

PRESERVATION OF CHARACTER.

An observing man is never without sources of amusement, and it is certain that among these sources the unconscious devices resorted to for the creation and preservation of character, in the eye of the world, deserve a prominent place. We meet in every town men who feel that they have filled up the measure of their character, and have nothing further to do in life but to bear that character, like a full vessel, to their graves, without spilling a drop. They walk the streets as if they were bearing it upon their heads. They bow to their acquaintances with the consciousness of their precious burden constantly uppermost. They refrain from all complication with the stirring questions of the times through fear of a fatal jest. They speak guardedly, as if a word might jar their priceless vase from the poise of continence. There is nothing so important to them as what they are pleased to consider their character; consequently, that is always to be consulted before any course of action can be determined upon. All questions of morality and reform, all matters of public or political interest, all personal associations, are considered primarily with reference to this character. If they prove to be consistent with it, and seem calculated to reveal something more of its glory, they are entered upon, or adopted, otherwise, they are discarded.

When a man arrives at a point where the preservation of his character becomes the prime object of his life, he may be considered a harmless man, but one upon whom no further dependence can be placed in carrying on the work of the world. As a member of society, he becomes strictly ornamental. We point to him as one of the ripe fruits of our civilization. We make him President of Conventions and Benevolent Associations. We introduce strangers to him that they may be impressed. We chronicle his arrival at the hotels. We burn incense before him, because we know it will please him, and because we know that he rather expects it. Small children regard him in respectful silence as he passes. He becomes one of our institutions, like a City Hall or an old church. We always know where to find him as we do a well-established town-line. But one thing we never do; we never go to him in an emergency that demands risk and self-sacrifice, because we know that those things are not in his line. His character is the first thing, and that is to

be taken care of. When we want any thing of this kind done, we go to men who have no character, or, having one, are not uncomfortably conscious of it.

THE MOUNTAINS.

How grand, how gloomy, how eternal are the mountains! Their veteran heads, hoary with Nature's symbolic snows, tower towards the vast concave of Heaven, and in their proximity to the sky o'en forget that their foundation is on the humble earth. The mountains are the sentinels of the land. Far away towards the heavens they rise, and stern and immovable as earth itself, watch over the ant-hill bustle at their feet. Never shall I forget the noble range of Catskill's that bounded my youthful vision, and for many a childish year daily charmed me and taught me to love my native place. Away to the south and south-west they stretched, an unbroken chain, their undulating outline sketched in bold relief against the sunset sky, and their forest-mantled sides blended in one haze of blue, that darkened into more sombre shades as the sun withdrew its smile, and when by moonlight's mystic beam the mountain tops were gilded, dark and gloomy shadows lurked at their base, like the overhanging ban of an evil spirit. What a teacher is Nature—and the mountains are her children.

Go and trace to its rocky fountain the crystal streamlet that, from the dark caverns of the mountain, comes dancing and leaping as in joy at its freedom from its prison stone. Go where never human foot has trodden and, midst the wild ravines and gigantic forest monarchs, study the lessons that the grandeur and simplicity of Nature present to us. Search where never sunlight strayed, and find the tiny flowers whose scented petals were never kissed by the sunbeam, and which, "wasting their sweetness on the desert air," bloom and die unseen by human eye. Go to the mountains, ye misanthropic dwellers in the dusty city, and there, where form and fashion, and hollow-heartedness cannot follow you, make your home with the happy creatures of Nature—the birds, flowers, and trees,—the rocks, winds, and storms. Commune with the voices that whisper from the tremulous pines, and ask the murmuring rill for its talisman of happiness.

"How do you get on?" asked one of our brave soldiers, while crossing a river. "Swimmingly," replied another.

THE CRICKET IN THE WALL.

Hark! 'Tis the small voice of the cricket in the crevices of the wall. How cheerful is his little song. What is the subject of his lay? Is he chanting melody in the ear of his lady love, or is he pouring out his soul in an evening hymn? Is he singing the praise of some mighty insect warrior, or lauding the name of some one who has gathered wisdom beyond that of his fellows? Have insects their heroes, their tyrants, their poets and their orators? Who can tell?

And why is it that all living things have glad voices given them? Why is it, that when the sun is gone down, and the hum of business is still—when man has withdrawn from the cares and business of the day, and the winds have retired to their caves, that the voice of the insect tribes, low and solemn, comes abroad upon the air? Why does not silence come down with the current of night, and brood with the darkness over us? It is that we may not forget the great teachings of nature. The heavens may be darkened by clouds, the stars may not look out to remind us, the face of the moon may be veiled, and the sound of the winds hushed, but the voice of the insect world tells us that life, beauty, joy and happiness, are still rife in the works of God. We remember the cricket, that chirped in the corner, when we set by our father's fire-side. His voice was cheerful, and it was a pleasant thing to listen to his happy song. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, were beside us then, and we talked of the little warbler as a thing we all loved.—But the corner and the cricket, and the home of our childhood, are all gone.—Swept by time into the returnless abyss of the past. And those who listened with us, where are they? Father, mother, brothers, sisters, where are they? "They are scattered and parted by mountain and wave, And some are in the cold, silent womb of the grave."

Sad are the memories that the song of the cricket brings to our heart. It tells of happy days, now gone forever—of merry hours that have passed away. It brings clustering around us the furrowed brows of the living, and the pale, still faces of the dead.—*State Register.*

"How did you come by that apple?" asked an old woman, of a youngster who had just walked off with one of the best pippins from her stand. "I didn't come by it," replied the urchin, "I stopped and took it."