

HOPE'S QUIET HOUR

IS THIS WASTE OF TIME?

There came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat. But when His disciple saw it, they had indignation, saying, to what purpose is this waste?—S. Matt. xxvi.: 7, 8.

I am writing this two days after Christmas, having just made some attempt to tidy the house, which was—of course—littered with the delightful disorder of tissue-paper, colored string, bits of baby ribbon and Christmas seals. There are people in the world still—people who look down in lofty scorn on the childlike spirit of Dickens—who say (or think)—“To what purpose is this waste?” Think of the quantity of ribbon and tissue-paper cut up to wrap about Christmas presents, and then tossed carelessly into the waste-paper basket. Think of the money spent on Christmas labels and seals! Why, it probably amounts to thousands of dollars in Canada alone. Is this waste? Might not this “wasted” money be gathered in a heap and given to the poor? So might some of the disciples of Christ echo the lament of those other practical disciples long ago.

But we are not concerned with the opinion of the servants of our Lord—what does the Master Himself say? Does he think the money spent in dainty wrappers is wasted? He evidently did not think the alabaster box and precious ointment were wasted, when they were joyously sacrificed in loving lavishness by Mary of Bethany. That apparent “waste” has been an inspiration to loving hearts ever since. Let us carefully examine the question of dainty accessories to gifts.

The other day, as we gathered round the table, and unfastened one parcel after another, we found that the youngest member of the party had taken special care to have each of her gifts daintily done up. She had bought a fresh supply of paper, ribbon and seals, because the first lot had been used for gifts outside the home. Do you think that she considered that “anything would do” for the home people? Not she! In all the rush of Christmas Eve, she found time to take particular and special delight in all the sacramental outward tokens of the inward grace of beautiful family affection. And I, for one, did not consider the time and money wasted. The gifts would have been as practically useful—perhaps—if wrapped in common brown paper, but they would not have been the outward signs of overflowing, considerate love—love that scorned to consider expense or trouble. And the thought came to me to have a chat with you about the value of keeping our perfume fittingly shrined in an alabaster box when we offer it to our Lord. Think of our gifts to Him, through His poor. Some people find it hard to accept a much-needed Christmas basket. They feel that the gift is “cold as charity”—real charity is never cold. But if the basket be daintily packed, with mysterious packages slipped in here and there, properly boxed or wrapped, and labelled with cheery Christmas wishes—how delightful the task of unpacking it will be. Five cents worth of paper and ribbon will give far more joy to a lonely, hungry heart, than the same five cents spent in sugar or meat. Of course one must not overdo this matter of tissue-paper. The outside must not be a fair covering of a worthless gift. The “alabaster” box held “very precious” ointment, which filled the room with its perfume. We must be careful to do unto others as we should like them to do unto us. If the daintiness is not an expression of kindly goodwill, it is indeed “waste.” Instead of a holy sacramental token, it may be only a hypocritical shell,

without a precious kernel.

Do you think God cares about the accessories to our gifts? Does He care about clothes? When the people were invited to meet with Him at Sinai, they were told to sanctify themselves and to wash their clothes. It is not a meaningless custom to prepare for the Sunday worship by bathing and putting on clean clothes. The “Sunday-go-to-meeting” suit



may be simply finery, or it may be the preparation of a King's daughter, who is careful to be “all glorious within” and also dressed in her very best clothing—“clothing of wrought gold . . . raiment of needlework.”—Ps. xlv.: 13, 14.

The wise men brought gifts of frankincense and myrrh to present to the King, and they did not consider that such offerings were wasted on the Child in His lowly home. Gold was, evidently, useful—some would have said of the other gifts, with their symbolic meaning: “To what purpose is this waste?” Were they wasted?

There may even be some followers of “Mr. Gradgrind,” who consider it “waste” to have candies and nuts at Christmas time. Just fancy a Christmas with only necessities and no luxuries! It might be sensible and practical, but it certainly would be a very poor imitation of a real, old-fashioned, hearty Christmas. It would be all outside—body without spirit, head without heart.

God might—as has been quaintly said—have made us in such fashion that our food could have been shovelled into us at regular hours, as coal is dumped into a stove. Then life would have been bare of the sacramental fellowship of the daily meals. Does God believe in dainty wrappings? Look at His gifts and see. Think how the rich juice of the grape is contained in a beautiful case. Think of the peach and plum and apple, and countless fruits. How different the world would be if these were all a dull black, or brown, or gray.

How tender and considerate God is in His numberless ways of wrapping His gifts in dainty ways to give His children pleasure. The world is full of delightful things, which are luxuries, rather than necessities. There are the various sounds of bird and insect, which blend into the pleasant harmony of a summer evening. There are the beautiful colors and shapes of flowers and birds and animals of all kinds. There are the varying colors of the sky, the solemn grandeur of mount-

ains, and the beauty of numberless landscapes. There is the beauty of water—sea and lake and river; and the musical “sound of many waters” which is like God's own voice bringing to us messages of tenderness.—Rev. i.: 15.

God shows plainly that He enjoys giving to us—do we show Him as plainly that we enjoy giving to Him? It has been suggested that the organist in a church plays a voluntary, while the offertory is being taken up, in order to soothe the sufferings of the congregation. Anyone who does not offer “willingly,” need not expect God to take pleasure in His gifts. God loveth a “cheerful” giver, and I think He is pleased when we save our brightest, cleanest money, to present joyously to Him, as an outward visible sign of our love. When the Church lifts up her gifts to her Royal Bridegroom, neither He nor She can be satisfied with a cold formality. He gives Himself to her “to the uttermost”—shall She measure her self-surrender for fear of giving more than is absolutely necessary?

“Thou hast shone within this soul of mine

As the sun on a shrine of gold.
When I rest my heart, O Lord, on
Thine,
My bliss is manifold.
My soul is the gem on Thy diadem,
And my marriage robe Thou art.”

DORA FARNCOMB.

GRANDMOTHER SPEAKS HER MIND

It's queer the way that some folks talk
Of how they felt when they were
younger,
How straight and brisk they used to
walk
How light their heart and keen their
hunger;
Though I know lots of girls like me,
Who don't speak of their days of yore
so,
But laugh and chat as full of glee
As in their youth—but only more so.

That phrase, “The snows of seventy
years,”
Is one I never took a shine to,
For somehow no one ever hears
That seventy lovely springs were mine
too;
That seventy summers opened their
gates
And let me wander through their sweet-
ness,
That seventy autumns—praise the fates!
Have crowned me with their rich
completeness.

What's all this stuff of years and snow?
The sunshine's all they need, I'm
thinking,
And every warm heart beat, I know
will set the years and snows to
shrinking,
But anyway, we maids and wives who
lived through seventy Junes of
clover,
Have had more bird song in our lives
Than snow and sleet—yes, ten times
over!
When did your grandpa charm me
most?
No, not in youth, nor long years after.
Glued close to his wage-earning post,
With little time for love or laughter,
He seldom talked—too much to do—
But sweetness, insight, wit and
leisure
Fall thick on him at seventy-two
He hands them on to me with plea-
sure.

The world belongs to young folks—yes,
Young folks of sixty years—God bless
'em!
How they would thrill to a caress,
If they had someone to caress 'em.
Their backs are bent, their locks are
gray,
Their lives were spent in toil for others
And in their stiffening work-worn clay
The fire of youth burns bright—or
smothers.

Spirit of youth! We often spend
Full three score years in looking for
thee,
And find thee near our journey's end,
A thing so fair we must adore thee.
The face of peace that never clouds.
The eyes of faith that cannot falter,

The hopes and plans that come in
crowds.
The lips of love that never alter.

I think “the heavy weight of years”
Is laid on those who haven't spent 'em
We can't hang on to toil and tears,
They just will fly—you can't prevent
'em.
Whenever I muse on misery
And trials I now no more shall go
through,
I feel that life's a smiling sea,
With not a blessed wave to row
through!

Talk of the twilight of old age!
Why, when life's sun is bright and shin-
ing.
How can you reach the twilight stage.
Unless your sky clouds with repining?
I've had some sunless days I own,
I knew what twilight meant at twenty
But now my unripe fears have flown,
The sunlight is so good and plenty.

I used to grieve on Christmas day.
And goodness! how I dreaded New
Year's!
It seemed so hard to have to say
I'd reached the age of thirty-two
years,
But now the days are smiles of God,
And she who has the greatest number
Has seen her griefs grow drowsy—nod—
Then slink to everlasting slumber.

Come Christmas! Come with all your joy,
And swell the stream of youth within
us;
Give strength to every dear old boy,
And show each old girl how to win us,
Lift all us grown-up little folks
Upon your massive jolly shoulder,
And make the subject of your jokes
The foolishness of growing older.
—Echelwyn Witherald.

INGLE NOOK

INGLE NOOK NEWS NOTES.

Sarah has a pattern for a dainty
cloak and hood for a little girl which
she offers to forward to any one need-
ing it.

A letter from Yorkton, dated Dec.
29, was addressed to the Fashion
Department, but as no name was
signed it is impossible to fill the
order. Will the writer kindly supply
the deficiency as speedily as pos-
sible?—D. D.

Among the pretty cards and calend-
ars that came to me at Christmas
time, was a calendar sent by one of
our members. It was all done by her
own skillful hands and was inscribed:
“The best of good things for Dame
Durden and the Ingle Nook for 1910”.

Several very helpful letters came
to me too late to be of any use be-
fore Christmas. Some of them re-
quired to have cuts made for illu-
strations before the directions could be
understood and the time was not
long enough for that. So I am go-
ing to hold these good suggestions;
the years are so short now that it
will not seem any time till we'll be
needing them again.

CAP, MUFLER AND MUFF.

This set made according to directions
is large enough for a child of three.
Muff and mufler need no alteration
for a five-year-old and the cap needs
only four extra stitches cast on for
the crown. The material required
are ten ounces of berlin, three quar-
ters of a yard of silk, and a yard and
a half of ribbon for the muff hanger.
Use bone needles, No. 7, and knit all
but the plain parts in the loop stitch,
which is made as follows: First row
knit plain; second row, slip the first
stitch, insert the needle in the next
stitch, put the wool over the point
of the needle away from you and
round the first finger of your left hand
twice, then put the wool over the
needle again and knit in the usual
manner, drawing all three threads
through. Knit the last stitch on the
needle plain; third row, knit plain,
drawing the three threads into one