

Cheerfulness in the Home.

Louisa M. Alcott, after telling that her mother's motto was, "Hope, and keep busy," related a most touching little incident in their family history, one illustrating the perfect faith, love and thankfulness which characterized their lives. To a beautiful content with whatever might, in God's Providence, befall them, was added a sense of humor, an unfailing cheerfulness, which enabled them, in the words of the worthy Mrs. Wiggs, to believe "that the sun is a-shinin', even when the clouds is thick enough to cut." The incident was as follows:

"One snowy Saturday night, when our wood was very low, a poor child came to beg a little, as the baby was sick and the father on a spree with all his wages. My mother hesitated at first, as we also had a baby. Very cold weather was upon us, and a Sunday to be got through before wood could be had.

"My father said, 'Give half our stock, and trust to Providence; the weather will moderate, or wood will come.'

"My mother laughed, and answered in her cheery way, 'Well, their need is greater than ours, and if our half gives out, we can go to bed and tell stories.' So a generous half went to the poor neighbor, and a little later in the evening, while the storm still raged, and we were about to cover our fire to keep it, a knock came, and a farmer, who usually supplied us, appeared, saying, anxiously:

"I started for Boston with a load of wood, but it drifts so I want to get home. Wouldn't you like to have me drop the wood here? It would accommodate me, and you needn't hurry about paying for it."

"Yes," said father; and, as the man went off, he turned to mother with a look that much impressed us children with his gifts as a seer; 'Didn't I tell you wood would come

if the weather did not moderate?'

"To which the mother added, with laughing eyes, 'Yes. Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days it will come back buttered.'"

Amelia Barr puts this opinion in the mouth of one of her characters in "The Hallam Succession," and truly it is one of general application: "Ben Craven is good at home. You may measure a man by his home conduct; it's t'right place to draw t'line, you may depend on't." And of them both the wife says: "Neither Ben nor I are made of stuff that'll shrink in t' wetting, you can count on that, Miss Hallam."

Sometimes when a life seems to be narrowed down to household cares and anxieties, these assume an undue importance, the grinding of one's own little mill absorbing all the faculties, whereas it is good to get out into the "open," to climb to the rising ground and take in the fair

beauties and inspirations of a wider outlook. I read, somewhere, that, "Our own acts are our attending angels, in whose light or shadow we walk continually. . . . It is good sometimes to get above our own high-water mark, to live for an hour with our best ideas."

"We can't none of us help what traits we start out in life with," was another saying of Ben Craven's wife, "but we kin help what we end up with." The home that is full of good cheer, in spite of its many limitations, is the best recruiting ground for any country. The children which come forth from it will not be weak-kneed citizens, or nerveless pioneers, should they choose to strike out new paths for themselves. They are far more likely to be rejoicing Christians and helpful comrades, inasmuch as the keynote of their busy home lives had been cheerfulness, their atmosphere that of sunshine, and their outlook hope.

H. A. B.

Make Your Life Beautiful.

The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.—Isa. 35: 1.

"Give me this day, dear Lord," I cried,
"Some blessed station near Thy side!
Some work in very deed for Thee,
That I may know Thy need of me."
Thus pleading, praying, up and down
I wandered, searching field and town,
Intent on task, the very best
Eluding still my eager quest.

And morn to noonday brightened; night
Drew slowly toward the fading height,
Till I, low kneeling at the throne
With empty hands made weary moan.
"Thou hast not any room for me!
No work was mine, dear Christ, for
Thee!"

Then sudden on my blurring sight
Swept majesty and love and light—
The Master stood before me there
In conscious answer to my prayer!
He touched my eyes. In shame I blushed,
In shame my weak complaining hushed.
For lo! all day, the swift hours through,
The work, Christ-given, for me to do
In mine own house had slighted been.

And I, convicted so of sin,
Could only lift my look to His;
The grace of pardon ask for this:
That I had wandered far and wide,
Instead of watching at His side;
That I had yet to learn how sweet
The home tasks at the Master's feet.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

I wonder how many of our hard-working Canadian readers feel, sometimes at least, the desire to do great things with the wonderful life they have received as a sacred trust from God's hands. Am I wrong in thinking that you are all stirred with that feeling very often? Do you not often chafe against the restrictions of your scanty opportunities of reaching out into the great world, almost as a warhorse might grow restive if forced to drag a plow when he heard the sound of the bugle. There seems to be something in each of us which will not let us settle down unconcernedly to lead colorless lives. This desire is a great gift of God, and should be cultivated rather than repressed, educated rather than destroyed. No one wants to live a commonplace life, and God surely cannot wish any of His children to do that which is so contrary to their highest ideals and aspirations. But let us never make the mistake of thinking that our lives are outside of us, that the greatness or littleness of a life is a matter of circumstances. Of course, it is absurd to fancy that a man's life, which is so much a part of his personality—if it is not his personality itself—can be outside of him; and yet that very absurd notion is only too common. We hear people saying, or, if they don't say, they think: "I could do so much good if I



were only rich, or clever, or beautiful, or had that mysterious power of influencing others which has been called 'animal magnetism.' Or they may think they could help their fellows more if they only had time; but each day is so crowded with little, trifling duties that don't seem to accomplish anything lasting. They read of glorious deeds of heroism, and feel rather disappointed because no opportunity comes to them. They know that God's saints are standing nobly and patiently for Him in the fire of pain, or sorrow, or terrible temptation; but no severe testing comes their way. Their lives, like the lives of most of their neighbors, seem tame and insignificant. At a superficial glance one might think the lives of millions were factory-made, turned out by the thousand, all exactly alike. Of course, we know, as a matter of theory, that no two lives are exactly the same, even in outward circumstances, but they are similar enough to seem uninteresting if only looked at from the outside. Here and there we find men with "five talents,"—men of influence of various kinds; and there are also men here and there with "one talent,"—ignorant, destitute, or hopelessly stupid. If we have no right to class ourselves with the first, it is very unlikely that we shall care to rank ourselves with the last. If, as is most probable, we stand between these two classes, we must take our place as servants to whom the Master has committed "two talents"; for, in the well-known parable of the Talents, there is no mention of anything between two and five.

It is possible for the average person—for us—to satisfy the God-given desire to make this everyday life beautiful, grand and glorious, with the material God has placed in our hands. It is in our power to do a wonderful piece of gardening, to make the desert blossom as the rose.

Certainly there is nothing grand in sitting with folded hands, dreaming of the great things we should do if only we "had the chance." One day our Master will return, and we shall have to give account of the two talents He left with us, left to be used for Him. Then it will be useless to say that we wanted to do a great deal to show love and loyalty to Him, but that we had no opportunity. Such an excuse for spiritual sloth is a very flimsy one, even now, and those who try to take refuge behind it know all the time that it will not bear examination. You can make your life grand and beautiful wherever you may be, whatever are the talents God has placed in your hands. The beauty of a life does not lie in its circumstances at all. Jezebel was a queen, and the mother of our Lord was only a poor village maiden; yet the one stands for all time as a terrible warning of how unlovely a woman's life may be, while the world will always gaze in reverent admiration at the womanly beauty of the

second. Nero was an emperor, but that fact certainly did not make his cruel and cowardly life grand or glorious. Jesus of Nazareth was only a village workman, and yet He has inspired men and women ever since. We know all this, it is acknowledged by everyone, and yet, in spite of all our knowledge, there is too often the feeling in our hearts that a life spent in plowing or sowing, in milking cows or threshing grain, in cooking, sweeping, scrubbing, or washing dishes, cannot be grand or beautiful.

I only know one way of making it beautiful and soul-satisfying, and that way is so simple that any child can understand and practice it, and yet so infinite in its far-reaching possibilities that it needs all eternity to develop in. We all know this elixir of life—in theory—but theory can accomplish nothing unless it is transformed into action. It is grand to come to our Master continually and receive from His hand the talents He wants us to use. It is a glorious thought that the days are His, that the work is His, that He is helping us to do it, and—most wonderful thought of all—that we are allowed to help Him in His great work of perfecting mankind. The most influential missionaries in the world are the men, women and children who walk along with joyous faces uplifted to the Face of the King, doing the tasks He sets them gladly and faithfully, finding every little act of service a fresh delight because it is done for Him. It may be the giving a cup of cold water, or only the washing of the cup afterwards; it may be the pouring of precious ointment on His head, or only the commonplace act of filling water pots with water. Either, or both, it is all a joy, for the Master is always near, and each separate act of service is an opportunity of ministering to Him. Think what it would have been like to have had the high honor of working with Him in the carpenter's shop, to have been thrilled with an occasional touch of His hand as you held a board in position for Him. That high honor of being a fellow-worker with God may be yours every day if you will only take and treasure it. You may really, though spiritually, touch His hand as you take each separate duty from Him, you may walk always in the sunshine of His approval, your little acts of self-sacrifice are never overlooked or forgotten by Him. He is intensely interested in every one of your small battles against selfishness or crossness, and is very patient with your efforts to make your prayers real and earnest. He can see the love which makes your offerings worth accepting, though you know only too well how tarnished and stained with self-seeking and self-glorification they too often are. He is always helping the best that is in you to grow, encouraging that desire for holiness and reaching upward that, like the life of a plant, defies the power of gravitation to keep it down. The image

of God is in each child of man, and the soul is never commonplace, it is infinite in its longings and possibilities. Though we may be only average people, receiving, like millions of others, only two talents from our Master, the fact that we have received them from Him, and are directly responsible to Him for them, brings us into a special relation with Him, which redeems any life from the danger of being uninteresting. When we realize that Christ is deeply interested in our fight and work, we must become interested too.

It is a very strange kind of Christianity that is sometimes preached—the doctrine that a life consecrated to the service of Christ is hard and dreary, the doctrine that His servants have to wait for happiness until after death. No one who had really tried to serve Him wholeheartedly would dream of saying anything so untrue to fact. You have only to look into their faces to see for yourselves that they are anointed with the oil of gladness above their fellows. Of course, those who only give Him half their heart—attempting the impossible and heartbreaking task of serving two masters—find life hard and disappointing, and are almost ready to declare that it is not worth living. But the life of the average person is worth living—grandly worth living—each day is crowded with glorious opportunities of serving Christ through the men, women and children who are within our reach. I know a poor woman who is totally blind, and yet she seems to enjoy everything. I found her doing the family washing the other day, and she said she always ironed the plain things—and she seemed to think that such work was "having a real good time." Her life is beautiful, and so may yours be—and beautiful not only in God's sight. Though He alone may notice each separate act of love, though only He can look at the beauty of a soul which is a fitting temple for His dwelling place, yet men are very quick to know when anyone is walking with God in secret. The secret is revealed unconsciously in a joyous face, in gentle tones, in kindness to everybody. We certainly can make our lives beautiful—are we doing it?

"Master, to do great work for Thee, my hand
Is far too weak! Thou givest what
may suit,
Some little chips to cut with care
minute,
Or tint, or grave, or polish. Others
stand
Before their quarried marble, fair and
grand,
And make a life work of the grand design
Which Thou hast traced; or, many-
skilled, contrive
To build vast temples, gloriously
planned,
Yet take the tiny stones which I have
wrought
Just one by one, as they were given by
Thee.
Not knowing what came next in Thy
wise thought,
Let each stone by Thy master-hand of
grace
Form the mosaic as Thou wilt for me,
And in Thy Temple-pavement give it
place."

HOPE.