

Constant Good Company.

The most charming companion I ever met was a plain little woman, whose life for years had been entirely given up to the care of an invalid demented father, an old man who demanded her constant presence in his darkened room during his waking hours, in the few spare moments she had while going through the usual routine of household duties.

Poor, living in the backwoods, where she never saw any society, she gained a depth of mind and a power of expression far superior to many of her old schoolmates, who had shown greater promise, and had possessed every advantage. Indeed, she was neither 'smart' nor particularly studious at school, but excessively fond of fun, excitement and company.

One day I asked her the secret of the change.

She laughed. 'I have been enjoying constant, pleasant company for the last few years.'

I stared, mystified. She drew from her pocket a little quotation book, and, pointing to two quotations, 'My own thoughts are my companions,' and, 'They are never alone that are accompanied with noble thoughts.' There were several other quotations written on the margin, and the pages were well thumbed.

She said, earnestly, 'Looking back over my girlhood, I know that there is a fatal defect in the training of our girls; our words, our actions, receive attention; we are given advice and instruction in every point but in our thinking. I did not even have a conception of entertaining myself by my own thoughts; I wanted all the time to be amused by something or somebody outside of myself. Then came that plunge into poverty, sadness, and loneliness; at first I believed I should become insane, then God must have directed me to this little book, too worthless to be sold when our library went. One other quotation chained my mind, "Our thoughts are heard in heaven," and I began recalling my thoughts. How disgusted I was with them! Round and round in a weary rut of repining they had travelled, or, even if not repining, how stupid, how un-elevating they had been! From that hour I determined my thoughts should be inspiring companions. When sewing up a seam they should not be, "So long and tiresome, wonder how long before I am done," and so on, over and over again. Why, I would take a little trip while sewing that seam!

'When washing the dishes I discuss with myself different national questions; when I am picking beans I decide whether optimism or pessimism is winning the day; sweeping the room I review the last book I read, or perhaps a book read years ago; every duty not requiring concentration is enlivened in this way.

'Not more than an hour can I ever read a day. Our books scarcely number a dozen, but since I began to think, one verse of the Bible will unfold and unfold, until it blossoms into a wonder-revelation, and I hope bears fruit. Before, I did not take time to wait for the unfolding and fruit-bearing.'

'But I can't control my thoughts,' I objected; 'they will dwell on any trouble or worry I have.'

'Paul tells us that in our warfare our weapons are "mighty to cast down our imagination"; "bringing into captivity every thought"; that promise is a great help when I feel despairing over my wrong thoughts. To keep down the disagreeable ones, to shake myself free from the servitude of daily fretting tasks, I drill myself thoroughly and constantly into meditating on pleasant subjects, just as I would drill my tongue in company to make pleasant speeches.

'Tell the girls you teach and write to how

true it is that "The pleasantest things in the world are pleasant thoughts, and the great art in life is to have as many as possible," also that this art cannot be learned when the feebleness of age has weakened the control of the mind.'

When she had left me, I remembered she was the only person who had not made inane remarks about the weather. Do you suppose it was because thoughts had occupied her mind, not empty turning of the mental wheels?

If the mill grinds not grist, it will grind itself; if the mind feeds not on thoughts, it preys upon itself, and it is its own destroyer. —'Christian Work.'

A Quarrel and Its Ending

(Nellie A. Vanderpool, in the 'Standard.')

'Well, isn't this considerable of a storm for you to venture out in, father?' said Raymond Searle as he met his father at the door of their comfortable cottage near the heart of one of our large cities.

'It is rather stormy,' assented his father, 'but I miss my walk so much if I do not go out, that I decided to venture for a short distance at least.'

'After all,' said his son as he helped him remove his overcoat, 'I do not know but what you can battle with the storms better than many younger men,' and he glanced admiringly at his father's stalwart form.

Louis Searle, although past seventy years of age, had not retired from an active business life until some few months past, when he relinquished to others the prosperous business which he built up and now lived a quiet, and peaceful life at the home of his only son, who had been married for several years.

The son had inherited the fine physique of the father, and the two were a picture of health and sturdiness as they entered the dining-room just as the noonday meal was announced.

Helen, Raymond's wife, was giving the final touches to the daintily set table and the father noticed that instead of coming to greet Raymond with a loving smile as she usually did, she gave no attention to their entrance, although the father's keen eyes noted a half-defiant expression on the partly averted face. He also noticed the cold, indifferent face of his son and sighed as he sat down in his accustomed place.

'They have had another misunderstanding,' he thought, 'and both are too proud to take the first step toward reconciliation. If they could only'—but here his thoughts were interrupted by a remark made by Raymond about something which had occurred during the forenoon.

Helen did not speak during the meal, and it was with an air of relief that the three arose at the close of the repast and separated, Mr. Searle noticing that Raymond left for his office without the customary good-bye kiss.

That afternoon Louis Searle sat for a long time before the fire in his own room. In his hands he held a picture, which, to all appearances, had been taken many years before. But faded though it was, the pictured face was still winsome and sweet and gave evidence that its owner must have been possessed of much beauty. After looking earnestly for some time at the likeness the old man buried his face in his hands and wept. At last he arose, saying to himself, 'I must tell him and I will before I go to rest to-night,' and he laid the picture carefully away before he responded to the bell for tea.

Tea was partaken of in much the same manner as dinner had been, and when the father and son rose from the table the older man

said quietly, 'Have you a little spare time this evening, my son? I would like to have a talk with you.'

Raymond gave a hearty answer in the affirmative, for there was nothing he enjoyed more than a quiet chat with his father, for whom he felt a deep love and respect.

'What is our talk to be about to-night?' he asked laughingly as he entered his father's room a little later; 'I remember the last evening chat we had was about my youthful mis-demeanors and the various means you resorted to to teach me to walk in the straight and narrow way.'

The father smiled quietly and they talked about matters of business for some time, for although Mr. Searle took no active part in business affairs, he was still interested in them.

Finally, after a short pause in their conversation, the older man said: 'We have always, my son, seemed to have a deeper affection for each other than most fathers and sons, and I trust you will pardon me if I talk for a short time on a subject which you may think concerns you and your wife alone.'

The son glanced up in surprise and said, 'Certainly, father; say what you wish.'

'I cannot help but notice, being in your own home as I am, that you and Helen often have, we will not say quarrels, but misunderstandings, which are anything but pleasant for either one of you. Yes, I know,' he continued, as he noticed a slight frown on the young man's face, 'that you love each other dearly, and think that you are capable of attending to your own affairs. I do not propose to correct or even advise you, but there is a story of my youth I have never told to human ears I wish to relate to you this evening.'

The son leaned back in his chair, giving a gesture of assent, and the father continued:

'I have often noticed that even when husband and wife cherish a profound respect and affection for each other these little jars occur more or less frequently and are thought but little of after they are over. Indeed, I have often heard it said that lovers' quarrels are worth while because the reconciliation is so sweet. After the experience that I have had I dread to think of those who love each other having these unpleasant times, because—' and here the old man's voice faltered, 'how do they know that there will be a chance to make all pleasant again?'

'You know well,' he resumed, 'that your mother lived but a few months after your birth. We had been married but two short years. We were married for the only reason that the marriage ceremony should ever take place—because we loved each other with a deep and sacred love. Those two years were the happiest I had ever known. But you are also married happily, so I need not dwell on that. I used to wonder sometimes if such happiness could last. I little thought what a sad ending it was to have,' and a look of intense pain appeared on the speaker's face.

'For all that we loved each other sincerely we had once in a while a few unpleasant words. We both worked hard and once in a while after business affairs had gone wrong or after she had done a hard day's work we would be nervous and irritable and would say things for which we would both be sorry a short time afterwards.

'Your mother, I believe, had the sharpest tongue, but she was nearly always the first one to sue for peace, whether she was the most to blame or not. These times were not frequent, and we always said after one had occurred that we would never be so foolish again.

'One night I came home to supper pretty well