

unsympathetic character, and here "Aurora Leigh" is the type. Many modern girls have read of Mrs. Browning's heroine, the half-Italian, half-English child, thrilling with passionate impulses and the poetic fire within, sent to the care of the cold, rigid, passionless English aunt.

"She had lived

A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to perch
Was art and joy enough for any bird.
Dear heaven, how silly are the things that live
In thickets and eat berries."

So terrible was the isolation to the lonely girl, under the icy *régime* of this undesirable relation, that she would have welcomed death.

At length she lighted upon a treasure; cases of books packed away in a garret. With feverish haste she dragged the volumes from their hiding-place, and henceforward she had a resource. The poets she found nourished her inner life, and she could live in a world where other souls spake to her soul. The aunt in vain carried out her theory that crochet-work was a woman's chief end.

"Then I sate and teased

The patient needle till it spilt the thread
Which oozed off from it in meandering lace
From hour to hour. I was not therefore sad.
My soul was singing at a work apart
Behind the wall of sense, as safe from harm
As sings the lark when sucked up out of sight
In vortices of glory and blue air.
And so, through forced work and spontaneous work
The inner life informed the outer life."

Aurora Leigh did not die but lived to find a happy fate.

The loneliness of the young is chiefly of Aurora's type. Those who are forced by circumstances to live as the solitary one in a family, and are therefore lonely, are few in comparison with those who feel themselves for other reasons solitary in a crowd. The shy, reserved girl at boarding-school whose tastes are not those of her fellows, and who cannot express herself freely to them; the lonely girl among brothers and sisters with whom she has little really in common; the orphan in the home of unsympathetic relations, like Aurora Leigh, may know the bitterest pang of loneliness, though they are never alone.

Again, loneliness may befall a girl, not from so-called "dependence," not from uncongenial companionship in any form, but from circumstances that shut her out from any society, pleasant or the reverse; such, sometimes, is the loneliness of an only child.

For the genuine sufferings of which I have written I have a warm sympathy. They cannot be altogether avoided, but there are many ways in which comfort may be taken.

One great help is to cultivate the inner nature, so as to be a companion to one's self. This is quite possible, and girls who know this truth can conquer the ache of loneliness. "They are never alone," said Sir Philip Sidney, "that are accompanied by noble thoughts." And of course the power of reading is above all the power that will supply companionship. As Mr. J. R. Lowell says, "It is the key that admits to the company of saint and sage, of the wisest and wittiest at their wisest and wittiest moments, that enables us to see with the keenest eyes, hear with the finest ears, and listen to the sweetest voices of all time." Ruskin puts it in something of the same way. "All the while this eternal court is open to you, with its society wide as the world, multitudinous as its days, the chosen and the mighty of every place and time."

Yes, and within this great array there are

the gentle and the sympathetic who will stoop to comfort and to help the simplest lonely child in her solitude.

Cultivate, then, an inner life in which you know the delight of communion with the world of literature. If, perchance, you are treated with neglect or scorn by silly people, such interests as these will help you to put trivial matters in their right places and to go your way undisturbed by them. It may be a solace to remember the saying of Lord Bacon:

"In reading we hold converse with the wise; in the business of life, generally with the foolish."

Lonely hours in youth may be made a preparation for the life that is coming. In them we should learn, as far as possible, the strength and the weakness of our own character; we should practice self-control and self-denial; we should lay up treasure for the coming years, in the shape of beautiful thoughts and inspiring knowledge. If solitude is thus used, it may come to be recognised as a priceless boon.

Once more, then, I may say to the lonely as I said to the shy, look away from yourself, avoid brooding, avoid self-consciousness—never nurse or indulge the lonely unappreciated feeling. Find plenty to fill up the recesses of your mind. Take all the opportunities you can, even if they are not at first sight attractive, of having companionship.

And, above all, cultivate the sense of intercourse with the unseen that lies about you and around—

"Closer is He than breathing; nearer than hands or feet."

Then you will know that the worst sort of loneliness is impossible to you, and, even in your youth, will understand the meaning of the lines:

"Earth's crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush a fire with God."

VARIETIES.

SHOP-KEEPING IN THE EAST.

The small shop-keeper in Eastern lands has ideas of business very different from ours. When a customer enters, he looks at him and makes up his mind how much he may ask, which is usually about three times as much as he thinks he may get, that being about five hundred per cent. beyond the actual value of the article.

"When I was in Alexandria," writes a traveller, "I went into a small *boutique* to buy a trifle I saw in the window. I asked the price. 'Ten francs.' 'Nonsense!' I said. 'Five, sir! two—one franc only.' Eventually I bought it for two large piastres (fourpence-halfpenny). Not a bad instance this of a rapid fall in prices."

"TEA OF LONG LIFE."

Numerous charlatans have appeared in the history of the world, and still appear at intervals, loud in their claims to have discovered the veritable elixir of life—gold, tinctures, and many other nostrums with which they promise to prolong human existence.

The most notorious of these quacks was the Count de St. Germain, who, with barefaced impudence, declared that he had already existed for centuries by the aid of his "Tea of Long Life," which he asserted would make the oldest of mankind young again.

On close examination, his miraculous tea was found to consist of a simple infusion of sandal-wood, fennel, and senna leaves.

THE HONEST FARMER EXPLAINS.

"It's dreadfully queer," said the housewife, "that the potatoes you bring should be so much bigger on the top of the basket than they are at the bottom."

"Well, mum," said the honest farmer, "it comes about this way. P'taters is growin' so fast right now, that by the time I git a basketful dug the last ones is ever so much bigger than the first ones."

AN ODD ADDRESS.

The post office officials recently had their ingenuity taxed by the following curious address:—

"Mrs. —, wearing a large bear boa, violet flowers in bonnet, promenade (morning), Aberystwyth."

The letter was from the lady's son, who had mislaid his mother's seaside address. It was successfully delivered.

SHE STOPPED TO PLAY WITH A KITTEN.

—An authority on the subject of nursing, in discussing the question of the age at which training should begin, declares that twenty-three is quite early enough. "I have known," she adds, "some small hospitals and nursing-homes take girls to train as young as seventeen; and, in one instance I remember, a girl who had been sent for a splint in a great hurry stopped on the way to play with a kitten and forgot all about what she was sent for."

A MUSICAL SISTER.

Captain (to stewardess): "S., you young rascal, you ran away from home, did you? You ought to be thrashed for leaving home, and thrashed again for getting aboard a ship without permission."

Stewardess: "Please, sir, my sister commenced takin' music lessons an' practisin' scales on the pianer, an' I thought there wouldn't be no pianers on ships."

Captain: "Come to my arms, my son. I had a musical sister once myself."

WHAT TIME CANNOT DESTROY.

"Thou shalt not rob me, thievish time,
Of all my blessings, all my joy;
I have some jewels in my heart
Which thou art powerless to destroy."

THE SUBJECT OF QUARREL.

Lady (in want of a cook): "Why did you leave your place?"

Cook: "I couldn't stand the dreadful way the master and mistress used to quarrel, mum."

Lady: "What did they use to quarrel about?"

Cook: "The way the dinner was cooked, mum."

GOOD IN EVIL.—There is this of good in real evils—they deliver us from the despotism of all that were imaginary.