

Choice Literature.

INTO ACTIVE SERVICE.

Coming in out of the July sunshine, Gussie Shairp had to grope her way to one of the great holland covered arm chairs in the cool, shaded parlour. It was infinitely comfortable, after the sultriness and glare outside, to sink into its roomy depths, and, pushing her hat off from her temples, to rest a few moments in the silence and half-gloom, while she waited for Miss Mildred Harmor, whom she had called to see. Presently she came—a slim, elegant creature, the folds of whose pale coloured gown trailed softly after her, as she crossed the room to shake hands with Gussie.

"How do you do, Miss Shairp?" she said. "It is very good of you to venture out in all this heat."

"I am afraid you will think that I have ventured too much," said Gussie, with a pleasant little breezy laugh, which seemed to come echoing back from all the ghostly corners of the room, "when you know what I am here for. This is a begging expedition."

"I am sure I shall be glad to give to any object you beg for. It is certain to be a good one," said Miss Harmor, with something in her voice which might have been heartiness, but for its indolence.

"I advise you not to speak too quickly," said Gussie, glancing doubtfully at the high-bred, listless young woman sitting opposite, with her white hands folded in her lap. "I do not wonder that you jump at the idea that I want money; the lack of it is rather a chronic difficulty with us, I admit. But this time it is something else; we want work."

She brought the word out with emphasis. Mildred lifted her straight eyebrows, but, before she could say anything, Gussie went on:

"You know it is very hard for us to keep up our staff of Sunday school teachers in the summer. They are dropping off woefully; and we have been casting about in our minds for substitutes. This morning I heard that you were going to stay at home this year, so I came to you."

"Yes, we thought we would try it for once. It gets tiresome to go about from place to place, when there is nothing specially to be gained by it."

"Then I do hope you will take our needs into consideration, and consent to teach a class. Will you not, since you are trying novelty?"

"I could not promise that. I never did anything of that sort, and I really think it would be as tiresome as Mount Desert."

"Yes, but then there is something specially to be gained by it," answered Gussie, quickly.

"But what about the incapacity?"

"I don't believe in it."

"Thank you, but I am afraid I do. I think I must decline the post." She spoke decidedly, and evidently considered the matter settled. "Do you never," she asked with some curiosity, "find all these benevolences of yours burdensome?"

"I get tired, sometimes," Gussie admitted, "and disappointed and discouraged. But it would grieve me very much to give them up. I would rather put in my lifetime so, than in any other way; there is nothing else like it."

"I can't understand how you philanthropists get up the proper amount of enthusiasm over those poor, unhealthy, dirty-faced little children. As for visiting them in their houses, I should sicken of it on the first trial. No, I am not of the stuff for such saintliness. We all have our different callings, and I must be content with mine."

Gussie looked grave.

"If we knew that ours is a branch of the one high calling, we can very well afford to be content with it, whatever it is. But Miss Harmor," she added earnestly, as she rose to go, "do you not think we sometimes miss part of the calls that were meant for us? We need to do the most we can, each one, for you know the work is very short of hands."

"What a queer thing for her to say," thought Mildred, as she went upstairs again. "Is the girl so in the habit of preaching, that she must do it to people that have been to church almost as often as she has? I should feel indignant, if it was not so troublesome."

When Mildred sat down to her novel again, for some reason her heroine's adventures failed to absorb her as they had done before.

"How alive she is!" she thought, carefully explaining to herself, "I do not mean this absurd little piece of tinsel in the book, but Miss Shairp. I have often noticed it. There is no tinsel about her. She is more like good substantial homespun. And she takes such a tremendous interest in her humdrum undertakings. I wish I found things half as entertaining. I don't. I find them very empty and unsatisfying when I stop to think about it, which is not often. But I am sure I could never feel the charm of unlimited Sunday school and prayer-meeting and parish visiting. It is preposterous for me to think of taking a class; I am not fitted for it. Miss Shairp seems to think that everybody must be of her energetic type; she forgets that it is only 'some' that are given teachers."

Feeling quite complacent at having backed up her cause with this scriptural quotation, Miss Harmor was about to return to her book, when there was another knock at the door.

"Who is it this time, Selina?"

"A little girl from the back street, Miss, with some kind of tickets to sell. They are fifteen cents a-piece and for the church."

Selina was beside Miss Harmor's chair by the end of the sentence, waiting to take down the money which that young lady was always ready to give. She was a good deal surprised when Mildred, obeying a half-reluctant impulse, said: "Send her up here. I want to speak to her."

The little girl, who appeared at the threshold a minute or so later, was neat and pleasant-faced and very ready to talk. Sitting quite at ease on the edge of a chair, she explained the nature of the cause she advocated.

"It's a concert to our church for the Sunday school, to buy some more books for it. We've pretty much read up all them that are there now, and we want some more. You see when you once get used to a good thing, like Sunday readin', it seems to make you feel lonesome for it to have to stop."

"Yes, I should think it would."

"And so we've got to earn the money for it. We can't just put our hands in our pockets, like some can, and there it is. If we was to try the experiment, I guess we'd find it turn

out different, for most generally when we put our hands in, there it ain't, you know. We're a poor Sunday school, we are. I mean," she added, with a sudden flash of a smile in the eyes which were fastened so directly on Mildred's face, "we're poor in what we take in in the baskets. But I guess the biggest part o' what a Sunday school's worth is what it takes in from the Lord, and countin' so, you might say we was as rich as the finest. He puts in heavy every Sunday; don't scrimp us any, no more'n if we was one o' them big churches out on the broad streets. He's awful open-handed, the Lord is, ain't He?"

"He is indeed."

"And I guess you're a good bit like Him. For whenever we're gettin' up anything, they always tell us to come here first thing, and we ain't ever disappointed. It must be nice to know that folks can count on you to give every time, though, of course, money givin' ain't the best."

"What is the best?"

"Well," said the girl, and for the first time she turned her gaze out into the branches of the great tree which shaded the window, "I was thinkin' o' that last Sunday when I was sittin' in church, so nervous I couldn't listen to the singin', because I hadn't saved nuthin' to put in the box. It seemed as if I couldn't nohow, and I think its an awful mean feelin' not to have a cent to give, just as if you hadn't thought nuthin' at all about it durin' the week. But then presently I says to myself: 'Don't worry, Patsey Lansing; don't you s'pose the Lord keeps a runnin' account of your expenses, and knows how it was you come out short? Don't you s'pose, likely enough, some days when Jesus went to the synagogue He didn't have so much as some o' the others to put in the c'lection? But nobody couldn't even say He was a small giver. Any church that ever He belonged to was bound to be rich. For they'd got one member as was always seekin' after the strayin' ones and fillin' up the empty pews, comfortin' the old and the sick and encouragin' the backward and lovin' the little children. Now, Patsey Lansing,' I says, 'the Lord ain't forever askin' money o' folks, when they ain't got it. Money don't look as big to Him as some o' these other things. An' them He does ask o' everybody, there ain't no possible use in tryin' to put Him off; he's worse than the tax-collector about them.' And so then I felt easier and begun singin' the hymn, 'Rescue the perishin'.' I always like that hymn, its such a holdin' fast kind of a hymn, but there wasn't only the last verse left. I'd missed the other three for my contrariness."

"Where do you go to church?"

She told her the number and street.

"Why, Miss Shairp teaches in your Sunday school, does she not?"

"Yes'm—reg'lar; she hardly ever loses a Sunday."

"Are you in her class?"

"No'm, I'm in Mr. Berkeley's, but he's gone away, and I don't know who we'll have now. Its hard work gettin' teachers in the summer, they say. That seems awful queer to me, don't it to you? You'd think anybody that knowed how blessed them things was, would be just hungry to be tellin' 'em all the time to them that weren't but very little acquainted with them. You wouldn't think, when they was sure o' heaven themselves, they'd have to be coaxed to give other folks a chance for it; folks whose chances wasn't very many nor very big. It don't appear to be natural; it seems to me sometimes that maybe some o' the Lord's children don't favour Him as much as they'd ought to—not as much as they've got a right to, you know."

Mildred's answer was to take out her purse and pay for such a number of tickets as filled Patsey with astonishment.

"You must be goin' to take a crowd!" she exclaimed.

"It's fine for me; for you see every ten I sell I get a ticket for myself. I didn't count on gettin' more'n one; but this will make me two—one for Nan, sure, and then this other for—I guess Jamie. I'll have to think over it some, though. My mind's been all made up about Nan this long while."

"Who are Nan and Jamie?"

"They're two friends o' mine. They ain't got anybody much to neighbour them, so I look out for 'em when I can. There's lots o' folks wantin' neighbourin' down our way, and now and then, if I'm watchful you know, there comes a time when I can do a little of it. It's a nice feelin', when you can."

"Are you not going to the concert?"

"Oh, no'm; there's plenty o' things fallin' to me all the while; I don't need any singin' to hearten me up any."

A sudden idea came to Mildred; taking off two from her pack of tickets, she held out the others to Patsey.

"I want you to do something for me," she said. "I shall not use any of those. I want you to take them and give them about to anybody that you think best. But you must keep one for yourself; you can do what you please with the others."

The magnitude of this proposal made Patsey slow to understand it. When she did, she was radiant.

"I must be goin'," she said soon afterward, with a happy laugh. "I guess with all this arrangin' and distributin' to see to, and all the rest o' the work besides, I'll keep pretty busy for awhile. Things is always happenin'; life is awful full, ain't it?"

When the last clatter of Patsey's stout boots on the staircase had died away, and the front door had closed behind her, Mildred sat down at her writing-desk and wrote a note. This was what it said:—

MY DEAR MISS SHAIRP:

Will you let me reconsider my decision of this morning? I should like to take one of your classes now, if I may. I have had another lesson in theology since you left me, and, though a dull scholar, I think I begin to get a glimpse of what is meant by being "willing to communicate." Sincerely yours, MILDRED HARMOR.

—Sally Campbell, in the Interior.

"A REALLY PRETTY GIRL."

Don't imagine when you see the "Health" Brand advertised opposite the figure of a pretty girl that it alludes to a new vintage of champagne, because it doesn't. This time it's a luxury for ladies, and refers to the newly-introduced under-vests by that name, which embody the greatest amount of comfort for the wearer, and are a sure safeguard against any such thing as rheumatism or cold. The first time you are out go into W. A. Murray & Co's and ask them to show you these goods, and you will realize the truth of what we say.

GORDON AT KHARTOUM.

How died that day our Hero saw it last?
Be sure his heart went Westward with the sun,
Swift circling on to England, till he won
From alien airs, that mocked him as they passed,
A breath of English bowers; and the vast,
Waste, desert stretches were as they were not.
Dreaming of England, he awhile forgot
The brooding cares that turned his thoughts aghast.
Careworn,—God's breast was nearer than he knew,
A step beyond the Arabs' bloody rage,
Dark ways turned golden, life's perplexing page
Grew luminous, as shone the glory through.
Immortal Dead! for Death could not undo
This kindest heart God gave a gold-cursed age.

—Emily McManus, in *The Week*.

INTEMPERANCE AND INSANITY.

Intemperance is a form of insanity, and there is no use denying it, and an intoxicated man is, for the time being, morally irresponsible. The poison has slowly but surely deprived him of the power of thinking and acting with judgment, and when actually intoxicated, a man of excitable temper is capable of any crime, and should scarcely be held responsible for the misery he inflicts on others, nor for the outrages of which he is guilty. The confirmed drinker is one stage further advanced; and, instead of being occasionally unable to control himself, he is always insane, and on his forehead the seal of madness is impressed. The occasional drunkard may sometimes—the confirmed inebriate can never—be regarded as retaining the power of acting and reasoning sensibly. The former, as soon as he is sober, deserves, and should receive, condign punishment not for the mischief done during his fit of temporary madness but for wilfully destroying his moral responsibility, and making himself a terror to his neighbours. The latter, on the other hand, must be treated as a confirmed criminal, convicted of a repetition of serious offences against society. But he is a source of evil, and capable of injuring others; and it would only be right to himself, as far as he is concerned, and just to the community, to remove him from the temptations which he lacks the power to resist, and lock him up in an asylum, where he would have the chance of being reformed. Medical men of the highest standing state, from long experience, that not five confirmed drunkards in a hundred can be reclaimed and cured, whatever the care and skill given to the treatment. By inebriate they mean a man who has been incessantly drinking for years, and so has destroyed his moral responsibility, and undermined his self control, so that the sight and smell of stimulants make him forget every good resolve. As long as he can resolutely pass the open door of the public house, or remove a glass of wine from his lips without tasting it—so long that is, as he can restrain his appetite and be abstemious, though only for a day—he cannot be called a confirmed drunkard, although he may be seriously injuring himself by excess, and may frequently be intoxicated. Not so very long ago I always felt indignant when I heard intemperance called a disease; it seemed to me to imply that the drunkard was regarded with too much levity and that the danger would arise of drunkenness being commiserated rather than condemned. A friend tells me that an inebriate in his neighbourhood, having heard of the new theory, has been encouraged to drink with redoubled persistency, urging in extenuation of his conduct that he is the victim of a disease, not of a vice. This is a danger which medical practitioners must not overlook; and the excuse that intemperance is a disease must not be allowed in all cases—nor, indeed in any case, unless the particular circumstances show the plea to be well founded. At the same time, the conviction is gaining strength that whatever inebriety may be at its commencement, it certainly develops—sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly—into a disease wholly beyond the unhappy sufferer's control, and then it becomes a terrible disease. The steps by which the moderate man descends are only too easy. Strict moderation is in many cases followed by occasional excess; one stage more, and he is sometimes seen intoxicated; a little later, and he is an habitual drunkard. Still, he can at first control himself by a strong effort. This power soon deserts him, and he becomes an irresponsible inebriate, possessed by an uncontrollable craving for the poisonous liquid; to obtain it he sacrifices wife and family, position and friends, even his own body and soul! In the meantime, he becomes poor, miserable, and neglected. But he does not repent. Madness and disease claim him, and tighten their hold till they drag him to a premature grave. In Great Britain and Ireland it is said that from thirty to seventy thousand persons directly or indirectly every year sink into the drunkard's grave—victims of a sensual, ruinous, and degrading appetite. Let us take the smaller estimate; it is large enough to fill one with horror. This fearful termination of a long career of vicious indulgence is only the grand climax; years of reckless intemperance generally precede it. Probably it would be within the mark to allow that eight years, on the average, intervene between the formation of the habit of drinking to excess, and its appalling termination in death. Therefore, there are at least 560,000 drunkards in this country at this moment, who will die prematurely—the wretched victims of an uncontrolled appetite. Dr. J. J. Ridge, however, in a calculation of his which I saw a year ago, puts the figure at a round million. In addition, there are, perhaps, as many persons who occasionally drink to excess; Dr. Ridge also estimates the number of these at another million.