

Choice Literature.

JEAN'S OPPORTUNITIES.

The afternoon sun of an April day was shining in through the windows of a cheery-looking sitting-room, penetrating the remotest corners, and beaming upon the head of a young woman who sat at one of the windows, engaged in the homely task of darning stockings. Her face formed a strong contrast to the brightness which surrounded her, for it wore a look of gloom. If it was an index to her thoughts, they were disagreeable indeed. The shadow was not occasioned by her occupation, for Jean Cranston was not indolent, and, in fact, rather liked darning, and prided herself upon the neat work she could execute, but on this particular afternoon of which I write, the demon of discontent had her in his clutches, and was doing his best to make her miserable.

She was thinking of the past, and contrasting it with the present, greatly, of course, to the disadvantage of the latter. Visions of her old home came before her, that dear old place, where every one had obeyed one scriptural injunction at least, that of using hospitality without grudging, for it had been a veritable open house, too much so, indeed, to enable the owners of it ever to become rich in anything but friends. And now that dear old home was broken up, the family scattered, the father and mother in their eternal home, and Jean the only one left in their native city. She made one of the family in the house of her aunt, a good woman, who did all in her power to make Jean comfortable, and was as kind to her as possible.

But this afternoon she was not happy. She was longing intensely for the "glorious privilege of being independent." That care for the future, against which we are so specially cautioned, was causing her uneasiness, for Jean's means were very limited, indeed she needed to look at both sides of a dime even before she spent it. This scarcity of money did seem so irksome. She thought if she only had a home of her own, and plenty of money, how happy she would be, and how much good she would do in the world. She would contribute so well to the missions and the Church, and look out all the poor people who were really in want and be a sort of Lady Bountiful to them. And the strangers who came to the Church, she would invite them and give them a chance of becoming acquainted. How delightful the imagination—but alas! what a downfall did the reality present. Crippled as her resources were, she felt that there was no avenue of religious work open to her, for what could one do without money, that indispensable factor in all good work? She had forgotten that God does not look for impossibilities, and the money value of a gift to Him is not of so much consequence as the spirit which prompts the offering. He has said a cup of cold water shall not lose its reward. However, this did not occur to her, and after an hour's vain fretting she resolved to see what a walk would do towards raising her spirits, so, having donned her outside garments, she sallied forth.

She had not gone far when she saw a lady approaching her who had but lately come to the city, and who sat so near them in church that they had become acquainted. "Ah, thought Jean, 'if I only had a home now I would ask her to tea some day.'" As the lady came near she half paused, and Jean, seeing this, stopped too, and a little conversation took place, which ended by the lady saying, "I do wish you would come and see me in an informal manner. I know so few people here, and have always been accustomed to having a number of sisters in the house with me, and you cannot imagine how much I miss them, and how lonely I am at times, for my husband is late in getting home from his business. It would be a genuine blessing if you would drop in and see me once in a while." Jean heartily promised that she would come soon and often. After parting with her friend she thought over the little episode, and, roused from her moody reflections, she went home in quite a cheerful frame of mind.

Was it by chance, I wonder, that Jean's evening Scripture reading included the sixth chapter of Galatians, and that the verse which attracted her attention and haunted her waking hours was the one beginning: "As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all? I think it was no chance, but rather the leading of the Holy Spirit, who chose this way of teaching her that our responsibility is only measured by our opportunity. "As we have opportunity," thought Jean, "mine are limited enough, yet with God's help I will look for them and see if, after all, an insignificant being like myself may not have a work in the world."

In thinking over the events of the day, the meeting with her friend recurred to her, and, like a flash, passed through her mind the words of Christ, "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in." "Dear me," thought Jean, "can a visit and a little attention to a stranger really be made works of service? Can these little commonplace duties be regarded as work for the Master?" She was dimly realizing the truth of Keble's lines:—

If in our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still of countless price
God will provide for sacrifice.

It often happens that when in the cold glare of the morning light we review our thoughts of the evening before, we are apt to look upon these as having been too enthusiastic, and, in place of working ourselves up to them, we let these, our best impulses, pass away. Not so with Jean. She woke and dressed with a full determination that with God's help she would turn every little circumstance of the day to good account, and, not only this, but be on the outlook for chances of doing good. She earnestly asked the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and after a farewell look at the verse which had so inspired her, she descended the stairs to the dining-room.

She had not long to wait for her message, for as she came into the dining-room her uncle said: "By the way, Jean, Mr. Thomson was telling me last night that he had been re-arranging his missionary districts, and he needs that he needs two more collectors for this one, and he wanted to know if you and Miss Keith would undertake the work. I told him I thought you would do it, so he has sent the book, with the list of people, with their addresses, on whom you must call."

"Missionary collecting of all things, thought Jean. 'I never did it of course, but I know I shall hate it. Fancy going to a lot of people you don't know, and asking them for money. Everybody says they treat you as if you were asking

it for yourself. But," she thought again, "perhaps this is my special work. God knows I have not much money to give, so perhaps He wants me to make a present of my time. Surely I can do this for Him." So she cheerfully said: "Very well, uncle, I think I can answer for Miss Keith, and you may tell Mr. Thomson we will do it to-day if possible."

It was with a feeling of dismay that Jean beheld her own name in the list among those who were expected to contribute to the missions. Hitherto she had been included in her uncle's giving, but evidently the new treasurer was going to impress them with a sense of individual responsibility. How she was going to spare anything she did not see. She thought of Christ Himself being so poor, and yet when He wanted money He sent Peter to get it out of the fish's mouth. She could not do that. Then she thought of the widow of Zarephath, who gave nearly her last morsel to sustain the prophet, and how signally she was blessed. And the widow with the mites went even further than that and cast in all her living, and Christ commended her. "Well," said Jean, "I wish I had more of the spirit of these women, and the only way to get it I suppose is by cultivation, so I will sign myself for 10 cents a month," and with a relieved air she closed the book.

During the morning Jean interviewed Miss Keith, and found her ready and willing for the work, and they agreed to set out early in the afternoon.

Afternoon came and the much-dreaded collecting. But certainly Jean was doomed to disappointment in one respect. They met with nothing but kindness in their rounds, and she was surprised at the willingness with which many gave. To be sure the sums were not large, but then neither were the incomes of those who contributed. Miss Keith, too, seemed to have such a happy faculty of drawing out the best in others. And what a different colouring it gave to life to see the home lives of others. If she had met these people year after year in church, she would not have known as much about them as that one afternoon revealed. Somehow, whether it was Miss Keith's sympathetic manner or what, that drew them out, Jean found herself listening to many different tales. In one house where lived a widow they heard how she had come to the city some twelve years before so poor that she had nothing, how her boys, then young, had taken the first work they could get, and worked for her. She told how now they had this good home and comfortable furniture and even a piano for her one daughter, and how proud she was to think her sons had all grown up good, steady young men. Then they called on one old woman who was so afflicted with rheumatism that she could walk only with great difficulty. But instead of repining she seemed to be always thinking of her mercies. Then they came to a poor young wife who was struggling along with a little sick baby,—and I could not tell you all they saw, but Jean found herself at the end of the afternoon with a more wide awake interest in others than she had known before, and was heartily glad of having been appointed to her duties.

Thus ended Jean's first day of active service, but it was not the last. For she found both her activity and usefulness grow by putting forth the effort. It was surprising to herself how many opportunities came to her. No great work to be sure—in the eyes of the world—but who can measure the value of sympathy, and this was what Jean's great talent proved to be. It is not every one who possesses the happy faculty of rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep, yet this was her gift. And when at times she felt weary in well-doing she seemed to hear the encouraging voice of the Master saying: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

TRUST.

"The same old baffling questions:—O my friend I cannot answer them. In vain I send My soul into the dark, there never burn The lamps of science, nor the natural light, Of Reason's sun and star: I cannot learn Their great and solemn meaning, nor discern The awful secrets of the eyes which turn Evermore on us through the day and night With silent challenge and a dumb demand.

Proffering the riddles of the dread unknown,
Like the calm Sphinxes, with their eyes of stone,
Questioning the centuries from their veils of sand!
I have no answer for myself or thee,
Save that I learned beside my mother's knee;
"All is of God that is, and is to be;
And God is good." Let this suffice us still,
Resting in childlike trust upon His will
Who moves to His great ends unthwarted by thee.

—John G. Whittier.

THE MEYERBEER CENTENARY.

An article published by the Hamburg *Fremdenblatt* under the title: "Two Prophecies, a Reminiscence on the Occasion of Meyerbeer's Centenary," relates two interesting anecdotes with regard to the great composer. They both refer to Meyerbeer's opera of "Robert the Devil." One of the anecdotes speaks of a visit paid by the *maestro* to Mme. Lenormand, the fortune-teller. Being first asked by her to throw dice, he did so, and the throw resulted in three sixes turning up. She exclaimed "A great success—ay, the greatest success." Meyerbeer then shuffled several times a pack of cards, which Madame afterwards raked with her wand. Finally she said to him: "You are a great artist, you have in hand a great undertaking created by you with the help of God, and for the world's delight. It will be crowned with great success and bring you glory and prestige, but"—and then she turned up a plain black card, "You have sold yourself to the devil, and he will be victorious." Overjoyed at this prophecy, which he of course interpreted as having reference to his opera, the composer was hurrying through the Champs

Elysées when he nearly upset a tall man who stopped him with an exclamation of recognition. Meyerbeer shook hands warmly. "My dear Rossini," he said, "my head is so full, you know; the day after to-morrow is the *première* of my piece." "Ah! of 'Robert the Devil,'" retorted Rossini. "They say you have already got the opera on thirty street organs to make it popular before its production. Is that piece of Jesuitism really true?" Meyerbeer, somewhat embarrassed, replied that he had to fight against stubborn animosity to his opera, and that the end justified the means. Before Rossini could answer, a barrel organ near by began playing Meyerbeer was delighted to see Rossini obviously fascinated by the tune, which was no other than the air of "Robert toi que j'aime." "What is this, and by whom?" ejaculated Rossini. Meyerbeer's eyes sparkled as he triumphantly declared it to be an air from the new opera. Rossini embraced him in the street, saying: "Meyerbeer, you have conquered me, and if your opera had no further brilliant pieces, this air would secure its victory. That is my prophecy." Both prophecies proved true, and the opera was a splendid success when performed for the first time two days later, on November 22, 1831, at the Grand Opéra in Paris.—*The Times*.

SIR BOYLE ROCHE.

The mention of the name of Sir Boyle Roche will at once bring to mind the Irish bull, for no other man has coined more bulls than the renowned Sir Boyle, and possibly none other has kept the House in such perpetual roars of laughter at his follies. He held the office of Gentleman Usher at the Irish Court, and discharged his duties to the satisfaction of everyone with whom his functions brought him in contact. There is a harvest of drollery to be gleaned from his speeches in the House at various times, and more especially were his *bon mots* entertaining for the reason that he himself was often very earnest and heated in his remarks, and was unconscious of the bathos he was giving utterance to. "What, Mr. Speaker, said he on one occasion, 'and so we are to beggar ourselves for fear of vexing posterity! Now, I would ask the honourable gentleman, and this most honourable House, why we should put ourselves out of our way to do anything for posterity, for what has posterity done for us?' The orator after this declaration, expecting loud applause from his own party, was extremely disconcerted to find the whole house in a burst of laughter at his remark, so he began to explain that "he assured the House that by posterity he did not at all mean our ancestors, but those who were to come immediately after them." This explanation convulsed the house, and nothing serious was done for half an hour. Sir Boyle was very indignant at the proceedings of the Parisian Jacobins, and on one occasion he thus aired his indignation and contempt of them: "If we once permitted the villainous French masons to meddle with the buttresses and walls of our ancient constitution, they would never stop nor stay, sir, till they had brought the foundation stones tumbling down about the ears of the nation. If these Gallican villains should invade us, 'tis on that very table, maybe, these honourable members might see their own destinies lying in a heap atop of one another. Here, perhaps, sir, the Marshallew (Marseillaise) men would break in, cut us in mince meat, and throw our heads bleeding on that table to stare us in the face." One of his famous Union speeches concluded with this pithy remark, that "this excellent Union will convert our barren hills into fruitful valleys." In another speech, directed against the Jacobins and Jacobin intrigue, Sir Boyle angrily exclaimed: "Sir, I smell a rat, I see him brewing in the air, but mark me, Mr. Speaker, I shall yet nip him in the bud." Hearing that Admiral Howe was in search of the French, he remarked that he trusted that "he would sweep the Gallic fleet off the face of the earth." He expresses his loyalty in one speech by the sublime utterance: "I stood prostrate at the feet of my sovereign." He also held up to the ridicule of the House "the man who had turned his back on himself." He lamented "that single misfortunes never came alone, and that the greatest of all possible misfortunes is generally followed by a greater." Sir Boyle was married to a daughter of Sir Richard Cave; this wife of his evidently seemed bent on schooling her husband, for she compelled him daily to read Gibbons' "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" for style. Sir Boyle was so cruelly punished by this that he often stigmatized the historian as a "low fellow, who ought to have been kicked out of company wherever he was, for turning people's thoughts away from their prayers, and their politics to what the devil himself could make neither head nor tail of."—*Bel-fast Telegraph*.

IT IS A MISTAKE

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