

Then she gave the snowy cloth loving little pats that smoothed it into place as the hoop was deftly placed in the press.

"Could any body as little as I am do the 'next thing,' do you think?"

"Why, of course," she answered, "every one can do it, and if they only would, how different things would be."

That very day mother left me to rock the cradle while she attended to some matters up stairs, and as soon as the baby dropped asleep, off I rushed to dig some sweet-flag roots to make candy for us children. I was running with the spade in my hand, and with hair streaming in the wind, when the thought came, this is not the "next thing," by any means. After considering a moment, I went back to the baby.

I thought for a long time the Club was formed then, but I have noticed since that a great many think the whole business was begun when they started out with a lighted candle. There was Mrs. Seymour, for instance. When the Presiding Elder preached that powerful sermon here, that resulted in so many conversions, he told for one thing that Carlyle said, "Do the duty first that lies nearest thee," and that his sainted mother used to express the same idea, by "Doe the next thynge," and found it a good working motto. The very nearest thing to us all, he said, was our duty to God and to our fellow-men. Mrs. Seymour was so much impressed by it that she had it engraved on the inside of her watch-case, and talked a great deal about forming a Club and living up to it. I think she honestly tried to, but we didn't hear much about the Club after she went to see Robbie Lewis, a little colored boy over in the Hollow, who had broken his leg. She found him on a poor, uncomfortable bed, trying to mend his sister's doll, while on the wall behind him, just within reach of his hand, was pasted in large letters, evidently cut from show bills, "Do the next thing."

"Where in the world did you get that, Robbie?" asked Mrs. Seymour.

"I don't know, ma'am, I mean I have been trying to do it for more than a year now. I pasted them letters there this morning, for if God wants me to lie here for 'the next thing,' I was afraid I might forget and think I wasn't doing anything, you know, and so got cross, and trouble mother."

Robbie had broken his leg trying to save Polly Clark's little boy from falling out of the big maple tree up at the school-house, and had no idea that he had done anything worthy of special praise, and could scarcely comprehend the sympathy of his neighbors. But, as Mrs. Seymour said, if she had wanted the honor of starting the Club, Robbie was just about a year ahead of her.

You remember Winnie Percy and her dainty ways, do you not? She is one of us, and her fine culture and training, her tact, her talent, and her energy, are being used down in Georgin among the Freedmen. That was the "next thynge" for her, and she says it is wonderful to see the enthusiasm in her school-room when she received a handsome motto sent out by Mrs. J.'s Sunday-school class last winter. It was on cream-colored satin, "Doe the next thynge," in the loveliest shades of brown, entwined with blue forget-me-nots. All of the girls helped about it but Molly Seymour. She said her fingers couldn't hold a needle to embroider with, or some such nonsense, and rushed off home when the work was planned. We all wondered at her queer behaviour, for when Miss Percy used to teach that class, Mollie used to think more of her than anyone.

But the matter was satisfactorily explained, when the very day the embroidery was finished, Mollie brought a

handsome frame for it, which she had about it when she visited her sister and carved herself. You see, she hates needlework, and has a passion for wood-carving. She learned something in Cincinnati last year, and is determined to learn more. She declares it is more respectable to earn her living as a wood-carver, than a second-rate music-teacher. Just now she insists that whittling is "next for her."

Miss Percy says the motto is hung over her desk and facing the school, and she is sure some of scholars are beginning to comprehend that a duty done makes way for the "next," and is a stepping-stone to higher possibilities.

You no doubt noticed it in the parsonage parlor, and wondered what need such a lovely woman as the minister's wife had of such a reminder. It is very pretty in those queer old English letters across the corner of that panel decorated with wild roses. Now that woman is a born artist, and her temptation is to become so absorbed in her work as to neglect the manifold duties that a country minister's wife is expected to take up. It isn't the height of happiness to her to hear for the twentieth time, perhaps, the history of Mrs. A.'s troubles, social and domestic, or to listen patiently to Mrs. B.'s plans for parish work. But a glance at that simple line sometimes helps her to send one away comforted, and to help the other plan more wisely for herself and others. In short, that to do for the "least of these," is to do for the Master.

On the study table stands a plain dark blue plush photograph frame with doors. It contains no picture, but the motto neatly done in German text. On a close inspection you will see that it was not written, but wrought with dark hair. It was the last work of the minister's sister, and was what finally determined him to enter the ministry. He had been what is called a wild young man. He certainly had no thought of preaching, and was beginning the study of the law. But with the news of Mary's death came this little loving gift which reminded him of their last talks together, and one step onward seems to open to another, until his duty seemed so plain it could not possibly be misunderstood.

He has endeavored to impress upon us that all the little details of church work, of missionary labour and of charitable endeavor, are the duties that lie nearest to someone, and that only by doing these "next things" will the way open to wider fields.

You were asking about that miserable den on the corner and how to manage to close it. Well, it closed itself after a while, but the true-hearted mothers in the village were the real compelling force. There were a few who felt in their souls that the welfare of their boys was "nearer" to them than fancy work, or faultless house-keeping, or even the delights of an uninterrupted course of study.

When one mother missing her boy had the moral courage to go after him there, and to take him away from shaking dice and smoking cigarettes in an atmosphere thick with smoke and foul with oaths, it was easier for the next one to go upon the same errand. In a little while it was not a very pleasant thing for the keeper of the shop to meet these earnest, indignant women, who considered the welfare of their boys before their own convenience or preference. The shop was no longer spoken of under one's breath as something that must be tolerated, but was openly condemned until no boy from a respectable family would be seen going there. It was the old story of "Spider and the Fly," but when the fly utterly refused to enter the web, of course the spider was powerless.

You understand now why the preacher called this