

The Quiet Hour

GO FORWARD

And the Lord said unto Moses,
Wherefore criest thou unto Me?
Speak unto the children of Israel,
that they go forward.—Exod. xiv.:
15.

"For a web begun God sends the
thread."
Over and over these words I read,
And I said to myself, with an easy
air,
"What need to burden myself with
care
If this be true,
Or attempt to do
More than my duty? For here is
proof
That we are to hold ourselves aloof
Until from the Master we receive
The thread for the web we are to
weave!"

So day after day I sat beside
The loom, as if both my hands were
tied,
With idle shuttle and slackened warp,
Useless as strings of an untuned
harp;
For I took no part
With hand or heart
In the work of the world. To the
cry of need,
The voice of the children, I gave no
heed.
"When the task is ready for me," I
said,
"God will be sure to supply the
thread."

Others might go in cellars and slums,
And weave a web out of scraps and
thrums,
Finding excuse for the daily toil,
The reckless waste of life's precious
oil;
But as for me,
I could not see
How I was to follow them, or be-
lieve
That the needed strength I should re-
ceive,
Unless I waited, howe'er time sped,
For God to send me the promised
thread.

I had no strength of my own, I
knew,
No wisdom to guide, no skill to do,
And must wait at ease for the word
of command,
For the message I surely should un-
derstand,
Else all in vain
Were the stress and strain,
For the thread would break and the
web be spoiled—
A poor result for the hours I'd
toiled;
And my heart and my conscience
would be at strife
O'er the broken threads of a wasted
life.

But all at once, like a gem exhumed,
The word "begun"—by a light il-
lumed—
From the rest of the text stood bold-
ly out,
By the finger of God revealed, no
doubt;
And shocked and dazed,
Ashamed, amazed,
I saw, as I had not seen before,
The truer meaning the sentence bore,
And read as Belshazzar might have
read:
"For a web 'begun' God sends the
thread."

The man himself, with his mind and
heart,
To the Holy City must make a
start
Ere he finds in his hands the mystic
clue
That shall lead him life's ways safe-
ly through.
And if loom and reel
And spinning-wheel
Idle and empty stand to-day,
We must reason give for the long de-
lay,

Since the voice of the Master has
plainly said,
"For a web begun God sends the
thread."

—Josephine Pollard.

The Bible is a wonderfully balanced
book, and if we wish to be perfect
as our Father in Heaven is perfect,
we must keep the balance true be-
tween virtues which seem almost to
oppose each other. Generosity may
become a sin if it is not balanced by
prudence; gentleness may do terrible
harm (as in the case of Eli and his
sons) unless it is kept steady by
wise firmness. So even trust in
God—one of the greatest of the
greatest of the Christian graces—
will make a soul weak unless it is
balanced by reasonable self-reliance
and healthy endeavor. We see this
all through the Bible records, even in
the Acts of the Apostles, where the
infant Church is so plainly led by
the Holy Spirit. But the story told
in our text is an object lesson, bring-
ing this great truth to a focus.
Moses was not blamed for praying to
God when he found himself at the
head of a frightened host, with the
sea before and the enemy behind.

They hear of others who are out in
the big world, doing "great" things
for God, and their own opportunities
seem so cramped and insignificant.
But what the Master looks for is
faithfulness. If you are faithfully
doing the apparently trifling tasks
which are all He is at present ask-
ing from you, then you are pleasing
Him quite as much—possibly more—
than those whose sphere of useful-
ness you are envying. The great
thing, though, is to "go forward."
If you are no better than you were
a year ago, no better than you were
a month ago, no better than you
were yesterday, then the Master is
disappointed. Look back and honest-
ly seek to find out whether there is
any improvement. Are your prayers
more real, and are you trusting
more in the ever-present God? Are
you more considerate for the feelings
of others, more gentle in word and
manner, more willing to shoulder the
burdens which lie in your way? Are
you opening the windows more than
you used to do, so that the radiant
sunshine of joy may pour into your
life from the God of Joy? Don't
waste much time over retrospection,
though, for the glorious present and
infinite future still call you forward.
Make some real progress to-day.
Look up into the Master's face and
ask Him what work He wants you
to do for Him, what lesson must be
mastered to-day, and then set your-
self to the day's work with gladness.

Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!
Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air,
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumor of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems
darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars,
The drift of pinions, would we hark-
en,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered
doors.

The angels keep their ancient places—
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
That miss the great resplendent
thing.

But, when so sad thou canst not
sadder,
Cry; and upon thy sore loss
Shall shrine the traffic of Jacob's
ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Char-
ing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul my
daughter,
Cry, clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water,
Not of Genesareth, but Thames!
—FRANCIS THOMPSON in the *Athenaeum*

Strengthen our love, O Lord, that
we
May in Thine own great love be-
lieve,
And opening all our soul to Thee,
May Thy free gift receive!
All powers of mind, all force of
will,
'May' lie in dust when we are dead;
But love is ours, and shall be still
When earth and seas are fled.

MY PRAYER.

Teach me to bear my cross and sing,
Send me Thy patience from above;
Teach me to bend my will to Thine;
So fold me in Thy perfect love.

—ANNA BENDEL.

He who knows our frame is just,
Merciful, and compassionate,
And full of sweet assurances
And hope; for all the language is,
That He remembereth we are dust!

—JOHN G. WHITTIER.

ON THINKING GLAD

Never mind a change of scene—
Try a change of thinking.
What if things were sordid, mean,
What's the use of blinking?
Life's not always storm and cloud
Somewhere stars are shining,
Try to think your joys out loud,
Silence all repining.

By degrees, by thinking light,
Thinking glad and sweetly,
You'll escape the stress of night,
Worry gone completely.
Get the habit looking for
Sunbeams, pirouetting,
Tapping gayly at your door—
Surest cure for fretting.

Needn't fool yourself at all.
For there's no denying
E'en above a prison wall
Song birds are a-flying.
Wherefore hearken to the song,
Never mind the prison,
And you'll find your soul ere long
Up to freedom risen.

—JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.

A STUMBLING BLOCK

Because, professing still to be
A follower of the Lamb of God,
I walk in devious paths where he
Is never seen, has never trod,
E'en thus it is that some, through
me,
The Master's face may never see.

Because, professing to be wise,
And to have found the Truth, the
Way,
I oft am seen in Folly's guise,
Unmindful whom I thus betray,—
Yet so it is that some, through me,
To Heaven's gate may lose the key.

Because, professing his dear name
Whose love is infinitely great,
My tongue will even friends defame,
And flashing eyes oft tell of fate,—
Alas, alas, that some, through me,
May, hopeless, face eternity!
—Sunday School Times.



AT THE BEND OF THE STREAM

But he was told that God would not
help them unless they tried to help
themselves. They must make a
start—"Go forward!"—then their
Divine Leader was pledged to supply
all needful help. It is the same
principle that must always be used
in education. The teacher will give
help that is absolutely necessary, but
will not injure the pupil doing for
him what he is able to do himself.

We must trust God to make our
way clear for us, step by step, and
yet we must not expect Him to
carry us when He has given us
strength to walk. For instance, I
am still uncertain whether my lame-
ness will force me to give up the
settlement work for a time—I have
tried to work for God, and if He
wants me to do that particular kind
of work He will give me strength for
it—but I must not, for that reason,
lie with hands folded in martyr-like
submission and wait for work to
come my way. Head and hands are
still capable of being used in the
Master's service, even if I can't race
about in the old energetic fashion.
We are all ordered to "go for-
ward!" Even if the whole body
should be tied helpless in bed the
soul can go forward—can, if the will
is bent in progress, go forward more
swiftly than in times of health;
though it is a great mistake to
fancy that it is easier to live a
saintly life in times of sickness—on
the contrary, it is far harder. Most
people have hours of longing for
greater opportunities of usefulness.

It is easy to preach, isn't it? When
I look back over the new lesson that
was given me to learn this summer—
the entirely new lesson of keeping
still—and see how I have wasted the
precious weeks in "kicking against
the pricks," instead of making real
progress in patient endurance, I feel
ashamed of all my years of preach-
ing. Failed? Yes, but the Mas-
ter is patient and will give me an-
other chance to learn the lessons He
has set. To-day is mine—and yours.
Let us gather up all our energy and
press forward and upward, with our
eyes on the Leader who has passed
over the road before us. We can
often show our repentance for past
failures best by refusing to let them
cloud our live. We must be sorry
for past sins, but never brood over
them. To-day is ours—let us GO
FORWARD! We can't afford to
waste the portion of time that is
still ours to grow strong and beauti-
ful in—it may be very short.

"Life is but a day in fleetness;
Richer in all strength and sweet-
ness
Grows the striving soul."

HOPE.

IN NO STRANGE LAND

"The Kingdom of God is within
you."
O world invisible, we view thee;
O world intangible, we touch thee;
O world unknowable, we know thee.