

The Inglenook.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

"Tis Our's to Choose."

BY HELEN STIRLING.

1. The scene of our story is the little hamlet of Bethany, clinging to the slopes of Mt. Olivet, about two miles distant from Jerusalem.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles—on his way he stopped at Bethany, and was received into the home of Martha.

The family was three—Martha, Mary and Lazarus. They seem to have been a family of wealth and importance, as they were known by many of the Jews in Jerusalem.

They had probably heard of the great teacher. Mary, the earnest—spiritually minded one, may have listened to his talks, and persuaded Martha to bring him to their home.

However that may be, we find him in the home and the honored guest.

The characters stand out before us very clearly—Jesus, the Man of God, who thought God's thoughts, who spoke God's words, the guest; Martha and Mary—hostesses.

We all love Martha—I think most of us love her best—we see her the busy careful housekeeper full of appreciation of her guest, anxious to do him honor, trying in every way to secure his comfort.

Mary had quietly done her part before, and now that he was here, was anxious only to be near Him, to sit at His feet and learn of Him—to lose not one word of all the gracious words which would flow from his lips.

She seems to have been more silent than Martha, and she had doubtless been thinking much of this great Teacher, and His new teachings. It may be that she saw further down the dim future and knew that His time with them was short; what to her was *much serving* when in so short a time the Master would be gone.

So sitting at His feet she drank in His wondrous words.

Martha the busy practical one had not caught the full meaning of the nature of their guest. He was worthy of honor—was the chiefest of all—thus much she knew—she felt,—but she had failed to fully appreciate the source of His greatness.

The Rabbis of the temple would no doubt be honored greatly by this much serving—and she had yet to learn that the service Christ requires is heart service.

In some way she felt that Mary was wiser than she; that she was nearer the great Master, than she could possibly come.

We can almost detect a little malice in her complaint to the Master—

"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone. Bid her therefore that she help me."

Is there not here even a reflection on the Master Himself—"dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone."

We can imagine, easily the scene, can we not? It is not hard for us. We have been interested parties in some such scene too often, and as we read we feel the resentment rising in our own heart, against the silent sister taking it "so easy" while we are taking so hard.

I wonder what Mary would have said if the Master had not spoken.

But his voice is heard—calm, and unmoved by the insinuation of careless indifference to her welfare—with what tender accents he speaks—"Martha, Martha," the reproof even in these words—"thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful—and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her."

He does not reprove her—He simply states the facts. "You are troubled and anxious about many things, that is why you are so hurried; and after all, Martha, only one thing is needful and Mary has chosen that one thing, it is simply a matter of choice."

What is this one thing which made the difference between Martha and Mary? I think Paul knew this one thing,—so did David—Paul says "this one thing I do forgetting the things which are behind I press toward the mark of the high calling of God." David, "one thing I desire that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Paul gives utterance to this again when he says—"For me to live is Christ." Mary had chosen—from all things to be had in this world—God to know Him and to serve Him, and seeing God in Christ she chose above all else to be in His presence, to learn of Him.

The choice is before each one of us every day.

What is this one thing?

Success in life always depends on the choice of one thing, as the object of pursuit. It is the distracted, aimless life which fails. But Martha's life was not aimless.

It is not the choice of Christ, as our Saviour, but the choice which must daily be made between the good things and the best. There are many good things—there are a few best. Paul after enumerating to the Corinthian church all the gifts which might be theirs closes by saying—covet earnestly the best gifts; and as the very best he puts Love.

How penetrating this choice is—the business man in business has it thrust upon him; shall he make his business a success? "So this is to be his life, or is his motto," for me to live is Christ, his business but a part of this life.

To the student comes the same temptation. Simply intellectuality craves his whole time, energy and powers; "for me to live is Christ—" means much for him. To us in our homes—how often does this choice force itself upon us?

There are so many worthy ambitions in the home.—We would have our homes beautiful, our tables dainty, and as a result, there is much serving, and we grow weary and discouraged because we cannot attain the ideals for which we strive. Oh! that above our worry and care we could hear the Master's voice: "But one thing is needful" how it would rest us? Christ does not disapprove the legitimate care of the home—it is the rush and bustle and hurry, and dispeace which these earthly ambitions bring, which He feels is not good—But one thing is needful—"to know and to do His will—"

Prudent perfect peace with thranging duties

pressed?

To do the will of Jesus, this is rest. His will may not be ours—the way of peace is, His Way. His will. Martha's will was to serve Him with great preparation. His will for her was that she should have *Himself*—His presence.

He also gently tells how fleeting the things of which she is troubling; she has chosen earthly ambition which perishes. Mary's choice was the eternal things. Could we but choose the things that last in our every day lives, how much simpler they would be.

How often we wear ourselves out ministering to the material wants of our loved ones, spending time and energy on things which perish in the using, while their spiritual wants are all neglected.

"Plain living, and high thinking," is the best for our homes. But one thing is needful, that they become acquainted with God.

The cry for the Bible in our schools, is but the expression of the feeling that with all our getting in educational lines—we must get wisdom, the fear of God.

Teachers feel the pressure of the intellectual cram, and are "cumbered with much serving." Well may they often steal away and commune with the sages. Down the ages rolls the full toned voice—"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." From the little home in Bethany floats out the comforting assurance, "But one thing is needful," and in sweet story, our sweetest singer, puts into the lips of the wise son, who replies to a foolish mother the "Follow the deed? Follow the Christ, the King."

Live pure; speak true; right wrong. Follow the King, else wherefore born. Let us choose ever the best, the highest, for ourselves and ours. We may be misunderstood and chided by the busy, bustling Marthas, but the Master will answer for us and take our part; and we, sitting at His feet as Mary, may be silent. May we covet earnestly the best gifts.

To Europe by Land.

In Harper's for November, Harry de Windt tells interestingly of his expedition from Paris to New York by land. The only difficulty which he found insurmountable was the actual crossing of Behring Strait on the ice. Of this Mr. De Windt writes:

"The wintry aspect of nature around Behring Strait seemed to predict a late summer, and it looked as if months must elapse before the revenue-cutter courteously placed at our disposal by the United States government could come to our rescue. My original idea was to try and cross over the frozen strait at Cape Prince of Wales (a feat never yet attempted by a white man), but I found, on arrival at East Cape, that the passage is never attempted by the Tchukchis, and only very rarely by the Eskimos. During the past decade perhaps a dozen of the latter have started from the American side, but only a third of the number have landed in Siberia. The distance from shore to shore is about forty-five miles, the Diomed Islands being situated about midway. The strait is never completely closed, for even in midwinter floes are ever on the move, which, with broad and shifting 'leads' of open water, render a trip by dog-sled extremely hazardous. My experiences on the five miles of drifting ice across which we were eventually compelled to wade in order to land on American soil inspired me with no desire to undertake the entire passage between the two continents."