

THE QUIET HOUR

The Literary Society

NO ONE AT CHURCH.

One Saturday morning I had availed myself of the privilege of private prayer within a beautiful old church, but upon rising from my knees and gaining the door, what was my astonishment to find it locked, and no one within call to come to my assistance! The woman who cleaned the church would, no doubt, soon come in to prepare it for Sunday's worship, so I reconciled myself to my position, and returned to my seat and my meditations. After a time, becoming somewhat weary, I collected some cushions, and, resting more comfortably, enjoyed the stillness and repose.

But soon it seemed that already I was present at an early celebration for which I had prepared. I thought that it was Sunday morning; the priest was at the altar, and I had a consciousness of keen regret at the fewness of the worshippers—six in all; a priest on his holiday, a young couple (husband and wife), a doctor from a neighboring village, a young servant girl, and one poor old woman.

It was a large well-taught parish, yet there were present none of the leading people, none of the business men, none of the farmers, none of the candidates at the last Confirmation.

My own thoughts certainly seemed to wander, quite without any check. Perhaps I was following up the train of thought of all these lost opportunities, when I felt a soft hand placed across my eyes, and heard a whisper in my ears of "Judge not: the scales shall be removed from thine eyes: Behold!"

Was it the touch and the voice of an angel? I bent low in trembling humility and awe. Venturing presently to raise my eyes, great was my astonishment at finding the hitherto empty church full of living beings. At the gates of the screen leading into the chancel stood two angelic sentinels, their white, glistening raiment contrasting with the rich tints of the painted windows. Above the altar, high up in the vaulted roof, were myriads of cherubim; round and about the altar were groups of angels holding "golden censors," with incense within "which they offered up with the prayers of all saints, and the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayer of all the saints, ascended before God out of the angels' hands."

That was not all. Near at hand I saw mysterious angelic forms mixing with a crowd of worshippers I had not seen before. The latter was somewhat shadowy and indistinct, but it was gradually revealed to me that they were linked in some way to the six worshippers already referred to.

When looking at the little servant girl more closely, I observed that she was leading by the hand one who, I concluded, was her sweetheart; he seemed clad in the uniform of a soldier, then fighting on the veldt; and for an instant I seemed to catch a glimpse of an ambulance and the red cross of the attendants; and by the other hand she led one who I fancied might be a dearly-loved brother. By his garb I supposed him to be a factory hand, amid, perhaps, dangerous surroundings; and as she reverently entered the chancel, the little maid seemed to take these shadowy but much-loved forms to the foot of the altar, and I seemed to hear her cry:

"And then for those, our dearest and our best,

By this prevailing Presence we appeal,
O fold them closer to Thy mercy's breast,

O do thine utmost for their souls' true weal;
From tainting mischief keep them white and clear,

And crown Thy gifts with strength to persevere."

I noticed that the chancel was crowded by quite a motley throng. The sitting priest had gone up first to communicate, and he was earnestly commending all his parishioners—toilers in a manufacturing city, gaunt, harsh-

looking men, poorly clad women, and little sickly children—truly all sorts and conditions—and his guild workers, his choir, and his sick. He took them all and laid them down before the altar, and I remembered, "He helpeth them to the uttermost who come unto God by him."

The doctor had brought his sick and the dying, and the cases of suffering which were perplexing him; and also the households he visited, to whom he longed to breathe a message of peace and unity, but found it a task too difficult and delicate.

Then I turned and saw the young husband and wife, and they brought with them two curly-headed golden-haired darlings just clinging round their parents' knees, and these they presented at the altar steps, in mutual faith and joy for the blessings on their wedded love and happiness.

And lastly came the old woman, hobbling up the chancel steps; very poor and very feeble she appeared; but what a crowd attended her! First an old, bed-ridden husband, then a string of middle-aged sons and daughters, respectable, hard-working people they appeared, and a cluster of grandchildren of all ages and conditions, winding up with one little baby girl of the fourth generation—very dear to granny's heart.

And the old lady knelt with difficulty, but her wrinkled face was illuminated with holy love and joy as she brought all her worldly treasures and laid at His feet who accepts our meanest gifts and hears our humblest prayers, especially when offered Him united with that "mystic sweet Communion." And I thought of holy Job, who "rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of them all. Thus did Job continually."

The mystic service seemed to end, the shadowy forms melted into obscurity, the worshippers dispersed, and I knelt on in silence with the angel-guard still around the altar—realizing that virtue from the precious Blood extends far and wide, "for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

And while I thus pondered over this wondrous revelation, I heard the key turning in the lock and my friends coming to release me—but, following the example of the Blessed Virgin, "I kept all these things and pondered them in my heart."—*The Watchword.*

THE SET OF SOUL.

One ship drives east and the other drives west

With the self-same winds that blow;

'Tis the set of the sails,

And not the gales,

Which tells us the way they go.

Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate,

As we voyage along through life,

'Tis the set of the soul

That decides its goal

And not the calm or the strife.

—*Ram's Horn.*

Japan is once again to astonish the nations. This time it will be by peaceful methods. A great international exhibition is to be held in Tokio in 1912 and it is to be so comprehensive in character that it is hoped to eclipse that of Paris. Huge hotels, theatres, and music halls are to be erected, in view of the expected influx of visitors to Japan, while there is a prospect that a new line of steamships will be built for the purpose of taking travellers from and to the country.

"Dear, I wish you would lay down your novel and come and button my shirt for me."

"Dear me! I never saw such a helpless man! I'd like to know how you buttoned your shirts before you were married?"

"My shirts had buttons on them in those days."—*Indianapolis Star.*

THE HUNGER OF THE CHILDLESS.

"Lucretia:

Bitterness—am I bitter? Strange, O strange!

How else? My husband dead, and childless left,

My thwarted woman-thoughts have inward turned,

And that vain milk like acid in me eats.

Have I not in my thought trained little feet

To venture, and taught little lips to move

Until they shaped the wonder of a word?

I am long practised. O those children, mine!

Mine, doubly mine: and yet I cannot touch them,

I cannot see them, hear them—Does great God

Expect I shall clasp air and kiss his wind

For ever? And the budding cometh on The burgeoning, the cruel flowering;

At night the quickening splash of rain, at dawn

That muffled call of babes how like to birds;

And I amid these sights and sounds must starve—

I, with so much to give, perish of thrift!

Omitted by His casual dew!

Giovanni:

You are spared much; children can wring the heart.

Lucretia:

Spared! to be spared what I was born to have!

I am a woman and this very flesh Demands its natural pangs, its right-ful throes,

And I implore with vehemence these pains,

I know that children wound us, and surprise

Even to utter death, till we at last Turn from a face to flowers; but this my heart

Was ready for these pangs, and had foreseen.

O! but I grudge the mother her last look

Upon the confined form—that pang is rich—

Envy the shivering cry when gravel falls.

And all these maimed wants and thwarted thoughts,

Eternal yearning, answered by the wind,

Have dried in me belief and love and fear.

I am become a danger and a menace,

A wandering fire, a disappointed force, A peril—do you hear, Giovanni?—O!

It is such souls as mine that go to swell The childless cavern cry of the barren sea,

Or make that human ending to night-wind.

Why have I bared myself to you?—I know not,

Unless, indeed, this marriage—yes, this marriage—

Near now, is't not?—So near made me cry out.

Ah! she will bring a sound of pattering feet!

But now this message—and those papers, I

Must haste to see the banquet-table spread—

Your bride is yet so young."

A WOMAN'S ANSWER.

Do you know you have asked for the costliest thing

Ever made by the Hand above—

A woman's heart, and a woman's life,

And a woman's wonderful love?

Do you know you have asked for this priceless thing,

As a child might have asked for a toy—

Demanding, what others have died to win,

With the reckless dash of a boy?

You have written my lessons of duty out;

Man-like you have questioned me.

Now, stand at the bar of my woman's soul

Until I have questioned thee.

You require your bread shall be always good,

Your socks and your shirt should be whole—

I require your heart shall be true as God's stars,

And pure as heaven your soul.

You require a cook for your mutton and beef—

I require a far better thing;

A seamstress you're wanting for stockings and shirt—

I want a man and a king;

A king for the beautiful realm called home,

And a man that the Maker, God, Shall look upon as he did the first,

And say, "It is very good."

I am fair and young, but the rose will fade

From the soft young cheek one day:

Will you love me then 'mid the falling leaves,

As you did 'mid the bloom of May?

Is your heart an ocean, so strong and deep,

I may launch my all on its tide?

A loving woman finds heaven or hell

On the day she is made a bride.

I require all things that are good and true,

All things that a man should be;

If you give this all, I would stake my life

To be all you demand of me.

If you cannot do this—a laundress, a cook

You can hire with little to pay;

But a woman's heart and a woman's life,

Are not to be won that way.

—E. BARRETT BROWNING.

IN FAVOR OF EQUAL WAGE.

(Another side to the question raised by Breadwinner).

In answer to the question, "Should men and women receive the same amount of wages for the same kind of work?" I say emphatically, "Yes,"

and I think your contributor, "Breadwinner," writes as if he knew that he had taken the wrong side, as well as the weak side, for what can be his object in viewing the question from the individual standpoint? I hold that what is good and right for the individual can not be bad or wrong for society or the community, even considering the welfare of the whole human race as he is inclined to do.

I believe that young people of both sexes go to work with a similar object in view; namely, earning a living, and a little more if possible, and as the female is generally acknowledged to be the weaker sex, then, in order for her to accomplish the same work as a male she must take greater effort, and therefore ought to receive at least the same amount of pay, and "be on an equal footing" in this respect also.

If the time should come when they two agree to marry, what disadvantage can this equality be to either of them, even if the wife does cease to be a wage earner in a competitive sense? His proposition will not be doubled, whatever it may appear to be, as previous to marriage he would have to pay someone to do work, such as cooking, washing, etc., for him, which she will be able to do.

"Breadwinner" appears to think that putting the sexes on the same footing would be placing a premium upon single blessedness and might possibly defeat one of the ends of our creation; but I do not fear any such result, as there would then be more marriages for love and fewer for convenience—consequently more happy homes and fewer divorce suits.

EQUALITY.