

Partly, I think, to show men something of the likeness of his Son. For it is God's plan that through those who love and trust him the world is to know him.

The sweet lily bells have faded. They made a bright spot in the lives of those who knew their story; but the flowers in the faces of the true-hearted mother and daughter and of the little girl who sold them will blossom on through all time.

It is worth while to cultivate the life which brings flowers to our faces. I wonder if all of us are doing it?

WHEN THE HEART LISTENS.

"That was a very agreeable woman you introduced me to. We had a delightful talk. I don't know when I've met anyone more entertaining," said a somewhat egotistical gentleman who had been spending an evening at a friend's home, as he came to him to say good-night.

The friend smiled a trifle satirically. "She is an agreeable woman," he assented, "though she has the drawback of not being able to speak an audible word. But she makes up for that by being a most entertaining listener."

Whatever may be thought of the truth of the story, there can be no doubt that it illustrates a prominent characteristic of human nature. Everybody loves a listener. To confide our perplexities and trials, or our hopes and joys, to some friendly ear, is as natural as breathing. Even in lesser things we crave interested attention, and are wounded, or perhaps vexed, to find that our listener's thoughts are wandering when we are trying to tell him the plot of the story we have just read, or to express our views on the political situation.

Even those young people who are habitually thoughtful about the comfort of others, fail constantly in this regard. While grandmother is relating some girlhood experience, or father is giving the outline of the day's news, their thoughts are so busy elsewhere that it would be impossible to suspect them of listening to what is said. They have not a moment to spare for the confidences of smaller brothers and sisters. They fly from the house on the approach of a neighbour who is inclined to confine the conversation to the details of her own ill health or ill fortune.

These same young people, it is more than likely, envy the vivacity and wit which give a charm to the conversation of some of their friends. They wish that they too had the ability to talk entertainingly. Yet mere dexterity in the use of words is far less of a charm and is more common than the power to listen understandingly and with sympathy. These clever conversationalists are usually in demand at social gatherings, but when one is lonely, or a little sad, or in a mood for a comfortable, friendly talk, his thoughts turn toward that acquaintance whose intelligence and kindness are as apparent in listening as in speaking.

Moreover, this faculty for sympathetic listening is helpful as well as agreeable. Lyman Beecher admitted that he always felt inspired

All Hands On Time



The second hand,
the minute hand,
the hour hand, run
in unison on an

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by the rapt attention of a poor and unlettered widow in his congregation. We are stronger to bear trial when we have told our troubles to a sympathizing friend. We see our way more clearly through a tangle of perplexities, if we have confided them to some attentive listener.

Our failure to give a hearing to that which lies so heavily on the hearts of our friends, is due to the same thing which causes most of our failures—selfishness. The man who defined a bore as "the fellow who talks about himself when I want to talk about myself," revealed his own nature in a sentence. We do not listen to others because we want to say our own words or think our own thoughts undisturbed. To be selfishly absorbed in ourselves seems vastly more attractive than to be unselfishly interested in those about us.

History gives us the names of some great conversationalists, while it keeps silent on the subject of the great listeners. Yet their names, too, are written in the record of those who have helped others bear their burdens, conquer temptation, keep a brave heart in the midst of trial and make the most of life and life's opportunities. But such helpfulness is only possible to those who listen with the heart as well as with the ears, and whose kindly interest both invites confidence and repays it.

NO TIME FOR CRITICIZING.

The people who do their own work well do not have time to worry overmuch about the negligence of others. The little girl who informed her father in a shocked voice that her brother had not kept his eyes shut during the prayer, illustrates a very common weakness. Those who are attending steadily to their own prayers are unlikely to discover that others are inattentive or indifferent.

It is a bad sign when workers of any sort keep complaining that other workers are neglectful. The accusation may be true, but one who is putting his whole heart into what he is doing is not likely to find it out. There is nothing so absorbing as work well done, and one who fills hand and heart with usefulness, has not time or strength to waste in criticizing his neighbours.

INFLUENCE FOR GOOD OR EVIL.

There is a general stock of evil in the world to which we all contribute, or which, by God's grace, some may diminish; a vast and fertile tract of ungodliness, of low motives, of low aims, of low desires, of low sense of duty or no sense at all. It is the creation of ages, that tradition; but each age does something for it, and each individual in each age does, if he does not advisedly refuse to do, his share in augmenting it, just as the chimney of every small house does something to thicken and darken the air of London. And this general fund or stock of evil touches us all like the common atmosphere which we breathe. And thus it is



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that when you or I, even in lesser matters, do or say what our conscience condemns, we do really make a contribution to that general fund of wickedness which, in other circumstances and social conditions than ours, produces flagrant crime. Especially if it should happen that we defend what we do, or make light of it, or make a joke of the misdeeds of others, we do most actively and seriously augment this common fund or tradition of wickedness.

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