

The Household.

Odd Minutes.

The amount of work that may be accomplished by the improvement of odd minutes is greater than one who has not tested the matter would easily believe. Five minutes a day amounts in a year to thirty hours, or three hours a day for ten days, and in that time a great deal of work can be done. In thirty years it would be three hours a day for 300 days. Looking at odd minutes thus one can easily see how the "learned blacksmith," Elihu Burritt, became versed in so many different languages. Every moment that he was not busy pounding on his anvil or its equivalent, he was pounding away at his studies, and between times was letting the knowledge he had gained become part and parcel of his mind. Had he waited until he could sit down at leisure and devote himself to the study of Greek and Latin and Hebrew and Sanscrit, the likelihood is that he would never have learned the alphabet of those languages. A single earnest purpose running through his life served as a cord on which all his odd minutes—the only jewels he ever had—were strung; as a cement to bind them into a coherent harmonious whole. The ordinary interruptions of daily life did not interrupt him. They aided him rather, for the same mental impression was renewed and renewed until it became fixed and permanent.

Our great novelists and some of our historians prefer to publish their works in serial form. They give us in one instalment only enough to occupy a brief space of time in the reading, and then let us wait for the next. Meantime we have opportunity to think over and analyze the characters and to live in the scenes and society portrayed. They prefer that our reading of their works should be fragmentary rather than continuous, for they know that thus they make a deeper, a fuller and a more lasting impression on our minds. The principle involved here is equally applicable to the pursuit of many studies and of some courses of reading. "Forty minutes a day," says the founder of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, will enable one to go through the four years course of reading prescribed, and give one an outlook on the world of knowledge similar to that gained by a college course. The mind set in a certain direction by ten minutes reading will retain that set during intermediate hours of work, and be ready to receive an additional impulse in the same direction. These successive impulses, in the course of time, produce astonishing results. A lad of our acquaintance has read through all the plays of Shakespeare in the course of a year, by simply occupying himself with the great dramatist while going on cars and ferries to and from his place of work in the city. The very interruptions of his readings have served to fix the plots and the characters more firmly in his mind.

One who employs all the intervals of waiting and of leisure in some handicraft has in a short time a great deal to show for the industry. A lady we know has in the last year or two knit her odd minutes into a very handsome counterpane, and knotted them into some yards of handsome macreme lace. A lady physician has her rooms tastefully decorated with delicate em-

broideries, crochet work and the like, the product of her own industry in moments of listening and resting. Her patients will talk to her more freely when she seems partly occupied.

To rest we need not so much entire cessation from work as a change of work, and those accomplish a great deal in this life who provide themselves with the various occupations, and so have something agreeable and useful to fill every passing moment. Those who "gather up the fragments that nothing be lost," often have more to show than others who have full "loaves" to feed from. If we take care of the minutes the hours will take care of themselves. If to the full web of our lives every moment furnishes one single thread, how rich and varied a fabric may we weave in the course of a lifetime!

Minutes and hours when the hands are at rest and the mind sinks into perfect calm are not to be counted idle. Only the still surface of the lake reflects the depths of heaven. There are truths we cannot see when the current of life is swift, truths whose outlines are blurred and dimmed and totally obscured in the toil and moil of daily struggle, but which shine out clear and beautifully when we sink into voiceless repose. Odd moments such as these come but rarely, yet they brighten many days of labor and answer many a weary quest of the aspiring soul.

Family Circle.

Isaline and I.

"Well, Mademoiselle Isaline," I said, strolling out into the garden, "and who is the young cavalier with the black mustache?" "What, Monsieur," answered Isaline; "you have seen him? You have been watching from your window? We did not know you had returned from the Aiguille." "Oh, yes, I've been back for more than an hour," I replied; "the snow was so deep on the Col that I gave it up at last, and made up my mind not to try it without a guide."

"I am so glad," Isaline said demurely. "I had such fears for Monsieur. The Aiguille is dangerous, though it isn't very high, and I had been very distractedly anxious till Monsieur returned."

"Thanks, mademoiselle," I answered with a little bow. "Your solicitude for my safety flatters me immensely. But you haven't told me yet who is the gentleman with the black mustache."

Isaline smiled. "His name is M. Claude," she said; "M. Claude Tirard, you know; but we don't use surnames much among ourselves in the Pays de Vaud. He is the schoolmaster of the commune."

"M. Claude is a very happy man, then," I put in. "I envy his good fortune."

Isaline blushed a pretty blush. "On the contrary," she answered, "he had just been declaring himself the most miserable of mankind. He says his life is not worth having."

"They always say that under those peculiar circumstances," I said. "Believe me, mademoiselle, there are a great many men who would be glad to exchange their own indifferently tolerable lot for M. Claude's unendurable misery."

Isaline said nothing, but she looked at me with a peculiar inquiring look, as if she would very much like to know exactly what I meant by it and how much I meant by it.

And what did I mean by it? Not very much after all, I imagine, for when it comes to retrospect, which one of us is any good at analyzing his own motives? The fact is, Isaline is a very pretty little girl and I had nothing to do, and I might just as well make myself agreeable to her as gain the reputation of being a bear of an Englishman. Besides, if there was the safe guard of M. Claude, a real indigenous suitor, in the background, there wasn't much danger of my polite attention being misunderstood.

However, I haven't told you how I came to find myself on the farm at Les Pentes at all.

This, then, is how it all came about. I was sick of the Temple; I had spent four or five briefless years in lounging about Brick Court and dropping in casually at important cases, just to let the world see I was the proud possessor of a well-curled wig; but even a wig (which suits my complexion admirably) falls after five years, and I said to myself that I would really cut London altogether, and live upon my means somewhere on the Continent. Very small means, to be sure, but still enough to pull through upon in Switzerland or the Black Forest. So just by way of experiment as to how I liked

it, I packed up my fishing rod and my portmanteau (the first the most important), took the 7:18 express from the Gare de Lyon for Geneva, and found myself next afternoon comfortably seated on the veranda of my favorite hotel at Vevay. The lake is delightful, that we all know, but I wanted to get somewhere where there was a little fishing; so I struck back at once into the mountain country around Chateau d'Oex and Les Avants, and came soon upon the exact thing I wanted at Les Pentes.

Picture to yourself a great amphitheatre of open alp or mountain pasture in the foreground, with peaks covered with vivid green pines in the middle distance and a background of pretty aiguilles, naked at their base, but clad near the summit with frozen masses of sparkling ice. Put into the midst of the amphitheatre a clear green and white torrent, with a church surrounded with a few farmhouses on its slope, and there you have the commune of Les Pentes. But most delightful of all was this, that there was no hotel, no pension, not even a regular lodging house. I was the first stranger to discover the capabilities of the village, and I was free to exploit them for my own private advantage. By a stroke of luck it so happened that M. Clairon, the richest farmer of the place, with a pretty, old fashioned Vaudois farmhouse and a pretty, dainty Vaudoise daughter, was actually willing to take me in for a mere song per week. I jumped at the chance, and the same day saw me duly installed in a pretty little room under the eaves of the pretty little farmhouse and with the pretty little daughter politely attending to all my wants.

Do you know those old fashioned Vaudois houses, with their big gable ends, their deep thatched roofs, their cobs of maize and smoked hams and other rural wealth hanging out ostentatiously under the protecting ledges? If you don't you can't imagine what a delightful time I had of it at Les Pentes. The farm was a large one for the Pays de Vaud, and M. Clairon actually kept two servants: but Madame would be scandalized at the idea of letting "that Sara" or "that Lisette" wait upon the English voyager, and the consequence was that Mlle. Isaline herself always came to answer my little tinkling hand-bell. It was a trifle awkward, for Mlle. Isaline was too much of a young lady not to be treated with deferential politeness, and yet there is a certain difficulty in being deferentially polite to the person who lays your table for dinner. However, I made the best of it, and I'm bound to say I managed to get along very comfortably.

Isaline was one of those pretty, plump, laughing-eyed, dimple-cheeked, dark little girls that you hardly ever see anywhere outside the Pays de Vaud. It was almost impossible to look at her without smiling; I'm sure it was quite impossible for her to look at any one else and not to smile at them. She wore the prettiest little Vaudois cap you ever saw in your life, and she looked so coquettish in them that you must have been very hard hearted indeed if you did not fall head over ears in love with her at first sight. Besides, she had been to school at Lausanne, and spoke such pretty, delicate, musical French! Now, my good mother thought badly of my French accent, and when I told her I meant to spend a month or two in western Switzerland she said to me, "I do hope, Charlie dear, you will not miss improving yourself in colloquial French a little." I am certainly the most dutiful of sons, and I solemnly assure you that whenever I was not fishing or climbing I missed no opportunity whatsoever of conversing with pretty little Isaline.

"Mlle. Isaline," I said on this particular afternoon, "I should much like a cup of tea; can Sara bring me one out here in the garden?"

"Perfectly, monsieur; I will bring you out the little table on the grass plot," said Isaline. "That will arrange things for you much more pleasantly."

"Not for worlds," I said running in to get it myself; but Isaline had darted into the house before me and brought it out with her own white little hands on the tiny lawn. Then she went in again and soon reappeared with a Japanese tray—bought at Montreux specially in my honor—and a set of the funniest little old China tea things ever beheld in a London bric-a-brac cabinet. "Won't you sit and take a cup with me, Mademoiselle?" asked.

"Ma foi, monsieur," answered Isaline, blushing, you other English drink it so, don't you? I will try it—for the rest: one learns always."

I poured her out a cup and creamed it with some of the delicious Vaudois cream (no cream in the world so good as what you get in the Pays de Vaud—you see I am an enthusiast for my adopted country—but that is anticipating matters) and handed it over to her for her approval. She tasted it with a little *moue*. English women don't make the *moue*, so, though I like sticking to my mother tongue, I confess my inability to translate the word. "Brrrr," she said. "Do you English like that stuff? Well, one must accommodate one's self to it, I suppose," and, to do her justice, she proceeded to accommodate herself to it with such distinguished success that she asked me soon for another cup and drank it off without a murmur.

"And this M. Claude, then," I asked; "he is a friend of yours? Eh?"

"Possibly," she answered, coloring slightly. "You see, we have not much society at Les Pentes. He comes from the Normal School at Geneva. He is instructed—a man of education. We see few such here. What would you have?" She said it apologetically, as though she thought she was bound to excuse herself for having made M. Claude's acquaintance.

"But you like him very much?"

"Like him? Well, yes; I liked him always well enough. But he is too haughty. He gives himself airs. To-day he is angry with me. He has no right to be angry with me."

"Mademoiselle," I said, "have you ever read our Shakespeare?"

"Oh, yes, in English I have read him. I can read English well enough, though I speak but a little."

"And have you read the 'Tempest'?"

"How? Ariel, Ferdinand, Miranda, Caliban?" Oh, yes. It is beautiful."

"Well, Mademoiselle," I said, "do you remember how Miranda first saw Ferdinand?"

She smiled and blushed again—she was such a little