

THE QUIET HOUR.

Your Mission.

If you have not gold and silver
Ever ready at command;
If you cannot, toward the needy,
Reach an ever open hand;
You can visit the afflicted,
O'er the erring you can weep;
You can be a true disciple,
Sitting at the Saviour's feet.

If you cannot, in the conflict,
Prove yourself a soldier true;
If, where the fire and smoke are thickest,
There's no work for you to do;
When the battle-field is silent,
You can go with careful tread,
You can bear away the wounded,
You can cover up the dead.

If you cannot, in the harvest,
Garner up the richest sheaves;
Many a grain, both ripe and golden,
Which the careless reaper leaves,
You can glean among the briars,
Growing rank against the wall,
For it may be that their shadow
Hides the heaviest wheat of all.

Do not, then, stand idly waiting
For some greater work to do;
Fortune is a lazy goddess,
She will never come to you,
Go and toil in any vineyard,
Do not fear to do or dare;
If you want a field of labour,
You can find it anywhere.

—Anon.

Finding One's Mission.

"God has a distinct plan for each one of us in sending us into the world. Not only does He create us all to be useful and glorify Him in some way, but He designs each person for some special place and some definite work. We are not sent into life merely to fill any niche into which we may chance to be lifted, or to do whatever bits of work may drift into our hands. God has a great plan, embracing all His creatures and all their actions; and in this plan each one has his allotted place. A true life is one in which we simply fulfil the Divine intention concerning us, occupy the place for which we were made, and do the particular work set down for us in God's plan. This thought gives to every life, even the smallest and obscurest, a sacred dignity and importance. Nothing can be trivial or common which the great God thinks about, plans, and creates. To have been thought about and then fashioned to fill any place is glory enough for the grandest and most inspiring life. The greatest thing any one can do in this world is what God made him to do, whether it be to rule a kingdom, to write a nation's songs, or to keep a little home clean and tidy. The true problem of life is not to "get on" or to "get up," not to be great or to do great things, but to be just what God meant us to be. If we fail in this, yet do other work which men call "great," our life will be a failure. An intensely practical question, therefore, is: How may we find this place for which God made us? It is very clear for one thing, that we must put ourselves under God's specific guidance. We get this lesson from Christ's perfect life. He did only and always His Father's will. Moment by moment He took His work from His Father's hand. He laid no plans of His own. If we then would find our mission, and do the work prepared for us, we must do God's will, not our own. All our personal ambitions must be laid at His feet, all our plans submitted to Him, either to be accepted and wrought into His plan or set aside for His better way. If we have truly given ourselves to God, we have nothing to say about the disposal of our lives, they are in His hands to do what He pleases with them. He may interrupt our favorite pursuits, or break into our plans with some other work, or even lay us aside for a time: we must always be ready to forego our schemes and plans, and take instead whatever He allots. Our time belongs to our Master, and He knows what He wants us to do any day. This is the hardest part—to give up our own way of doing good and accept God's way. When we are thus ready for direction, it will surely be sent. The bible is the great chart in which our journey is marked out; study it carefully and prayerfully. Then there is the voice of conscience which must be obeyed, as God's voice would be obeyed if heard by our outward ears. Opportunities also must be watched. God opens doors and closes doors. He brings us face to face with duties. People sometimes chafe and fret because, in their circumstances, they cannot do any great things; as if nothing could be really a divine mission unless it is something conspicuous. A mother, occupied with the care of her little children, laments that she has no time for any mission. Does she not know that caring well for them may be the grandest thing that could be found for her in all the range of possible duties? Certainly, for her hands, for the time at least, there is nothing else in all the world so great. That which the Master gives any one to do is always the grandest work she can find. Another thing to be remembered is that God does not map out a mission plainly at the beginning. When Saul accepted his new Master and asked what he should do, he got for an answer only that moment's duty. He was to "go into the city," there he would learn what must be done next. That is the way the Lord generally shows men what their mission is—just one step at a time, just one day's or one hour's work now, and then another and another as they go on.

"Talk not of talents. What hast thou to do?
Thy duty be thy portion: free or free,
Talk not of talents. Is thy duty done?
Thou hast sufficient, were they ten or one.
Lord! what my talents are I cannot tell,
Till Thou shalt give me grace to use them well.
That grace impart, the bliss will then be mine,
But all the power and all the glory Thine."
—From *Silent Times*.

Little Things.

Little words are the sweetest to hear; little charities fly farthest and stay longest on the wing; little lakes are the stillest; little hearts are the fullest, and little farms are the best tilled. Little books are the most read, and little songs are the dearest loved. And when nature would make anything especially rare and beautiful, she makes it little—little pearls, little diamonds, little dews. Agar's is a model prayer; but then it is a little one, and the burden of the petition is for but little. The Sermon on the Mount is little, but the last dedication discourse was an hour. Life is made up of littles; death is what remains of them all. Day is made up of little beams, and night is glorious with little stars.

Two Men.

Two men toiled side by side from sun to sun,
And both were poor;
Both sat with children when the day was done,
About their door.

One saw the beautiful in crimson cloud
And shining moon;
The other, with his head in sadness bowed,
Made night of noon.

One loved each tree and flower and singing bird
On mount or plain;
No music in the soul of one was stirred
By leaf or rain.

One saw the good in every fellow-man,
And hoped the best;
The other marvelled at his Master's plan
And doubt confessed.

One, having heaven above and heaven below,
Was satisfied;
The other, discontented, lived in woe,
And hopeless died.

—Boston Transcript.

The Touch of Christ.

It is only when you have passed through the furnace of temptation, wrestling with evil, sore beset, and victorious through the grace of Christ, that you are ready to be a helper to others in their temptation. It is only when you have known sorrow in some form yourself, and when you have been comforted by Divine grace, and helped to endure, that you are fitted to be a comforter to others in their sorrow. You must learn before you can teach—and the learning costs.

At no small price can we become true helpers of others in the world. Lessons which cost nothing are worth but little. Virtue went out of Jesus to heal others. Virtue must go out of us to become life and benediction to other souls.—[Dr. J. R. Miller.

FAMILY CIRCLE.

The Children.

A BACHELOR'S SONG. AIR: "THE BOWER."

I went home one night with a friend of mine
Who'd asked me to go to his house to dine.
He promised to give me a glass of wine,
And show me his boys and his girls, so fine,
And oh what beautiful youngsters they were!
And of the sort that I most prefer.
At least so I thought just before the din-ner,
That evening up town with my friend.
The children, the children, the things they did and the things they said;
The children, the children, I wished I had some of my own.

But after the dinner—oh woe and despair!
They sneaked up behind me and upset my chair;
They pulled off my collar and ruffled my hair;
They tossed my new beaver hat high in the air;
They trod on my toes and they ruined my shirt;
And when I objected they all became curt,
And gave me responses exceedingly pert.
That evening up town with my friend,
The children, the children, the tricks they played and the things they said;
The children, the children, I'll never go there any more.

Aunt Polly's Principles.

"I do wonder," said Miss Polly Whittlesea, suspending her knitting and sending an indignant gaze across the street, where a young lady, dressed in the cloudiest of white muslins and the bluest of blue ribbons, was being helped into a carriage by a young gentleman. "I do wonder what's the sense of a woman's getting married, making a slave of herself, when she might be comfortable and being dictated to by somebody in pantafoons! There's that Jenks' girl," indicating the young lady before mentioned. "She had everything she wanted at home, and her pa was worried if she scratched her little finger. She could dress as she liked, go where she liked, and do what she liked. And here she must up and marry that ridiculous snip of a clerk, who earns a thousand dollars a year. Of all the foolishness! A thousand dollars! I wonder where she'll get her ribbons and her cologne! It's a melancholy example of blindness and perversity, and I hope you girls will profit by it." But for Miss Polly's last remark the reader might have supposed she was alone in her shady parlor that afternoon. It would have been a mistake. Her niece Jane—a tall, demure-looking young lady of twenty-five—sat at the table near by, dotting an embroidery pattern. Her niece Mollie, a curly-headed damsel of seventeen years, sat in the open window, swinging the sprays of blossomy lilac abstractedly, and watching the couple who had excited Miss Whittlesea's indignation with envious eyes. It was a little, old-fashioned parlor, with a high, gilded looking-glass, a few quaint pictures, claw-footed chairs, spare curtains, and a great vase of syringa set on the mantel. Miss Polly, a woman of forty-five, looked quite as old-fashioned as the room, as she sat knitting vigorously in her starched cap and black-silk apron.

"I hope," continued Miss Polly, after waiting a reasonable time and receiving no response to her former remark, "I shall never see either of my nieces making a fool of herself."

"No, certainly, aunt," said Jane.
"Oh, no!" echoed Mollie, from the window.
"As I have always said I want to save you from the universal stumbling block of the sex, I want you to keep what health and happiness you have, and not slave yourself to death for other people."

"Yes," was the subdued response of the two listeners.
"I see you understand me. Why, Mollie there comes Mr. Wilkins home to supper, and there's no fire made! Run, child—oh, stop a minute—I forgot to say that I am going out to tea to-morrow night, Mr. Wilkins and I, to Mrs. Green's. She's been talking about having a tea-party for two years, and now it's coming off. It's a regular party. We're going at three and stay till nine."

Mollie whirled about suddenly in the doorway, and there was a peculiar expression in Jane's gray eyes as she raised them to her aunt's face.

"Shall you stay so late?" she asked.
"I mean to, if I'm well. I don't go merely to get my supper; I go for the sake of social intercourse. What are you waiting for, Mollie?"

"Nothing," responded that damsel, dancing on with sudden, light-heartedness. "Supper in fifteen minutes, auntie. I have explanations, so I will only say that Miss Polly was a maiden lady with a moderate fortune, living in the village of Belton. Jane and Mollie were orphan nieces whom she had educated, and whom she loved as if they were her own daughters. Like most maiden ladies, Miss Polly disapproved of matrimony, and she had striven, with apparent success, to impress her own opinions on the minds of her two charges. The Mr. Wilkins obscurely mentioned above was an elderly gentleman whom Miss Whittlesea was boarding for the summer, driven thereto by a scarcity of pocket-money. He was a tall, spare man, a widower, with stiff, gray hair, and a curiously puckered face, which wore a perpetual feeble smile. He always had most amazingly stiff shirt collars, and the squeakiest boots in the world, and his whole conversation was a prolonged meander among words—a hopeless search for terms that should sufficiently praise Miss Polly. Perhaps this was the reason that the latter endured him with such wonderful patience, and reproved Jane and Mollie very severely for laughing at his personal peculiarities."

If any one had been looking for Miss Jane Saunders immediately after breakfast the next morning, he would have found her in her chamber hastily scribbling a letter. Of course, we cannot make her correspondence public, so we will merely watch while she puts the letter in her pocket, dons a gray shawl and bonnet, and starts for the village, walking gravely and innocently, as if that pocket was empty. After doing one or two small errands, she goes into the post-office. Now we are on the look-out. The letter is directed to Mr. Lyman Ellis. The post-mistress smiles a little as she sees the name, and Jane turns away with flushed cheeks.

"She must have thought it a business letter," Jane soliloquizes perturbedly; "but, to be sure, she must have wondered why I didn't call at his office. I don't care what she thinks. Surely it is not wrong. Aunt will never know it, and I have so few chances to see him."

Nevertheless, Jane's conscience troubled her a little, and she walked more slowly than usual as she came near home. Mollie was on the gate, looking as pretty as the morning, ostensibly occupied in breaking dead branches off the rose bushes, with a reckless disregard for thorns.

"Why, where are your scissors and gloves?" inquired Jane.
"I don't want them," said Mollie, hastily. "I can work just as well this way. Isn't there a prayer meeting to-night?"

"Yes," replied her sister, feeling her cheeks grow hot again.
"You're going, I suppose?" questioned Mollie, becoming very busy with the rose bushes.

"I think so, if you're not afraid to stay here alone."
"No, indeed!" was the quick answer, delivered with unnecessary earnestness. "Don't think of staying on my account. Very well."

The instant Jane was out of sight, Mollie, after looking suspiciously at the front of the house, that looked back at her meekly with closed blinds and vacant doorway, and after peering down into the recesses of the garden on her right, called in suppressed tones to a tiny Irish child on the opposite side of the street, "Mick!"

"Yes, miss!"
"Going past Mr. Bent's store?"
"Yes, miss."
"Give this note to Mr. Hall—remember to Mr. Hall. If you'll be back in ten minutes, and won't tell anybody, I'll give you the biggest piece of cake! Will you?"

"Yes, miss."
And the small urchin was off in an instant.

Mollie listened to the patter of his bare feet with a very satisfied smile, then went on trimming the rose bushes demurely. Mick, having returned in precisely seven minutes, was duly rewarded with an immense bar of cake, duly cautioned never, never to tell, and dismissed well content. Then Mollie opened the note; for, of course, like all communications written by females, her note had required an answer.

It ran thus:
"DEAREST MOLLIE:
I will be with you to-night at precisely half past seven. I'm inclined to bless both the dragon and my stars."
"Tom."

At three o'clock that afternoon Miss Polly came into the parlor, where her nieces were sitting demurely, cutting bits of bright silk for patchwork. She wore a lace cap, tied with yellow ribbons, and a green silk dress. Let the reader be not shocked, for Miss Polly was fond of bright colors, and went to tea-parties but seldom.

"Be good children," she said, patronizingly, regarding herself in the glass with great complacency. "Don't sit up for me. I shall take a key, and we can let ourselves in. Does my dress look well, Jane?"

"Very well, aunt."
"What flowers shall I get for a bouquet? London pride is pretty, and sweet williams—don't you think so?"

"I think smaller flowers would be better. I'll go and cut you some," said Jane, dutifully.

"No, sit still. I hear Mr. Wilkins on the stairs. I'll pick some myself as I go out."

You might have heard Mr. Wilkins at the other end of the town, such amazingly stiff boots had he seen fit to assume on this occasion. It was quite a wonderful thing to watch him as he stood in the little path, awkwardly holding the bouquet of pinks and coreopsis that Miss Polly had given him, remarking every other minute that "the hum—the flowers were hum—excessively pretty," and finally offering his arm laboriously.

The two girls regarded this scene from the window, and turned away, without comment, only there was a good deal of wonder in Jane's eyes, and a good deal of fun in Mollie's. They sewed industriously the rest of the afternoon, scarcely one speaking to each other, until the clock struck five, and Jane went out to prepare tea.

"What a beautiful sunset!" said Mollie, as she rose from the table. "How long does the meeting last, Jane?"

"Until half-past eight; but I may not be home then, for I'm going to carry old Mrs. Dobbs some medicine. Don't sit up for me. You can leave the back door open, or I'll take the other key—the front one. I shall be back before auntie," she added, guiltily, seeing Mollie's surprised face.

"You'd better take the key. I think I'll go to bed early. Don't come into my room and disturb me, Jane. I never sleep well if I am waked."

As Mollie put the last dish comfortably away in the closet she heard the clock strike seven, and saw Jane passing out of the gate, basket in hand. She felt guilty. How good Jane was, and what a difference between them! Jane was going to do good, and attend a prayer meeting, and she was going to disobey her aunt, stay at home and see Tom. But, somehow Mollie thought the prospect was pleasant.