ; little use can be made of the hands when enveloped in one ; the ends are apt to be dipping into or dragging over cups and basins, and consequently the warm shawl is frequently thrown aside when any service has to be performed, because it is in the way, and not resumed till a chill has been felt. A warm dressing-gown without a cape, or a knitted polka, is far more convenient and comfortable than any shawl.

It sometimes occurs that a sick person is disturbed or awakened by some one entering the room either to relieve guard or to make inquiries, and the attendant who has perhaps had the satisfaction of seeing the patient for the first time in a quiet sleep, hears the intruder coming, and is nervously aware that the opening of the door will infallibly awake the sleeper, and yet can only by a gesture implore quiet when too late. This source of annoyance should be prevented by a signal being agreed on, such as a quill or slip of paper pushed through the key-hole, that no one shall enter till it is removed, and it will be equally understood that the watcher within cannot open the door for the same reason. Even when a sick person is not asleep, it is most irksome to have any one constantly going out and in of the room, or even moving much about the apartment. To prevent

this let the door be as seldom opened as possible, but when it must be so, keep it open and bring in and take out all that is required at one time. A table should be set out of sight, covered with a napkin, on which to put down quietly what glasses, spoons, etc., may be required. Never leave the room without taking a look round, to see what ought to be carried out and what will require to be brought in, when the door is next opened, and keep everything strictly in its place, that there may be no confusion or hurry when it is wanted. Keep a basin of water, a towel, and duster, beside you to wipe up^{*} instantly any drops spilled, or to enable you occasionally to wash up a cup, or glass, or spoon, that has been in use. As a general rule, neither physic nor food should be seen by the patient while preparing; the dislike to the first is increased, and the desire for the second lessened, by watching their preparation. Never administer either without spreading a clean napkin over the sheets, lest spot or stain should fall and annoy the senses of the poor invalid. Great caution should be observed as to the subjects of conversation introduced in a sick-room. Even when the patient is so far recovered as to be able to converse, or to enjoy hearing others talk beside him, there is often an unknown weakness remaining that

causes any painful or unpleasant topic to make a deeper impression than is suspected; and long after the subject is obliterated from the minds of those who can go forth, and, mingling in other scenes, forget what is unpleasant, it may linger about the sleepless couch or solitary room of the invalid. In the seclusion of a sick-room there is often a vividness of impression similar to what is observed in the quickening of hearing in the blind,—one idea is apt to be dominant; so, as far as possible, beware of thoughtlessly creating and leaving behind a painful, harassing, or unpleasing impression. There is sometimes a mistaken theory on this subject, viz., that to hear of others suffering more severely than himself makes the patient more resigned to his own illness; but even if this were the case, there can be no need of entering into details or giving particulars, as these must do so much harm to a mind weakened by illness, as to counterbalance any moral good hoped for by the narrative. This style of occupying and interesting a sick person is apt to be resorted to by servants and sick-nurses, and should be strictly prohibited when they are left in charge of a sick-room. There is much scope for thoughtful ingenuity in attending on the sick, not merely in little contrivances to give them ease, a change of position, or

the like, but also in guessing their wants, rather than questioning them on the subject. It is teasing to be perpetually asked if you would wish this or that to be done, what you would like for dinner, etc., but a watchful and judicious attendant will avoid these petty annoyances, and by thinking for the patient, save him the trouble of doing so, or the more painful necessity of complaining. In every case of illness there must, of course, be obedience to the doctor's orders, and a general submission to the necessary restrictions imposed by the care of others, but do not let your attention to the order of the sick-room induce you to forget the comfort of the sick one. Do not fidget or torment one who is ill and anxious to be left in quiet, with your over-anxiety to have all things in nice order, for though it is right and desirable that a sick-room and the invalid should be kept as much so as possible, yet it is far better to sacrifice some degree of this nicety than to run the risk of harassing the patient. Those in health are apt to forget how fatiguing, and sometimes oppressive, the trifling duties of the toilette are to the sick, and may urge them to undergo, for the sake of appearances, what is really to them a great exertion and annoyance.

In the *Domestic Management of the Sick-Room*, by Dr. A. T. Thomson, it is recommended that the

table in the room "should have one drawer at least, which ought to be furnished with the following articles—broad tape, such as is required in blood-letting, and also some narrow tape, two or three half-worn ribbons, a bundle of old soft linen, a sponge, a few ounces of lint, scissors large and small, a bone spatula for spreading ointment, a couple of rolls of calico, and the same quantity of flannel bandage, two inches broad, a pincushion well supplied with pins, needles, and thread, and about half a yard of adhesive plaster."

In the same useful work the necessity of great order and cleanliness in the sick-room is repeatedly enforced; all glasses, cups, or spoons, used in the administering of physic, are recommended to be washed immediately after use, and this not only on the score of cleanliness, but, as it is said, because—"Some medicines when they are exposed to the air, rapidly undergo changes which alter their properties, and this alteration having been undergone by the small portion which is always left in the glass or cup, communicates the disposition to be decomposed to that which may be next poured into the cup. An active medicine may be thus rendered inert, or one which is mild in its operation may be so changed as to operate with hazardous energy." Let therefore

the chemistry of cleanliness, as well as the comfort of it, impress its necessity upon the minds of those in attendance.

It should also be remembered that leeches will not bite, and are apt to fall off after they are fixed, if any peculiar odour be diffused through the room, such as the vapour of hot vinegar, or smoke from burning brown paper, or a sulphur match.

When fomentations with hot water are ordered, it will be found useful to have ready two pieces of flannel, each three yards long, with the ends sewed together, to admit of the boiling water being wrung out of them by means of two sticks turned in opposite directions, one flannel to be got ready while the other is applied.

It may seem unnecessary to remind the reader that the utmost care and nicety should be observed in all cookery for the sick. Try to make things *look* nice, for the fastidious appetite of an invalid is often affected by the appearance of the food set before him, and what in health would be partaken of without notice, will frequently in illness be turned from with dislike, because "it does not look nice."

If, in spite of all your pains and care, the patient should be dissatisfied, or unable to take what has been provided, do not lose patience, or remind him

that it is the very thing he wished for, or accuse him of being whimsical ; remember that whims and fancies are often a part of the disease, and though they cannot always be gratified, they may always be sympathized and borne with. Indeed, in all cases of attendance on illness, the sympathy and kindness really felt should be shown by attention and earnestness of manner, even when the service required may be whimsical, or may seem unnecessary.

There is an excellent work for the use of those suffering from illness, called *Sickness, its Blessings and Trials*, which may likewise be read with advantage by those in attendance on the sick. It may serve to point out to those who have suffered little themselves, what are the trials, great and small, of those who are ill, and may give them many hints as to avoiding sources of discomfort, or suggest means of relieving and amusing those on whom they may be attending. If attendance in a sick-room is likely to be prolonged, and in many cases for months and years this duty is required, the sooner the attendant can attain to the art of carrying on her usual occupations in that room the better. The duty may be felt as a privilege, but it is still a monotonous work, and requires, to be well performed, that the mind should be occupied and interested with some variety

of pursuits. For these prolonged cases, indeed, what is generally required is rather companionship and a sympathizing superintendence, than actual occupation about the invalid, and without any neglect of this, many pursuits and even studies may be quietly and regularly carried on. This habit of steady occupation will be useful oftentimes to the patient, not only by giving him a more intelligent companion, but by insensibly interesting him in some of these pursuits, and thus withdrawing his attention from himself. I have heard of one lady who was led to study botany as an amusement and occupation while absent from home in attendance on a sick relative, and who even in these circumstances became a skilled and scientific botanist; and of another, who, in the intervals of sick-room duties, acquired sufficient knowledge of a foreign language to enable her to read it with ease.

Although these hints are intended for those who are nursing an invalid, rather than for an invalid herself, it may not be out of place to say here, how much the tedium and languor caused by long continued indisposition, may be alleviated by even an attempt to carry on in the sick-room the occupations that interested one while in health. To do this not only prevents weariness, but it frequently aids re-

covery, by keeping the patient's mind from dwelling on her own illness and watching symptoms, which I believe is generally admitted to be far from a wholesome exercise of mind. The knowledge and acquirements gained in our hours of health, may thus often be a solace in our solitary hours of *sameness* and sickness; it may be that we were enabled to make these acquisitions as a preparation for sustaining us when other sources of pleasant employment were dried up. The following extract from the Memoir of Mary Jane Graham will serve to illustrate what is meant:—

“ For the last two years she was entirely confined to her room, and unable to be dressed. . . . In this state of wearisome languor and pain, her mind, however, was always vigorous and full of energy. She never seemed to know an idle moment. During the whole period of confinement to her bed, she was always surrounded with books, or other objects that engaged her attention. It was her habit to have her table placed by her bedside every night with her books and writing materials, that she might commence her operations with the earliest dawn of light. Her beloved Bible was always under her pillow, the first thing in her hand in the morning, and the last at night. Subordinate to this object of

supreme interest, her diligence and perseverance in study were most remarkable. When reminded that such intense application must be injurious to her health, she always replied, that she considered these diversified sources of interest as among her greatest temporal blessings, in diverting her mind and attention from her bodily ailments. Her studies in the sick-room were as varied as in the time of health. Sometimes the languages were taken up. At other times the more engrossing study of mathematics fixed her mind. This in its turn was exchanged for chemistry or botany. Occasionally, when her mind was less equal to exertion, she would amuse herself with lighter employments. In the spring of her last year, she attempted to dry flowers which her parents procured for her, with the intention of forming a herbarium, but increasing indisposition frustrated this plan. Cutting out paper was also a favourite amusement, in which she early excelled. . . . She was also a beautiful netter, and sent a number of purses to a bazaar, to be sold for the benefit of her dear Spanish friends, which produced upwards of three pounds to their fund."

There may be few who have the ability, even if they had the inclination, to carry on such abstruse studies as some of the above; but the principle of

varied employment for an invalid, as a beneficial exercise, is what is chiefly to be observed as here illustrated.

It must frequently have struck every one accustomed to visit the sick, how much better some bear lengthened and tedious confinement than others, how much more contented they are, and how much more grateful for all that is done for them. In many cases this may be a result of natural temperament; in some the blessed effect of Divine grace, sought and obtained in the time of need; but is it not frequently caused, or greatly assisted, by habits (formed in health) of industry, of steady pursuits, and of attending to the feelings of others more than to one's-self? There is such a thing as being educated to be ill, however strange it may sound, and fortunately it is acquired by the same process that makes one most useful when in health.

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RAB AND HIS FRIENDS.

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