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Over Evening

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

A MOTHER.

There came one day to join the angel throng
A woman, bowed through serving oft in
pain;

But as she meekly stood her form grew
strong,

And long lost youthful beauty dawned
again;

Yet more was given—for all, with wonder
fraught,

Bent low before the sweetness of her face,
Crying, "What marvel hath this woman
wrought.

To be thus clothed by such sweet, mighty
grace?"

Then one of seraph tongue made answer
low:

"One talent only hers—a faithful heart,
And she abroad but little could bestow,

So much was needed for her mother part.
And this with love she always made so fair

That there she was an angel unaware!"

Whether we look at doing good as a duty or a privilege, and it is both, it assumes equal importance. "As we have opportunity" means a great deal. It includes not only the special openings or possibilities of service, which attract us by their conspicuousness or novelty, but also those which the ordinary intercourse of everyday life affords from hour to hour. It means not merely benevolent or helpful actions, but wise and cheering words, and even that stimulating, encouraging spirit which shows itself in the look and manner and often benefits strangers with whom no words are exchanged.

"What we need," said a noted preacher, "is not more Christians, but a better brand." It would be better to say a better quality and more of them, for the Church can not gather in Christians of the highest and best quality. Its mission is to gather in and bring to Christ. Of course, we want a better brand, but we can not have such without Christian education and culture. The duty of the Christian minister, and those who sustain his work, is to bring sinners to Christ, and then build them up and strengthen them by instruction in righteousness. The best "brand" of Christians are made so by growth in grace and knowledge, which must come after conversion.

When the steamer Birkenhead, with a regiment of soldiers on board, struck upon a rock on the coast of Africa, it was thought from the moment of the first rasp and shock that it could not keep together many minutes and orders were given to fit the emergency. The roll of the drum called the soldiers to arms on the upper deck. It was promptly obeyed by all, though each one knew that it was his death summons. There they stood, drawn up in battle array, looking on while the boats were gotten out, first for the women and children, next for the other passengers—no boats left for them! There they stood, firm and calm, waiting a watery grave. . . The boats pulled off in safety, but on that solemn deck the soldiers still kept their ranks motionless and silent. Then down went the ship, and down with it went the heroes, shoulder to shoulder, firing a parting volley, and then sinking beneath the remorseless waters—type of spiritual soldiers doing their King's commands, and being "faithful unto death."

The sweet toned bell rings out sweetness, however gently or rudely it is struck, while the clanging gong can not be so touched as not to respond with a jangle. There is the same difference in people. From some you learn to expect always a snarl, or a whine, or a groan, while others give forth words of cheerfulness and joy. When the grace of God possesses mind and heart, you will respond with a sweet spirit to every touch, kind or unkind, rude or loving. You will be a voice for God, in whatever place or company you are thrown, a witness for charity and kindness and truth. "When a man lives with God," says Emerson, "his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn." Be a sweet-toned bell.



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