

Around the Hearth

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Years ago, we used to hear considerable about "besetting sins," (we seldom hear them mentioned now), and I used to feel at times that talkativeness was mine. Many a time I tried to imitate some demure person, hoping to overcome this besetment of mine. It always made me feel very virtuous to thus restrain myself, but my resolutions were very fragile and often broken.

But one day my viewpoint changed. I had been talking to an old woman who kept a little bake-shop. She had unburdened her mind to me, and as I rose to leave she said, "Oh, don't go yet, your talk is doing me so much good."

As I walked homeward, I reasoned the matter out with myself, and concluded that if my speaking member could dispense comfort, why should I not use it rather than refrain? So the "besetting sin" was "laid away in a napkin," and the talent brought forth in its stead.

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"I'm not much of a talker, I do a lot of thinking but I just can't express myself," is a very common phrase.

That speech makes me somewhat impatient. Why don't those people incorporate their thoughts and send them forth? Practice speaking aloud the thoughts that course through the brain, and thus qualify for a companionable person, if not a brilliant conversationalist.

Some of our best preachers, our greatest orators, our most eloquent statesmen were very quiet men before they were called into public notice. They had to overcome diffidence, nervousness and hesitation of utterance before they attained to a state of perfection. Would you know wherein lay the secret of their progress and success?

It is this—they became obsessed with an idea and they proceeded to give it expression. As the idea grew in their mind, they expatiated upon it with their words. By degrees it became easy to express what was uppermost and absorbing in the mind and heart, and "practice makes perfect."

A really good speaker, man or woman, is one who has a message to give. The same applies to a good talker. They have something to say, and they say it in the best language they can command.

Many people consider they are bestowing a compliment by congratulating a person on being a *great* talker. Never confuse the words, because it is an offence to a *good* talker.

We all meet with "great talkers," people who keep up a continual strain of uninteresting chatter—

"But leave you none the wiser
For all they have to say."

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Some time ago I read an article in a magazine, wherein the writer contended that we all talk too much, that it is a disease with many, that it is most trying on the nervous system,

and in many cases requires serious treatment to overcome.

Many of us know by experience that there is some truth in these assertions. We have tossed for hours instead of sleeping because of an overdose of talk. The excitement of a prolonged conversation, probably late at night, with some one whom we have not met for years, will overtax the nerves, and cause unrest.

Now, I suppose we all *do* talk too much. Better for us if we said less, and did more thinking. But if we know enough to have our quiet spells, and avoid excess, what a splendid mission to impart information.

But to return. The day wore on, the rain falling with quiet persistence. The sock grew in length, and the talking went on apace.

We gave war-time recipes, talked of women in business, in politics, making of wills, telepathy, phrenology, hypnotism, fortune-telling, even ghost stories, and gradually, or mayhap suddenly, back to the weather.

Then came a delightful change of programme as boxes and baskets once more received our attention. I once heard a man make this remark, which I never forgot—"Is it not gratifying, when eating is such a necessity, that it affords us so much pleasure?"

Never more so than on that rainy day, when the seats that had been so soft and acceptable at first grew hard and tiring as we sat hour after hour watching the patter against the window panes.

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Lo! the wheels began to move. We were actually pulling out! What a relief to feel we were going! As we neared the city, there was no evidence of rain having fallen. It had not rained a drop all day.

My friends dropped off at their respective streets, and I was left alone. As I gazed out of the window in the gathering dusk, I mentally soliloquized—"Well, the rain, the talk, and the day are ended. It was uneventful, but it had its lessons. It required patience to spend the long hours in such close, cramped quarters, lacking the air and exercise we so much desired, but we had food and shelter, and congeniality."

I always travel to Dreamland by way of England and France, so my mind reverted to the boys in the trenches, the long waits in the dark and mud, often cold and hungry, listening for the signal to go over the top.

"I could write a book, mother, on the various emotions as we stood there in the inky blackness of the dug-out, waiting for the boom of the guns and barrage of fire that Easter Monday at Vimy Ridge," my son wrote. Six of that unit went over. Three returned at night through the mire and sleet, saddened and lonely.

"Some days must be dark and dreary."

Peace—The Stranger

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"Refreshments for Madame Palmist," she smiled.

The boy was an opportunist. "If I might stay with you while you drink your tea, those who are waiting would think you engaged and not disturb you," he offered.

"Ah! how nice of you; to talk to a man is a rare treat in the present dearth of masculinity; and *you* should have much of interest to tell owing to your experiences at the front."

"Why, how did you know? You failed to catch the hint I gave you about the gas."

"I did, but received a 'message' later. The mind currents are working overtime to-day, and your promise of thrills was prophetic. Oh! I'm glad to be nonsensical for a minute or two, but now it's really—goodbye."

"Goodbye?" he said, in an injured tone. "Au revoir, rather."

"Run along, infant," she scoffed. "I eat little boys like you for supper every night."

"Very well," he persevered, "there are still two days of the Fair, and any time I pay my quarter I'm entitled to fifteen perfectly good minutes of your time."

(Continued on following page.)



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