

had none with his method of prosecuting it. She called it 'pottering.' If he had only gone at it in a systematic manner, then he might have become a professor, and they would have all lived in a university town ('a centre of social and intellectual life,' said Miss Prudence), and the additional income would still have enabled them to maintain the Leasowes in the old style as a vacation retreat. Or if he had really achieved some great invention of discovery! Miss Prudence firmly believed that such things were easily the prey of sheer industry and determination; and if they were not, well, then, why did her brother not give popular lectures and write popular books? That only wanted spirit and energy, she would say, looking reproachfully at the shy, shrinking gentleman.

Agnes did not find her uncle as eager to display and explain experiments and projects, as her brothers had always been. And yet he seemed so pleased to see her when she came in that she was soon encouraged to tender some humble services in the matter of cover-glasses and instrument cleaning.

The quiet sage looked kindly at her over his spectacles.

'It's very good of you to think of that, my dear,' he said, 'and I'm sure I would be delighted at anything which would bring you in here regularly, but' (Agnes's heart sank) 'you know poor old Gray, who was our nurse, and who has been devoted to us all her life? Well, she does this sort of work for me. She's not fit for any household post now, and it's a great pleasure to her to be able to do something, for it's hard for one who has always been active to find that she is of no more use in the world. It was a very kindly thought of yours, but we must not take the poor old body's work from her, even if you could do it better, and that is hardly possible, for Gray is wonderfully neat-handed and careful.'

'Oh, uncle, of course I would not think of such a thing!' said the girl, with that pained tone in her voice which her aunts might have interpreted as 'touchiness' or 'pettishness.' How well her uncle, speaking in poor Gray's behalf, had stated her own case! Only was it easier to bear the sense of uselessness in youth than in age, and was it not far harder to plead its pangs and get them recognized? Still, though Agnes did not heed this then, she felt a new sympathy with the superannuation and the ever-growing limits of old age. If she could have noticed this, it might have helped her to realize why trials of such varied sorts are sent to each of us, and how poor and narrow our lives would be if unenriched by the experience and insight which are born of suffering.

Agnes made further efforts of the same sort. One day she found her aunt Prudence really flurried and overworked among a mass of accounts, correspondence, etc., connected with the various schemes with which she was engaged. Could she not do something to help? Agnes asked timidly. Could she not copy the figures to her aunt's dictation, or read them aloud for her to write down? Miss Prue was really rather worried, to which was due a sharpness in her answer—that 'Agnes could not do anything; it would take more time and trouble to show her what to do than to do it one's self.'

And so Agnes gave up, and began to feel thoroughly listless and discontented. She could not enjoy the walks and drives which had no other object than the maintenance of the health and strength which seemed

to her to be already superabundant for the outlets they found. It was a good thing that Agnes could not be content with such things. The only pity was that she could not be content to be dissatisfied—could not accept this as her present cross and its endurance as her present duty and discipline—assured that, in God's own time, work will find its way to the emptied hands that are kept upstretched and outstretched for it.

To some of us, alas! work never seems to come, but that is only because we are not watchful for small beginnings. We want to do some great thing. And that is not God's method.

Somehow, after her uncle's little plea for Nurse Gray, Agnes felt a gentle drawing of her heart towards the old woman, who had been such an important woman once, when her old mistress died and the faithful servant had had to mother the three little Meredith girls and their baby brother. And now she seemed of no importance at all, for she never arrogated any of the authority which she had had to lay down, but sat in the big cane chair by the open window in the back hall, with the stocking-basket beside her, and looked up with a bright smile at everybody who went by.

Agnes got in the habit of sitting down beside her. Nurse Gray could talk to her of her mother's girlhood. Then Agnes noticed that Nurse Gray, still deft with her fingers, took a long while threading her needles. Agnes threaded them for her while they sat together. Then Agnes got a packet of needles, and every morning she threaded enough to keep the old lady going for the day.

'Now, who would have thought of that?' said Nurse Gray, the first time she noticed the little attention. 'Eh, me, Miss Agnes dear, what a heap of little helps we can give each other, if we just take notice o' the little bits o' want that slip between people's fingers an' that the busy folk can't stop to pick up. I mind once reading an anecdote that fixed itself in my memory—about an old Frenchman at the gold-diggings, who, instead of pressing on after nuggets, washed the gold dust from the ground the other folks had turned over, and he died the richest of the lot in the end. There's a deal o' gleaning in the fields 'o God, if we're ready to pick up what's dropped instead o' running after what is being carried off.'

Agnes sought no more to find duties to do; she sought only for duties that were going undone. In a remote corner of the parish she found a little deaf and dumb girl whose parents could maintain her in comfort and so spurned all thought of an asylum, but who was growing up in heathen ignorance. Agnes set herself to learn the mutes' alphabet, and gave the little girl a daily lesson and a double one on Sunday. Agnes discovered a boy who was furtively drawing clever caricatures on slates and fences, and she started him in a severely disciplinary course of free-hand and 'black and white.' Agnes made friends with the strange, sullen, old couple who lived on the edge of the common, withdrawn from all their neighbors and never appearing in church. She made slow progress there. For months it meant only pausing to look over their hedge and express admiration of the prospect they must have from the seat by the door, ignoring the gruff curtness of their answers. Then all of a sudden there was a thaw, and when Agnes had a sharp touch of illness and was prayed for in church, the old woman came up with a tearful face and said a loud 'Amen.' And

Agnes's first walk was past that cottage, and she was invited in to rest, and in the course of a few visits heard a history of tragic struggle and disappointment and defeat which set the grim old couple in quite a new light, and taught her how to help them out of their half-involuntary retreat to once more mingle with their fellow-men.

Agnes read the books for the village libraries, which Aunt Prue was disposed to buy in batches, as recommended by their publishers' names or by some 'safe' review. As a consequence of her recommendation, the libraries got much more attractive and were made more use of. Aunt Prue noticed the change for the better, though she did not trace it to its origin.

Agnes steadily frequented her uncle's laboratory and watched Gray at her loving little services; and as her image grew into easy familiarity with the shy, half-defeated man, he began to confide in her some of his old ambitions and all his present disheartenment. He showed her what had been the grand scheme of his life—a philosophic deduction from certain careful observations he had made in a little-cultivated branch of science. A very confused and unattractive mass of manuscript it looked. He had sent it once to a popular scientist, who had returned it with a civil, evasive note, while an accident revealed he had never got beyond the third page. Two publishers had returned it without opening the packet. 'Thanks to my caution, Prue knew nothing of all this,' he said, with a boyish alarm, which was half comical, half pathetic in the middle-aged spectacled man. Agnes waded into that manuscript. She persuaded her uncle to explain what she could not understand, and then he re-wrote the misty paragraphs when she pronounced his explanations lucid. She could at least stand as a type of the ordinary stupid public, she said. It got into complete shape at last. It was sent to twenty publishers, one after another. Mr. Meredith's perseverance would have soon failed, but Agnes's did not. It was accepted at last. It was published. It made a 'furore' in the thinking world! But, what mattered very much more to poor Mr. Meredith, it made him the master of his own house, it won him the respect of his sister Prudence, a respect which worked retrospectively, for Prue was sure that she had always foreseen what her brother had in him and took credit to herself for her faith and her furtherance.

Agnes is not a girl now. She is a lovely, happy-looking woman of twenty-eight. Her brothers have all revisited their native land, and each of them has said that it is not every man who has a sister who never missed an outward mail for ten long years, and that sometimes even in the face of long silence or very brief communications on their side. When Martin and Leonard return to India she is to go too, yet not merely as their sister, but as the wife of the Bishop of Kurrumboola, who sought her out when he came to England because he wanted to see the woman whose unflinching letters had seemed to have so much influence in keeping her brothers straight and steady round many a sharp corner. It will not be work that Agnes need ever ask again but only strength and courage for the work which is given.

Her boy pupil, growing a famous artist now, has painted her portrait as he first remembers her—a quiet, grave girl, in mourning, with a simple muslin scarf crossed upon her breast and her soft hands lying lightly in her lap. It has been exhibited in one of the famous galleries, but it