

MY WISH.

I ask, O Lord, that from my life may flow
Such gladsome music, soothing, sweet
and clear
From a fine-strung harp, to reach the
weary ear
Of struggling men.
To bid them pause awhile and listen:
then
With spirit calmer, stronger than before,
Take up their work once more,
I only pray that, through the common
days
Of this, my life, unceasingly may steal
Into some aching heart strains that shall
help to heal
Its long-borne pain,
To lift the thoughts from self and worldly
gain
And fill the life with harmonies divine;
Oh, may such power be mine!
Thus would I live; and when all working
days
Are o'er for me,
May the rich music of my life ring on
Eternally!

—M. P. N., in *Westleyan Magazine*.

THE BARGAIN COUNTER.

IN passing through one of our great department stores upon some minor errand, our attention was drawn to a certain counter upon which a mass of goods was confusedly heaped, and over them was displayed in large letters the information: "Slightly Soiled. Greatly Reduced in Value."

Yes, we thought as we walked on, the articles upon that table are all articles of luxury. They are the finest things in the stock, from certain points of view. They are delicate laces and beautiful embroideries and iridescent silks. And not one of them is "pot black." That is the pity of it. They are only "slightly soiled." But the finer a thing is the easier it is to efface it. It takes more to hurt a hoe than to ruin a razor. It requires less to nick a cut glass carafe than a granite ware coal scuttle. You can kick around a horse blanket and not destroy its sale; but it is quite otherwise with a lace handkerchief. A very little handling ruins the beautiful drawn-work intended for the centrepiece of a solid mahogany table. And that was what many of these pieces were. The most elaborate designs and delicate workmanship in the establishment were here. And not one of them was "black as the ace of spades." They were only "slightly soiled"; but, alas, they were "greatly reduced in value." And judging from the looks of the table that day there was not much call for them even at their diminished price.

Perhaps there was a time in this country when "almost any old thing" would do; but that time has passed. The minister who would be employed, the young man who would be advanced, the girl who would be respected, the Christian who would keep his or her influence, must remember that a little soiling goes a great way in depreciating character values.

We were lately trying very hard to secure a good brother in the ministry a call to a certain well-known church. "It won't

do," was the reply, with a shake of the head. "That brother formerly lived hereabouts. There is not a thing proved against his character; but his name is a little smirched by certain transactions that occurred in a previous field. Nobody thinks him a bad man. But he is an indiscreet man. He keeps doubtful company. He tells dubious stories when with men alone. He has a fine education, brilliant natural gifts, and as an after-dinner talker he has few equals. But somehow his reputation as a spiritual leader is a bit 'off color,' and he has greatly depreciated in value in consequence."

The great International Bond Company wrote to us last week asking for information as to young X. Y. Z. He is an applicant for a place at a fine salary, and the corporation has agreed to take him if he can get responsible bonds. He referred to us. He is not a bad fellow. But we see him once in a long while coming out of the side door of a saloon; and we heard of him as an occasional attendant at the races. We understand that he "picked up" a few stray dollars on the October pools. He has a nice wife and a charming little family. But what has this to do with the point blank inquiry, "Do you know of any circumstances that would render you suspicious of his fidelity and trustworthiness?" It does not take a public scandal to ruin a man's chances, does it? We will not even hint our fears to this bond company. We simply cannot answer that letter of inquiry at all with satisfaction. So we drop it into the wastebasket; and that costs our young friend X. Y. Z. fifteen hundred dollars a year. That is a serious depreciation in value; but he who permits himself to be "slightly soiled" by such habits and companionship has only himself to blame for the pecuniary loss that ensues.

There will be "extra meetings" in many of our churches this winter. Some of God's people will find there opportunities to speak a word to souls that "would see Jesus." But there will be others who have not wholly guarded their tongues; have not carefully kept the door of the lips; have not been well enough to go to the prayer meeting much of the time, but were seldom too feeble to attend the play to its late close. They are not without a hope; not without some interest in the Saviour; not without a wish for the upbuilding of His kingdom; but they will not have any great value as revival workers. They are conscious that a too near contact with the world has left their Christian character "slightly soiled." It is too bad, too; for nothing finer is known out of heaven than the soul that is washed and made white by the waters of a regenerating grace. It is quite true that in times of spiritual depression the children of this world have no use for disciples who are "too pious;" but in times of spiritual awakening they have no call for those who are too much like themselves.

"Slightly soiled," only "slightly." But "greatly reduced in value." Yes, that is a good text. We will let each reader preach the sermon.—*The Interior*.

HER ONE TALENT.

ONE day a friend handed me a book, Thomas à Kempis' "Imitation of Christ," saying simply: "Will you not take it to old Mrs. Williams? I do not like any of this shelf of books to remain idle a month. If I am not reading them, someone else must be."

I looked at the swinging shelf and saw there Miss Havergal's little books and the "Addresses" of Drummond and Phillips Brooks and the poems of Heber and George Herbert. Worn they were, from the touch of many hands, but as I thought of the comfort they had brought to many an aching heart, they seemed more beautiful than if they had retained their first dainty freshness.

Looking at the quiet little woman who had made for herself this beautiful law of ministry, I wondered how many homes were thus made a centre of help, whence radiated unceasingly streams of comfort and strength-giving.

She colored when I spoke my thought, "Oh, it is nothing; these books are my one talent and I love to lend them out. They seem more precious when they have given joy to others as well as to myself. When I get a new book it is such a joy to think out, among the different needs and natures of my friends, to whom it would bring most joy. This book," and she touched a little brown volume, "I bought to lend to those who mourned. These books on art and the beautiful I lend to a little artist friend; while these books on child-life and child nature I lend to young teachers and the mothers of little ones."

How many of us have books stored idly on our shelves, that would bring help to others? In how many homes are there books on medicine or law or divinity left by brother or uncle or father which would help many a struggling young student? Our books are indeed a talent and one that God intends us to use.

Not many of us would destroy food or needlessly waste it, but how many of us have unused garments stored away in garret and chest; and how many have trunks of old papers and magazines lying away under our eyes, waiting for rat and roach to devour them at leisure? It is not the clothes we use, or expect to use in the future; not the magazine we cherish, of which I speak; but the things which we ourselves see no use for at all, yet selfishly hoard away.

It has been said that half of the world could be fed on what the other half throws away; there are hundreds of homes where the books and papers we thoughtlessly destroy would be treasured, and hundreds of little children in need of the worn school books which, when finished by our little ones, are flung carelessly away on the attic shelves, while there are so many homes for destitute men and women and so many hospitals and asylums; even omitting the families of missionaries struggling afar from us and famishing for mental food!

If we could only realize that the piea, "It is our own," would not excuse us for carelessly destroying what would bring joy to another!—*Selected*.