

## Ungracious Goodness.

(By Martha Clark Rankin.)

Like the Apostle, 'being crafty, he caught them with guile.' Above a hundred of these outcasts of society assembled on the appointed evening; the room was crowded, and seldom has so extraordinary a company been gathered under a decent roof. In one corner of the apartment especially, it seemed as if the ringleaders had fixed themselves; and to this point one of Mr. Budgett's sons, who was in the plot, immediately betook himself, made one of the party, and talked familiarly with their chief.

Just as the repast ended, the preconcerted move began to be made; but Mr. Budgett ran up into the desk and said: 'I asked you to come here for the purpose of doing something for you—something that will be of use to you. Now, just as a start, I will give among you fifty pounds, and you must make up your minds what you will do with it.'

The 'wild rogues,' as the narrator of this interesting incident calls them, were thunderstruck. It is easy to run away from a prayer-meeting, but it is another matter to run away from fifty pounds. Hats were laid down, and some who had got as far as the door turned back. One of Mr. Budgett's sons—he who had identified himself with the strange visitors—called out, 'Fifty pounds!—that's something; why, there are about a hundred of us, and supposing we divide it amongst us, there will be half a sovereign apiece.' Another, who was also in the secret, at once rose and objected, saying it would be foolish to throw away such a sum as fifty pounds in that way; they had better put it to some use that would do them good for a long time to come. This was argued until all seemed to agree to that suggestion. It was then proposed to found a society for study and mental cultivation, to be called the 'Kingswood Young Men's Association.'

This was carried by vote, and Mr. Budgett was appointed treasurer. A committee was formed, and, in accordance with the tact whereby the whole matter was managed, some of the wild youths, to their great delight and exultation, were placed upon it. Weekly meetings were then arranged for Sunday evenings, after service. This secured Mr. Budgett's object of withdrawing them from their demoralizing rambles on Sunday evenings, and getting them to the house of God.

The result of this happy tea-party was that about sixty of these young men attended regularly, and were met with on Sunday nights after service for religious instruction, and in the week for secular instruction. The original donation was laid out in a good library; and year after year a tea-meeting was given, at which very substantial books were given as rewards.

A similar association for young women was afterwards instituted by Mr. Budgett, which was blessed with similar success. These associations cost him annually about fifty pounds; but he had his reward in the improvement of many and the clear conversion of some.

To the life of this remarkable man, which we would earnestly recommend to the attention of our readers, the most appropriate motto would be these words: 'In every work that he began he did it with all his heart, and prospered.' 'Fervent in spirit,' and 'not slothful in business,' he 'served the Lord.'—'Day of Days.'

Teach me thy patience; still with thee  
In closer, dearer company;  
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong;  
In trust that triumphs o'er wrong;  
In hope that sends a shining ray  
Far down the future's broadening way;  
In peace that only thou canst give—  
With thee, O Master, let me live!

—Washington Gladden.

'Mama, is Mr. Black a good man?' was the earnest query of a ten-year-old boy.

'Yes, indeed; a very good man. Why do you ask?' was the reply.

'Because, if he is good, then I don't see why God lets a good man be so disagreeable.'

To the mother of three ever-questioning children it was no uncommon experience to be at a loss for an answer, and this time the thought was one which had often seemed puzzling. It is written of our Saviour that he 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.' That would seem to be the natural condition of spiritual growth—an increase in favor with man as well as God; but alas! I had known too many who, like Mr. Black, were types of ungracious goodness. A stern, sour face, which instantly repelled a sensitive person; a manner never kindly, often distinctly unsympathetic and harsh—could I wonder that such a man should be a stumbling-block in the way of my child.

I sent the boy away on an errand, knowing that his question would be brought back to me, but hoping by delay to gain some inspiration. Immediately all the ungracious good people I had ever known began to pass in procession before me.

First came the woman who could always be counted on to help a neighbor or the church, but who was sure to find fault, criticize, and scold, giving the impression that she was a martyr, killing herself with self-sacrificing work. 'An excellent woman,' everybody said, 'but peculiar,'—a word, by the way, which covers a multitude of sins.

Next came the blunt church-member, who prided herself on always telling the truth. 'If everybody was like me,' she was wont to say, 'there wouldn't be much trouble in the world. Everybody knows just where I stand.' It is she who waits for the pastor after church with the greeting, 'I hope you'll give us a good practical sermon next Sunday—one that'll hit some of our backsliding members; and p'raps you don't know that Aunt Huldy's feeling dretful hurt because you ain't been in since she's had the rheumatism so bad.'

The poor pastor, who had known nothing of 'Aunt Huldy's' rheumatism, goes home discouraged—a feeling which he shares with half a dozen others whom she greets. But she is a good woman, and at least never says anything behind your back that she would not say to your face.

Following her is the elderly man who is ever shaking his head over the degeneracy of the times and the frivolity of the young. When he was a boy, he went to church twice every Sunday, and to Sunday-school between; and, if boys now had to do the same, there would be an end to Sunday bicycling and weekday dancing and card-playing. He does not know what the world is coming to, with such a gay set of young folks to take the place of the strong men and women who will soon be gone.

His cousin is the man who thinks poorly of the Christian Endeavor movement. It makes a good show, he admits, but there is too much show about it, and it makes the young folks think they can run everything.

Next I remembered a lady whose diligence in the study of her Sunday-school lesson attracted my attention on the cars one day. With bent head and attentive air she was comparing her bible and commentary, and I thought some scholars were fortunate in a diligent and careful teacher. Then she looked up, and I found myself wondering whether the lesson of the melancholy scowling

face might teach louder than all she could say. And when she moved aside to make room for an old woman who came into the crowded car, I noticed that it was done without the smile which would have made the action gracious.

At this point I was interrupted by a call from my pastor, to whom I propounded the question, 'Why is it that good people are not always agreeable?'

'They are,' was the response. 'Goodness must of necessity be agreeable. If one fails to find it so, the fault must be in himself.'

I was silenced, but would this answer satisfy my child? Should I say to him, 'You are very wrong, my son, to think Mr. Black cross; if you were only better yourself, you would see only his lovely traits of character; we see in others the reflection of ourselves?'

Perhaps it was a mistake, but when he came bounding in to hear what I would say, I found myself talking after this fashion:

'You know, my child, that when we call a person "good" we don't mean that he is perfect; only One who has ever lived has been without faults. We mean simply that he is trying to do right. Your little experience in gardening has shown you that it is far easier to raise a good crop on one piece of ground than another; and so good traits are much more easily cultivated in some characters than in others. Some people fail to realize their unattractive manners, while others, I fancy, mourn in secret over what they do not succeed in overcoming. We can always respect their evident desire to be good, whatever the result; and we should strive ourselves for a gracious and winning manner. It is the oil which makes things run smoothly, and prevents friction in the affairs of life. You know how much more easily a bicycle runs after it has been oiled, and you may often notice that one gracious kindly person will keep a whole household happy and sweet-tempered. A man may be gracious without being good, and he may be good without being gracious; but it is only the union of the two that gives the best results.'—'S. S. Times.'

## About Good Books.

(By Margaret E. Sangster.)

I am often asked by young people what sort of books I would recommend for the reading of those who have not very much time to spend in literary pursuits, but who really wish to improve themselves. The question is a little difficult to answer, because the world of books is so large, and the tastes of readers are so various. But there are certain broad lines which an intelligent person may follow to advantage, and first I will lay some of these down on the negative side.

'Never read a book which you know to be bad.'

It is a singular thing that a book sometimes wins financial success, is sold readily and bought eagerly, simply because it is talked about as not quite a good or moral book. I hold that as we choose our friends we should choose our books, and as no one selects for daily companionship a vulgar or coarse or wicked person, so no one should admit to his or her intimate company a book known to be bad.

'Never read a book which gives you a false view of life.'

There are books of fine literary quality, which are packed with false sentiment, which are cynical, which leave one with a distorted point of view. Such books do positive harm, and a busy young person has no time to waste on them. To spend precious hours