

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

"IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN."

By Hannah Isabel Graham.

What libations of foolish tears and sinful regrets are poured upon the altar of "It might have been." The words float like a requiem over the clay idols that Time has broken and laid in ruins at our feet.

We envy our neighbor who is possessed of greater talents, wealth, distinction or popularity than ourselves, satisfied that if we had been given his opportunities "It might have been."

Life is to many a "via dolorosa" simply because they are constantly turning to grieve over a lost Sodom. The future, so full of possibilities, is a blank page to them. They see no beauty in the blue sky above them or the flowers at their feet. Sorrow and disappointment instead of fulfilling their design, in broadening and deepening their heart's channel, have frozen it into an ice-bound stream of selfishness. Regardless of the burdened hearts everywhere around them, that are perishing for lack of a loving word of cheer, they go their solitary way, unloving, unsympathetic, unfruitful lumberers of the ground, who, when they cross the mysterious bound, leave the world no poorer than they found it.

"It might have been" is the convenient scape-goat upon which the world lays its sins, follies and neglected duties, and banishes them to the dreary waste of bygone years, forgetting that our lives have only gone before to the Great Judge, who "requireth that which is just."

If we could only for a moment realize that life is the ladder on which we rise from earth to Heaven, we would no longer waste the precious moments of opportunity in idleness and repining. There is a crook in every lot and each life has its mysteries of pain and sorrow. There are things hard to be understood, hard to bear, and hard to give up. But instead of sighing for the good denied and, like Lot's wife, losing the present in the contemplation of the past, how much better and wiser it would be to bury the vanished years in the faithless depths of God's forgiveness, and "forgetting the things that are behind, press forward to the things which are before." Gleaning only from each might have been the lesson that it was sent to teach: "More reverence toward God, more gentleness and love toward man."

The grandest and noblest lives that have beautified this earth have arisen from the ashes of a dead past, "purified, softened and enriched for greater helpfulness." Those whose very presence brings peace and comfort to countless aching hearts have come forth, in the morning, after a night of weeping, to wipe the tear-drops from the cheeks of their fellow-sufferers.

Often, "when we are fretting under the touch, and perhaps with sentimental weakness talking of broken heart-strings and a blighted life, the hand of the great Master-tuner is upon us, giving to each rebellious chord its proper tension, that from the re-tuned instrument there may come forth that special harmony which He desires to draw from it in this present age—that special har-

mony by which He is to be glorified on earth, until Eden come again and the wilderness blossom as the rose."

Let us take life's broken chords to the divine tuner, "who will not break the bruised reed," and ask Him to make us now what we will wish we had been when we stand before the great white throne; when the crooked places shall be made straight and the dark mysteries of Time shall be perfectly explained in the light of Heaven's eternal day.

Then we will understand that "whatever is, is right;" and "what seems confusion here, is wisdom there."

Seaforth, Ont.

TWO KINDS OF THANKSGIVING.

By Ruth Sterry.

One prayed aloud his thanks, and many heard—
But when he passed forth from the house of prayer
He wore upon his face his secrets bare,
While those who met him sighed, and thought with pain
Of all the year had lost them, of the reign
Of grief and sorrow on this earth of ours.

One wore upon his face the smile of peace,
As if he held communion close with God,
And loved the world and all who on it trod;
And those who met him smiled, and thought how fair
The world must be to him—and straight-way there
Rose in their hearts a glad thanksgiving hymn!

THANKSGIVING.

Will it do to say more on this time-worn subject? Can anything new be said of Thanksgiving—anything but the old commonplaces that deal with bountiful harvests, peaceful lives, the living under one's own vine and fig tree with no one to make us afraid, the duty of remembering the Giver of all good things in the midst of his gifts? We all recognize these familiar expressions, and have a sort of scorn of their familiarity, their threadbare tone of commonplace.

And yet is not the commonplaceness of them ours? Ought we not rather to blame ourselves that these beautiful gifts of God in nature recurring with the seasons should seem to us commonplace and our thanks and remembrance of them a perfunctory thing instead of a renewed, a spontaneous rejoicing at each return of God's autumnal gift time? To the commonplace all things are commonplace. Let us rather see in this very commonplaceness of our blessings but another cause for thanksgiving. Thank God that his gifts are so usual, common, customary, universal, that we are constantly in danger of forgetting them. Thank God, too, that the best gifts are the commonest. Good men, loving hearts, healthy, wholesome bodies with sane minds, the pure air of heaven, the rain that falleth alike on just and unjust, the warming sunlight, these belong to us all and are so common that we forget them while we think of wealth, social position, power, all the gifts that are rare and come to the few, as if they were the only desirable ones. God shows us by his generous bestowal of the former on all his children that those are the truly good things of life, just

as we may judge by the parsimony with which he gives the latter how dubious and uncertain goods, wealth, rank and power often prove to their possessors.

Abraham Lincoln, with that homely wit that made his pithy wisdom classic, once remarked that God must have loved the common people, he had made so many of them. And so may we not say of his gifts of love, health, air, sunshine, that these must have been the gifts he loved to give because he knew them to be the best for all; these were the common universal gifts restricted to no sect or race, no climate, no chosen and select few, but strewn with lavish hand among all.

The truly good gifts of life are the commonest, free and shared by all or most of us. And it is for those simple commonplace blessings that we owe the deepest thanks rather than for worldly success; for wealth, for power, position, these are for the few, and not always blessings to them. If we have them, let us see that they become blessings by the use we make of them, and that so for these, too, we may properly and honestly give thanks. And yet again, there are other good things for which perhaps we do not see that we owe thanks, good gifts that we cannot recognize because of their forbidding outward wrappings. These are no commonplace blessings; they come to us perhaps in some cruel blow, the death of some loved one, the disappointment of a cherished hope, the loss of worldly possessions, suffering, pain, disease, perhaps approaching death. It is hard to give thanks for these, hard to see the good beneath their apparent evil. Here, indeed, is a task for the thankgiver, to look back over the past year to some death and thank God that he took that sorely missed wife, that bright-faced child, that old and reverend father to himself; that he sent the disease that meant weary nights and days of watching, that were hard to the sufferer and his friends, but left behind the precious legacy of unselfish, loving service on the one side and of patient, heroic endurance on the other.

Be sure that we do not properly observe our Thanksgiving if we cannot rise to the height of thanking God for these, if he has sent them during the past year, just as we may with less effort thank him for their absence, for the sparing us these harder blessings of his goodness, if in his wisdom he has seen fit to spare us.

And then with Thanksgiving in words must go thanksgiving in deeds. It is no mere accident that at these seasons of universal giving of thanks there should go a giving of gifts to others as a sincere token and symbol of our thanksgiving for what we ourselves have received. It is natural for a man who truly feels that he has been blessed and favored to wish to share with others what he feels is but a gift to him, and to make some return to the Great Giver of all good by giving to his less favored brother.

Do you sincerely give thanks and feel thanks for all you yourself have received this past year? Then as Whitfield, I think, once asked a congregation that was much moved by his appeal for help: How much do you feel in your pocket? How thankful are you in gifts to others? Make your thanksgiving their thanksgiving, too.