

"Can you guess why the work is so badly done, Esther, dear?" and the elder woman's hand was laid gently upon the bowed head before her.

Another pause; and then all Esther said was the one word—"Why?"

"Because, my child—and it's no use to try to hide it from you any longer—you're aunt is getting old, and her sight isn't what it used to be. In fact, Esther, I—I am getting blind!"

The girl started up, and threw her arms impulsively round the other's neck.

"Oh, auntie, surely, surely it cannot be true!"

"It is, my darling, I'm afraid, too true!"

"But perhaps it may get better again. Perhaps, if you were to go to some doctor, he might be able to do you some good. You haven't tried that yet."

"Yes, I have, dear. I've been to Dr. Middleton, who is considered so clever with the eyes. I went at the time he sees people free; and he looked at me, and said he feared there was no hope."

"You never told me, said Esther, in tones of gentle reproach.

"No, dear, I didn't tell you, because I couldn't bear to bring any fresh cares upon your shoulders, and so I thought I would wait until I was quite sure. I tried to hide it from you, for I thought that as long as ever I could you should go on in ignorance of the trouble coming upon us. But now, Esther, I can't keep it from you any longer."

(To be Continued.)

PRACTICAL KINDNESS.

One of the most beautiful and practical instances of real kindness I ever saw came to me in this wise: I had gone into my butcher's shop one Saturday night, and was waiting for my steak. While doing so, a man, black with the toil and dust of machinery, came in. He was old and homely, and meanly dressed, and I never should have looked upon him as a divine agent of consolation had not a little girl come in and revealed him to me.

"How's father to-day, Polly?" he asked.

"He's worse to-day, and mother's down, too," and the weary little thing began crying softly to herself. Then the man stooped and said something in a low voice, to which she only shook her head and cried more bitterly. So he took the basket from her, saying: "Run away home, Polly, or that baby, she'll be in mischief. I'll bring the basket." She offered him twenty-five cents, but he hurried her away and would not touch it. Then he choose some good beef, a piece of bacon, and plenty of vegetables, and having paid for them, walked off toward a large tenement house in sight.

I gave him silent reverence as he passed me, for I knew him then as one of God's messengers, unconsciously, but oh! how blessedly, taking a share in the ministry of angels!

Opportunities like these are constantly thrown in our way by the angel who watcheth for our souls; but "if a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?'"—Mrs. Barr, in Christian at Work.

The Scripture gives four names to Christians, taken from the four cardinal graces so essential to man's salvation: Saints, for their holiness; believers, for their faith; brethren, for their love; disciples, for their knowledge.

"JERUSALEM THE GOLDEN."

Jerusalem the golden!
I languish for one gleam
Of all the glory folden
In distance and in dream!
My thoughts, like palms in exile,
Climb up to look and pray
For a glimpse of that dear country
That lies so far away.

Jerusalem the golden!
Methinks each flower that blows,
And every bird a-singing
Some secret of thee knows.
I know not what the flowers
Can feel, or singers see,
But all these summer raptures
Are prophecies of thee.

Jerusalem the golden!
When sun sets in the west,
It seems thy gate of glory,
Thou City of the Blest!
And midnight's starry torches,
Through intermediate gloom,
Are waving with their welcome
To thy eternal home.

Jerusalem the golden!
Where loftily they sing
O'er pain and sorrows olden
Forever triumphing!
Lowly may be thy portal,
And dark may be the door,
The mansion is immortal—
God's palace for His poor.

Jerusalem the golden!
There all our birds that flew,
Our flowers but half unfolden,
Our pearls that turn to dew,
And all the glad life music,
Now heard no longer here,
Shall come again to greet us
As we are drawing near.

Jerusalem the golden!
I toil on, day by day;
Heart sore each night with longing
I stretch my hands and pray,
That, mid thy leaves of healing,
My soul may find her nest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling—
The weary are at rest.

IDLE WORDS.

A Christian should be on the watch that in the daily discourse of life, and in its hours of relaxation, all do not run to waste and emptiness, but that there be ever a mixture of words wherewith one may edify another, and of sound speech that cannot be condemned. It is well to go into society with a collected frame, and a mental prayer that God would keep the door of our lips.

It may be thought that undue importance is given to our words. A word! what is it? A mere breath of utterance often without much of thought or deliberate purpose! why should it be laid up against us, and our eternal judgment rest upon it? Because it is not the light thing that is supposed. Words indicate our own character, and they help to form the character of others. We judge our fellow-men by their words, why should not God do the same? If one is habitually frothy and trifling in conversation, we would not entrust any very grave business to him; we say, "He may be capable, but I don't like his talk." And so of a swearer or foul-mouthed person; and, on the other hand, of one who speaks judiciously and to the purpose. We refuse or choose them by their words, and a single word has often let us into the character of a man so that we think we cannot be mistaken in him, and employ or reject him for nothing else. Very likely we are often mistaken in such judgments, but it is one of the means we have of estimating character, and all use it. God never errs in judging, and why should He not use the same means?

Words are the index of thoughts. There can be little danger of mistake in saying that a man who swears is not religious, that the whole tone of speech in another indicates true piety.

And, besides, words tend to form character. They have their influence for good or for evil. See that young man pouring into the ears of a companion something that he ought not to hear; will it not leave its bad effects? Or the boy who, amid a group of boys, takes God's name in vain, will he not have admirers and imitators? Or the slanderer, does he not smite and blight with his tongue? What would it be there that rankles more than some evil word that has been uttered against us? Or what grieves us more than some we have spoken?—If we could have the privilege of taking back all that we have ever said amiss, who would not eagerly catch at the offer? But they are gone to judgment beyond our recall, and by them we are to be justified or condemned by the God who has not forgotten one of them. Millions have gone forth from our lips since the days of our infancy, and who can bear the trial of them?

The text of Scripture, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," is one that makes us feel instantly that we cannot be saved by our own merits. Who would think of going to judgment on his own righteousness, when his own words condemn him? We have verily sinned in thought, word, and deed, against the Divine Majesty, and have need to pray God for Christ's sake to forgive us our sins. May He also make us more watchful over our words, that nothing proceed out of our mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."—Rev. W. H. Lewis, D.D., in Churchman.

AN honest peasant surprised an infidel one day, who was jeering at him for believing in the Bible, by the reply, "We country people like two strings to our bow." "What do you mean?" inquired the infidel. "Only this," rejoined the poor man: "That believing the Bible, and acting up to it, is like having two strings to one's bow; for if it is not true, I shall be a better man for living according to it, and so it will be for my good in this life—that is one string to my bow. And, if it should be true, it will be better for me in the next life—that is another string, and a pretty strong one it is. But, sir, if you do not believe the Bible, and, on that account, do not live as it requires, you have not one string to your bow. And, oh, sir, if its tremendous threatenings prove true—oh, think what then will become of you!"

No man will promptly develop as a Christian who lives in a state of quarrel. In enmity against God, he is, of course, not a Christian at all; but reconciled to him he must remain a dwarf, unless he secures peace with those around him. Fighting the brethren, fighting angrily in behalf of reform, contending with bitter words for even the best doctrine, he will stunt the growth of a doctrine life within him. Even fighting against sin is not to be done in a quarrelsome way, but in a spirit of honoring God, while abhorring the sin and pitying the sinner. We are to conduct a warfare, but our fight is to be a "good" one, which means that it is to be directed against wrong, and in favor of right, and also that it is to be waged so that in the darkest day of defeat we may be able to say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."