

## The Quiet Hour.

### A Light in a Dark Place.

Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.—St. Matt. v: 14, 16.

I have just been listening to a very telling address, given by a missionary from China. A friend of mine said, as we came out of church: "That was the best missionary sermon I ever heard." I answered: "I am going to pass it along to the best of my ability."

That was half an hour ago, and you see I am keeping my word. The sermon was a wonderful inspiration of hope—hope for the teeming millions of China. I realized more than ever before that the men and women there are, like ourselves, eager to learn higher, nobler and wiser ways. The preacher showed how public opinion in China is becoming more and more just, humane and wise through the silent influence of the lives of Christians, who are simply letting their light shine. It is only very lately that the first school for girls has been opened by the Chinese. Until the Christians started mission schools for girls, no one thought it worth while to educate them. No girl was supposed to have a soul until after she died. Then, if she had been very good, she might hope to be born again as a boy and have a soul. Three thousand years of national life had not taught them that women were worth educating, but a very few years of Christian example opened their eyes. When the heathen women saw how superior their Christian sisters were, intellectually, they gave their male relatives no peace until the door of education was opened to themselves.

But the cause of Christ has not only silently and secretly worked this change of public opinion; it is also openly acknowledged by thinking men among the heathen. Many of the mandarins have removed their daughters from the Chinese public schools after trying them for a few months, and, coming to the Christians, have pleaded that room might be made for them in the mission schools; because they found that education without the restraints of religion was a dangerous experiment. "You may teach my daughter anything you like," said one of these officials, "if only you will take her and educate her." Petitions for Christian teachers are pouring in from all sides. The Chinese want to learn something of this religion, which has made the younger nations so much stronger and more vigorous than China. The most enlightened of them say that though many so-called Christians do not seem to believe their professed faith, yet the best of them believe it, and set the ideals for the rest.

The passing away of the "baby-towers" is one proof of the effect of

Christian light on the darkness of heathenism. These round towers, with a window set several feet high in the wall of each, were erected in the cities, without shame, for the convenience of heartless parents who had more babies than they wanted. They were simply thrown in there to die. Think of the horror of it—you who have dear little babies of your own—and of the impossibility of such a crime being openly committed as a matter of course in any Christian land! Until lately, Chinese sentiment was in favor of "baby-towers." Now, however, in cities where Christian missions are well established, public opinion has become so enlightened that the towers are never used, and are falling into ruins. Any unfeeling parent who wishes to murder his little daughters is forced to do it secretly, though in towns where Christianity is hardly known these towers are still constantly in use. The missionary who told us about them said that a friend of his was once riding past one of these towers, when he saw a man go away from the other side of it. Hearing a pitiful cry, he instantly climbed through the window and rescued a baby. The horror of the situation may be imagined rather than described—he counted sixteen little bodies inside.

Then the silent, leavening influence of Christianity has also helped to put down other horrors, such as the binding of the feet of little children, and the torture of criminals. The punishment which was called "the death of a thousand cuts" has been entirely abolished. This was far more awful than even its name implies, to have cut the victim into a thousand pieces would have been merciful compared with it. Another terrible punishment has also been abolished, having vanished as the darkness disappears before the dawn. It used to be a common custom to kill the innocent wife and children of a criminal before he suffered "the death of a thousand cuts." Then he expected that his forlorn soul would be unfed and uncared-for in the spirit-world, because there would be no one left on earth to carry on the ancestor worship.

Faith in the ancient religion of China is rapidly dying out. In many places, the Chinese themselves pulled down their temples and burned the contents. This year they have begun to teach the New Testament in many of their schools because, as they say, their own religion has proved itself unable to keep their nation up to the level of other nations, and they want to give Christianity a chance, and see what it can do for them. Then the power of real family life is shining like a star here and there, and those who see it are greatly attracted by its novelty and beauty. Family life is a strange and unheard-of thing in China, except among Christians, so the speaker told us. Love is the last thing considered in arranging a marriage. The boy and girl are betrothed as babies, and often do not meet until the wedding; but the betrothal

is a thing which must not be broken, no matter how much the young people may object. The young man is forced to marry the girl to whom his parents have betrothed him, though afterwards he may marry as many other wives as he can support. As for the poor girls, of course, they have no choice of a husband. But the Christians bring up the young people to be free to choose for themselves, and, as no polygamy is allowed among them, the Chinese are filled with wonder at seeing that a man may love and respect his wife—instead of treating her as a slave—and may find real pleasure in his home life. To see the beauty of holiness, especially when its radiance shines against such a black background, is to be inevitably attracted by it, and to make some attempt to copy it. So every Christian home is like a candle, giving light to all in its neighborhood, and so doing truest missionary work unconsciously.

Then hospitals and orphanages, as well as schools, are established by the Christians and imitated by the heathen. Example is always far more potent than precept, and the influence of the Christian life is sure to do incalculable good not only in China, but everywhere else. Our Captain not only assigns to each his post, but He also works mightily in and through each consecrated life. He can change discouraging failures into grand successes, which are waiting to surprise the weary soldier when he passes within the Veil. The greatest work done by anyone is probably something which he himself thinks little of. If S. Chrysostom—the golden-mouthed preacher—wrote the short prayer which bears his name, he surely never dreamed that during century after century it would awaken in innumerable souls of careless worshippers the thrilling thought of Christ's Presence, and arouse them to repentance for wandering thoughts and want of earnestness in public worship. Those who are joyously doing the work God puts into their hands, like loyal loving children rather than like driven slaves, are influencing the world far more than they know. As Brierley poetically expresses it: we can pay our contribution to the world and help our fellows "by bathing the facts of each day's life in the radiant atmosphere of our own faith, when by God's grace and our inner struggle we have produced that noblest and most delightful of all products, a richly-developed inner life, we shall have taken the best possible means of paying back our debt. The world's greatest asset is the souls it is producing. Let us see to it that our own becomes a worthy addition."

Let us each go on with our lowly sowing of living seed, remembering that the miracle of the increase rests with God, and is not dependent on our strength or wisdom. He who fed the thousands of old with one lad's little supply is constantly choosing the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of

the world to confound the things which are mighty—"that no flesh should glory in His presence." We are commanded to let our light shine before men, forbidden to hide the light which God has given us, but it is not for our own glorification, but that men may glorify our Father which is in heaven. If the light is shining brightly the darkness is forced to flee away, for darkness can never hold its own against light, and truth is far mightier than falsehood. HOPE.

### A Bird's Ministry.

From his home in an Eastern bungalow, In sight of the everlasting snow Of the grand Himalayas, row on row, Thus wrote my friend:

"I had travelled far From the Afghan towers of Candahar, Through the sand-white plains of Sindh-Sagar; And once when the daily march was o'er, As tired I sat in my tented door, Hope failed me, as never it failed before. In swarming city, at wayside fane, By the Indus' bank, on the scorching plain,

I had taught, and my teaching all seemed vain.

'No glimmer of light,' I sighed, 'appears;

The Moslem's Fate and the Buddhist's fears

Have gloomed their worship this thousand years.

For Christ and His truth I stand alone In the midst of millions: a sand-grain blown

Against yon temple of ancient stone, As soon may level it! Faith forsook My soul as I turned on the pile to look: Then rising, my saddened way I took To its lofty roof, for the cooler air: I gazed, and marvelled; how crumbled were

The walls I had deemed so firm and fair!

For, wedged in a rift of the massive stone,

Most plainly rent by its roots alone, A beautiful peepul-tree had grown, Whose gradual stress would still expand The crevice, and topple upon the sand The temple, while o'er its wreck should stand

The tree in its living verdure! Who Could compass the thought? The bird that flew

Hitherward, dropping a seed that grew, Did more to shiver this ancient wall Than earthquake, war, simoon, or all The centuries in their lapse and fall! Then I knelt by the riven granite there, And my soul shook off its weight of care, As my voice rose clear on the tropic air:

"The living seeds I have dropped remain

In the cleft: Lord, quicken with dew and rain;

THEN temple and mosque shall be rent in twain!"

—Margaret J. Preston.

## With the Flowers.

### House Plants in Winter.

House plants—most house plants—have a rather hard time of it in winter. Kept in dry, over-heated rooms during the day-time, in a temperature which closely approaches freezing point at night, over-watered, or injudiciously watered, allowed to become choked with dust, until it is impossible for the leaves to breathe—and breathe they must, even as human beings do—it is little wonder that they grow sickly and die.

The first essential of success with house plants is, of course, proper potting. Pots must not be too large—a small plant never does well in a large pot—soil should be loose and fairly rich, and a good inch of drainage material, broken crockery, bits of brick, or rough pebbles, covered with fibre moss, should be in the bottom of each pot.

That seen to, the next condition is plenty of light and pure air. Shades should be run to the top, and curtains drawn back in any window in which plants are expected to flourish, and the air should be frequently renewed from "out of doors," although never permitted to strike directly upon the plants in a strong, cold current. The best temperature for house plants is

about 70 degrees during the daytime, and 55 at night, and moisture in the atmosphere should be provided by keeping a vessel of water continually on the stove.

Most people make the mistake in winter of giving plants too much water. In summer, when evaporation is excessive, water may be required possibly every day or two; in winter, once a week may not be too seldom. The best way is to give water only when the surface of the soil is dry, and when the side of the pot, when dipped with the finger nail, rings with a somewhat hollow sound. Then enough should be given, slightly warmed, to run through a little at the bottom of the pot. A showering every day to keep the dust off the leaves will be found beneficial to most plants; also a thorough washing in soap suds once a fortnight. If the soil is rich, no fertilizer will be required, except for exceptionally-gross feeders, but if exhausted, so that the leaves appear stunted and ill-nourished, manure water, just strong enough to resemble weak tea, may be given once a fortnight.

These rules for watering apply, it will be understood, to the majority of plants, but, of course, discretion must be exercised. Aquatics such as the Calla Lily and Umbrella Plant, require, of course, much more water, the latter, indeed, doing best when the pot containing it is kept in a larger vessel continually filled with water. The Cactus, on the other

hand, whose home is naturally in the hot and arid regions of the south, needs but little water. Between the times of watering, stirring the soil occasionally with a fork will be found of great benefit to the plants.

House plants are particularly likely to be infested with insect life during the winter. Aphides, or plant lice, are readily distinguished. They are usually green, and move about on the plant, often covering the stems in great numbers, and clinging to the undersides of the leaves. A good syringing with tobacco tea will rout them; but if the smell of the tobacco is disliked, dipping the plants in soap suds made with Ivory soap,  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. to the pail of warm water, will be found effectual. . . . Red spiders are very small, and usually one does not suspect their presence until the leaves turn yellow and begin to drop off. If the undersides be examined closely, tiny spots, like rust specks, may be observed moving slowly about. These are the red spiders, and, so far, nothing better has been found to banish them than strong and frequent sprayings of water, supplied directly under the leaves, as well as above them. . . . Mealy bugs resemble patches of white down. If only a few appear, they may be picked off, or touched with a brush dipped in alcohol. If in great numbers, a solution of fir-tree-oil soap should be syringed on every part of the plant. To make the solution, dissolve 1 ounce of

the soap in water just brought to the boiling point. To this add water to make a gallon, and apply while still warm. . . . The same soap may be used in fighting the scale, which will be found like stationary patches of brown on the stems of such plants as ferns, oleanders, ivies, etc. Apply with a stiff brush, taking care to remove the scale entirely; then wash well with the soap suds. . . . If worms appear in the soil, get rid of them by soaking thoroughly with lime water. Put a piece of fresh lime, the size of a cup, in a pail of water. When dissolved, pour off the clear water, and apply.

A bald-headed chemist was standing at his shop door in London. A Scotchman passing by noticed him. The Scotchman stopped and inquired of the chemist if he had any hair restorer.

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "Step inside, please. There's an article I can recommend. Testimonials are many from great men who have used it. It makes the hair grow in 24 hours."

"Aweel," said the Scotchman, "ye can gie the top o' yer head a bit rub w't, and I'll look back the morn and see if ye're telling the truth."—[London News.