

EVERYDAY FAITHFULNESS.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.—St. Luke xvi.: 10.

O trifling tasks, so often done,
Yet ever to be done anew!
O cares that come with every sun,
Morn after morn, the long years
through!

We shrink beneath their paltry sway,
The irksome calls of every day,
The restless sense of restless power,
The tiresome round of little things,
Are hard to bear, as hour by hour
Its tedious iteration brings;
Who shall evade or who delay
The small demands of every day?

The boulder in the torrent's course,
By tide and tempest lashed in vain
Obeys the wave-whirled pebble's force
And yields its substance, grain by grain;
So crumble strongest lives away
Beneath the wear of every day.

We rise to meet a heavy blow:
Our souls a sudden bravery fills;
But we endure not always so
The drop-by-drop of little ills;
We feel our noblest powers decay
In feeble wars with everyday.

Ah, more than martyr's aureole,
And more than hero's heart of fire,
We need the humble strength of soul
Which daily toils and ills require;
Sweet Patience! grant us, if you may,
An added grace for every day!

After two years spent in experimental study of settlement work, I am now in the responsible position of Superintendent of a Settlement House, and in the rush of preparation for the winter's work—seeking for teachers, planning for classes, etc. And my two years' experience has taught me this practical lesson—that every day faithfulness is worth far more than charming personality or brilliant genius. Some people are as little to be relied upon as the seed sown in stony ground, where the soil was shallow, and results were quickly visible, speedily dying out when the dry season began. A bright, attractive girl may undertake a class of poor children, enthusiastically promising to teach them sewing, drawing or cooking. She may be delighted with the work at first, but in a few weeks—when the novelty wears off, and the children are dull or troublesome—she may seize on any trifling excuse as a reason for absenting herself from the class. Then the work is at a standstill, the superintendent is in despair, and the children's faith in their teacher is shattered. It is the same way in Sunday-school work. The other day I heard a Sunday-school superintendent say that he found he had made two conflicting engagements—the one with a man and the other with a boy—he always made a point of keeping the one with

the boy, as it always injures children to lose faith in their leaders.

I am blessed with several volunteer helpers who can always be depended on to appear at their posts, no matter what the weather may be. I know they will not disappoint their children unless it is absolutely impossible to attend the classes—and that is the kind of worker the world needs everywhere. Such people are not numerous but they are worth their weight in gold every time. And the greatest heights are always close beside us, ready to be scaled. Perhaps you are longing to do great things, or feel disappointed because you have not been endowed with genius or exceptional gifts of any kind. Well, the opportunity for doing great deeds is within your reach, for there is nothing in this world greater than everyday faithfulness—the faithful and cheerful doing of the tasks God has appointed, every day and every year, all one's life through. It is a grand and glorious thing, this simple doing one's duty. The Great Captain is watching each soldier in the army and always knows whether he is at his post and doing his appointed work. What does it matter whether the outside world is indifferent or appreciative? The heart of a true servant of Christ must rejoice if the master is pleased, and no reward can equal the simple commendation: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

He has given each some special work to do while He is absent from sight, and "blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find him so doing." Don't let us waste our time in idle dreaming about the grand and important work we should do if we had time or opportunity or money, when this greatest, grandest thing of all—the opportunity of doing to-day's duty in simple faithfulness to an unseen Master—is in our grasp. And why should we waste the work we are doing by allowing ourselves to be inspired by such low motives as love of praise, when we might make each moment beautiful if we always kept our thoughts true to the unseen God by the pure in heart.

"There are wonderful things we are going to do
Some other day;
And harbors we hope to drift into view,
Some other day.

With folded hands, and cars that trail
We watch and wait for a favoring gale
To fill the folds of an idle sail,
Some other day.

"We know we must toil if ever we win,
Some other day;
But we say to ourselves, there's time
to begin
Some other day;

And so, deferring, we loiter on,
Until at last we find withdrawn
The strength of the hope we lean upon,
Some other day."

A man in our great northwest once started to build himself a shack. One windy night the half-built structure came down with a crash. While the amateur carpenter was looking dolefully at the wreck one or two neighbors came up to condole with him.

"Well, are you sorry for me?" he asked.

"Yes," was the ready answer.
"Then if you are sorry for me, take a hammer and lend a hand."

That very practical appeal holds good everywhere. If you want to help in the great work of purifying and enlightening the world, don't waste time and energy in lamenting the fact that you can do very little, while the needs are so many and so great, but "lend a hand" at once and don't drop the hammer as soon as the work becomes hard or uninteresting. That is just the point where you can prove your faithfulness. Anyone can do interesting and easy tasks, but the Master's warm approval is won by those who work on faithfully until He gives the word to throw down the tools.

But faithfulness "does not mean useless self-martyrdom, it does not mean that we should work at the top speed" all the time. Such a foolish waste of life-material is rather "unfaithfulness." You know that God has given you certain duties each day, and, in order to do the daily duty thoroughly and joyously, you must keep yourself as far as possible, in good condition. If you wanted to reap your grain swiftly and easily, you would appreciate the advantage of having your reaper well oiled and in first-rate repair. And if we wish to be polished instruments in God's hands, in fit condition to be used by him wherever and however He may choose, we are bound to do our utmost to keep body, mind and spirit in an unstrained state. We are bound to take necessary time for food and recreation, so that all our bodily members may be strong to do His work. We are bound to take also mental food and exercise; for much of the work required of us is mind-work. And most important of all, we must—if we wish to give faithful service—take spiritual food and exercise; for the hardest, grandest work we are privileged to do is spiritual; and it is folly to attempt to give out, unless we have first taken in—and go on continually taking in. If we are "too busy" to pray or to study God's word, then we are slowly but surely weakening our souls and making them unfit for hard and faithful service. We are being unjust to our Master, stealing for earthly concerns the time that belongs to Him, and "he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." We must beware of being unfaithful in little things,—of borrowing trifles and forgetting to repay, of promising lightly and failing to fulfil the promise, of telling secrets which have been confidentially imparted, or neglecting, or doing in slovenly fashion, duties which only God is likely to take notice of. "Only God!" What a wonderful help and inspiration it is to know that God does take interest in every trivial thing we do or say! If all the world should praise, and God did not care, of what profit would our work be? Then we might echo the sad complaint of the Preacher:

"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."
Those who are working with and for

God can hardly echo such a pessimistic lament, for they know that no faithful service can ever be unnoticed or forgotten by their faithful and righteous Master. They can sow their good seed with unwearied hope and patience, day after day, knowing that "in due season they shall reap if they faint not." They know that plain every-day faithfulness can never fail to win the blessing and approval of their Lord, and that it will also—in the long run—win the favor of good men, a thing which is not to be despised.

And to work faithfully means that we will not shrink from service because it is, apparently, menial or beneath our dignity. Miss Horton says that "fishing for souls" may include digging the bait, carrying the tackle and rowing the boat. If our Master did not consider it beneath His dignity to stoop down and wash the travel-stained feet of His servants, then we need not consider any useful work beneath us, if it can help the spread of His kingdom. As a bright-faced ex-nurse said to me yesterday, when I asked her if she would visit some of our neighbors in their tenement homes: "Yes, I will do anything you like. I will take a scrubbing brush along and scrub the floors, if you think it would be any help." Such scrubbing done for love's sake, is surely as sacred a thing as the work of a missionary.

To work faithfully everyday in God's sight, keep the spirit steady in all kinds of weather. When everything goes well, and friends heap praise upon you for the work you are doing, the remembrance that you are only an instrument in God's hand and that He is doing the work—as He can do it with you, or without you—keeps the spirit sweet and humble and prevents vainglorious elation. Then when everything goes wrong, when all your work and all your prayers seem to bring no result worth mentioning, the remembrance that God is your faithful and all-mighty co-laborer enables you to go on steadily and cheerily, in the sure and certain knowledge that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Outward and visible success is a comparatively unimportant matter—though, of course, we all like to succeed—but steadfast faithfulness in present duty is the one important thing for us to strive after. What a wonderful thought it is that this quiet faithfulness can give real joy to the Great God of all the earth. No one is too obscure to give him this joy, no one is so great or famous that he can rise to a greater pinnacle of glory or gladness. We are all on a level in God's sight, unless by hard fighting we have reached a higher place than another. And never be afraid that God may overlook you and forget to give you the opportunity you are fitted for. Keep yourself as a polished instrument, in good condition for service, perfecting all your powers faithfully; and He will use you when He needs you: "The required instrument is never left to rust."

"Beautiful hands are those that do
Work that is earnest, and brave, and true,
Moment by moment the long day
through.

"Beautiful feet are those that go
On kindly ministries to and fro—
Down lowliest ways, if God wills so.

"Beautiful shoulders are those that bear
Heavy burdens of homely care
With patient grace and daily prayer.

"Beautiful lives are those that bless—
Silent rivers of happiness,
Whose hidden fountains but few may
guess." Hope.

A traveller putting up at a small hotel out in California brought the porter up to his room with his a gry storming.

"Want your room changed, sir? What is the matter?"

"The room's all right," fumed the guest, scorchingly. "It's the fleas I object to, that's all."

"Mrs. Hawkins!" shouted the porter, in an uninterested sort of voice, "the gent in No. 7 is satisfied with his rooms, but he wants the fleas changed."—*Harper's Weekly.*

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