



Along the path of a useful life  
Will heart's ease ever bloom;  
The busy mind has no time to think  
Of sorrow, or care, or gloom;  
And anxious thoughts may be swept away,  
As we busily wield a broom.

—Louise M. Alcott.

### White Hands.

Six young ladies of a graduating class were gathered around a window overlooking pleasant grounds, and talking very eagerly about the future. Their plans were various, reaching onward with no thought of grief or sorrow. Wealth, admiration, fame, were among the attainable. Music and art would each have its devotee. One would continue her studies at a higher institution; another would become the mistress of a beautiful home.

One had not spoken, and when the question, a second time, was asked impatiently, "Louise, what are your plans?" her answer was eagerly awaited.

"I shall help my mother," said quiet Louise.

"O-o-h," we all began to do that, of course," said one; but what plans have you? You can't mean just to stay at home in a poky way, and not try to do anything."

"Girls," said Louise, "I do mean to do just that, for the present, at least. My business shall be to help my mother in any way it is possible for me to help her."

A glance at the puzzled faces around her, and she continued:

"Shall I open my heart to you a bit, and let you read a sad passage from it? You remember Stella Morton? You remember that I once visited her during vacation? Her home was very pleasant, and a large family of brothers and sisters made the days pass merrily. Our pleasures kept us so much out of doors that we saw little of Mrs. Morton—a delicate, quiet lady, always ready to bestow sympathy when needed. I noticed that the girls were not so tidy and helpful about the house as I had been taught to be; but as I did not see who supplied all deficiencies, I thought little about it. One day a picnic had been planned, and I heard the girls impatiently commenting upon the illness of the one servant, as it threw upon them some disagreeable household duties. How Mrs. Morton ever accomplished the delicious lunch we ate; that day only such overworked mothers can explain; the little assistance given by Stella and Alice must have been most unsatisfactory.

We returned by moonlight, so tired that we went to our rooms without seeing anyone, if, indeed, anyone was up at that hour. By and by—I don't know how long we had slept—a frightened voice called Stella, who had shared my room, and soon we all knew that gentle, tired Mrs. Morton was alarmingly ill.

"At sunrise she was gone, without hearing the voices so full of love and sorrow. Girls, I can't describe Stella's grief; she placed her own delicate white hand beside the thin, toil-stained dead one, and said: 'See, Louise, at what cost mine is so fair; and I have been vain of my white hands.' She kissed the cold fingers again and again.

"One day I saw Stella at her mother's work-table, holding up some unfinished piece, evidently left in haste. 'Louise,' she said, 'mother asked me to do this, and I really meant to; oh, why didn't I do it at once?'

"You can't understand what an impression all this made upon me, and when a few days later I was called home by the failing of my own mother, the feeling was intensified. Mother was very ill, and as hope grew fainter, my distress was hardly less than Stella's. One night, when my sister and I were too anxious to sleep, I told her about Stella, and we then pledged ourselves to take from mother every possible care, and to make our home our first object. To make the promise more binding and real, we exchanged rings. Mother's illness made it seem more natural and easy at first, and everything moved on so smoothly that I really think she gained her health more quickly. All the mending and sewing was done promptly under her direction, and we always silenced her by saying we liked to do it. She seldom knows what is prepared for tea or breakfast; we begged her not to inquire, for we know that she enjoys little surprises. The boys and the dear baby are better and happier for having so much of her time and attention.

"Last summer I visited Stella again. She is the light of the home. Only for the discipline I passed through could I understand how she was able to accomplish so much. Once when I expressed something of this to her, her eyes filled with tears, as she asked: 'Do you suppose she can see us—that she knows what I am trying to do?' Her hands were not fair and delicate, but I thought them more beautiful. Why, girls, I never see a pretty hand now without wondering whether it has a right to be fair and white. So I am going home to help mother. I shall be happy, because I know it's my duty."

As Louise finished speaking, the retiring bell sounded. Not a word was spoken, but the kiss which each bestowed upon the flushed face of the earnest speaker told of the impression her words had made. Those mothers alone can tell whether the influence was lasting.

### Sympathy.

In this sad world where mortals must  
Be almost strangers,  
Should we not turn to those we trust  
To save us from its dangers?  
Then whisper in mine ear again  
And this believe,  
That aught which gives thy dear heart pain  
Makes my heart grieve.

God wills that we have sorrow here  
And we will share it,  
Whisper thy sorrow in mine ear  
That I may also hear it.  
If anywhere our trouble seems  
To find an end,  
'Tis in the fairy-land of dreams  
Or with a friend.

—Lionel Temyson.

"Are these pure canaries?" said a fashionable lady. "Oh, yes, madam," said the dealer. "I raised them here from canary seed."

## THE QUIET HOUR.

### The Old Church Bell.

"High up o'er the heads of the people,  
That pass like vague ships on the street,  
It hangs in its home in the steeple,  
That throbs with the wind's rhythmic beat.  
What heeds it the world and its noises?  
What reck's it of traffic's loud din?  
Of tears or the clamor of voices  
That speak of the light hearts within?  
Enough that its duty is ringing  
In every condition of weather;  
Enough that its mission is bringing  
The spiritual household together;  
Enough that it strikes for the hours  
That speed in a ne'er ending chain,  
And chimes over nuptial flowers,  
And tolls for the funeral train.  
Enough that it speaks to the mothers  
In clear, unmistakable tones,  
And fathers, and sisters, and brothers,  
From all the earth's populous zones.  
Enough that it brings to the altar  
The ones who have strayed from the truth,  
As well as the weak ones who falter  
Mid trials unknown in their youth.  
So there while the pale stars are marching,  
And rivers roll on to the sea,  
And Heaven's blue vault is o'er-arching,  
The bell in its belfry will be.  
And then, when its mission is ended,  
And turned the last burial sod,  
The echoes full-toned will be blended  
With trumpets that call us to God."

### A Sunless Sunday.

I thought it was Sunday and I was on my way to church. It was many Sundays since I had been there, but I had nothing to do, and thought it would pass the time away. I did not hear the bells ringing, which so often rang in vain, and it seemed to me I must be late, so I hurried on.

But to my surprise, on reaching the end of the street, no church could I see.

I was amazed, and inquired of a passer-by the name of the street.

"St. George's," was the reply.

"But where is All Saints' Church?" I asked.

"We have no churches now," replied the man.

"So few went, and scarcely one to pray."

As he was speaking, others joined us, and amongst them I recognized many who, like myself, attended church just as a "make-weight" when there was nothing better to be done.

How strangely silent all seemed; no chiming bells, no churches to go to. What a blank, long day it seemed.

"Could not the churches be rebuilt?" was asked on all sides. "They might be," it was thought. "But it would take such a long while," mournfully exclaimed one man who had never been known to attend any place of worship.

"Better wait a long while than never again to hear the chiming of the bells," said another. While we were talking there came toward us an old, haggard man, whom we scarcely recognized as our pastor, so bowed and old had he grown.

"But, my friends," said he, "how is it you have not gone out for the day?"

"Because," answered one, "we came to church."

"My friend," he said, turning to the man who had spoken, "it is too late; I have given an account of my stewardship, and have been found wanting." Tears coursed down his thin, wan cheeks, as he murmured over and over again, "Found wanting, for none would heed me."

The sun was streaming into my window as I woke, awakened by the ringing of yonder church-bells proclaiming it was Sunday, and as I listened to the chiming it sounded the sweetest music I had ever heard.

### The Children in Church.

In the morn of the holy Sabbath  
I like in church to see  
The dear little children clustered,  
And worshipping there with me.  
I am sure that the little pastor  
Whose words are like summer dew,  
Is cheered as he gazes over  
Those dear little heads in the pew.

Faces earnest and thoughtful,  
Innocent, grave and sweet—  
They look in the congregation  
Like lilies among the wheat;  
And I think that the tender Master,  
Whose mercies are ever new,  
Has a special benediction  
For those dear little heads in the pew.

When they hear, "The Lord is my Shepherd,"  
Or, "Suffer the babes to come,"  
They are glad that the loving Father  
Has given the lambs a home—  
A place for their own, with His people;  
He cares for his me and for you,  
But close to His arms He gathers  
Those dear little heads in the pew.

So I love, in the great assembly,  
On the Sunday morn to see  
The dear little children clustered,  
And worshipping there with me.  
For I know that our Heavenly Father,  
Whose mercies are ever new,  
Has a special benediction  
For those little heads in the pew.

—Margaret Sangster.

## THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

### The Song of the Wind.

"I've a great deal to do, a great deal to do—  
Don't speak to me, children, I pray—  
These little boys' hats must be blown off their heads,  
And the little girls' bonnets away!  
There are signs to be cracked and doors to be slammed,  
Loose window-blinds, too, must be shaken!  
When you see all the business I have for to-day,  
You'll see how much trouble I've taken.  
I saw some ships leaving the harbor to-day,  
So I'll e'en go to help them along.  
So flap the white sails, and howl thro' the shrouds,  
And join in the sailor-boys' song.  
Then I'll mount to the clouds, and away they will sail  
On their gorgeous wings through the bright sky;  
I bow to no mandate save only to His  
Who reigneth in glory on high."

### The Spirit of Cold.

The Spirit of Cold blew his ice trumpet, and the winds sailed to the echo. The birds shivered, and flew to the warm south-land; some of the flowers died when he touched them with his frosty finger, but others fell asleep, saying, "We shall awake next spring!" The wild beasts ran away to their dens, and the tame beasts were cared for by men who gave them shelter.

"Ah, these men!" cried the Spirit of Cold, in anger. "They have no feathers, no leaves, no fur; but they make clothes from flax, and cotton, and from the wool of sheep. I will kill these men."

Then he blew shrill notes from his trumpet, and laughed when he saw men's noses turning blue with cold, and little boys and girls blowing upon their cold fingers. But more wool was made into cloth and flannel to keep everybody warm. And from the skins of beasts were made mittens and coats and shoes to keep out the cold. So when the Cold Spirit blew again everyone had warm clothes, and the children looked so rosy that he could not help saying: "How pretty! Did I paint those cheeks so pink?"

Then the naughty Spirit ran down Poverty-Alley and sounded his trumpet of ice, and poor little starved babies shivered and died, while the ragged, bare-footed girls and boys were hungry and cold and sick.

But good men and women came with food and warm clothes, so the poor little children laughed and played in Poverty-Alley.

Then the Spirit made a new ice trumpet and blew the North Wind through it, saying, "I will freeze all mankind."

But men had gone down deep into the earth and brought up millions of tons of coal; they had gone to the forests for car-loads of wood, and when the Cold Spirit came they were ready for him—with glowing fires that warmed every corner of their houses. They said: "How cold it is! We must send a load of wood and a ton of coal to the poor families in Poverty-Alley."

So the Spirit of Cold drove away his old enemy, the Spirit of Fire, who went to the river, enying, "Here fire cannot come, for the Spirit of Water is the foe of the Spirit of Fire."

"No, no!" cried the Water Spirit. "Fire is my good friend now. He turns me into the Spirit of Steam. When I am water, I can only turn slow mill-wheels, but when I am steam I can pull boats and trains, and work great city mills, and heat houses, and—"

"How dare you speak of heat?" cried the Spirit of Cold, angrily. He took out his ice key and locked up the Water Spirit beneath a great door of ice. But the boys and girls ran out and skated merrily on the frozen river.

"I have only given them a new game!" said the Cold Spirit. "But I will kill them with snow."

Then he poured the white flakes over the fields. But the children played with balls of snow, made snow men and snow houses, and coasted down the hills.

"Only more fun for everyone!" cried the Spirit of Cold. "It seems that I can do no harm. Perhaps I'd better try to do some good."

So he ran off to a Southern Country, where the heat was killing people, and he blew gently on his trumpet and drove disease away from the land. He soon found out that it is far pleasanter to try to do good than to try to do harm.

### The Wind in the Chimney.

Over the chimney the night wind sang  
And chanted a melody no one knew;  
And the woman stopped, as her babe she tossed,  
And thought of the one she had long since lost,  
And said, as her teardrops back she forced,  
"I hate the wind in the chimney."

Over the chimney the night wind sang,  
And chanted a melody no one knew;  
And the children said, as they closer drew,  
"Tis some witch that is cleaving the black night  
through—  
And we fear the wind in the chimney."

Over the chimney the night wind sang,  
And chanted a melody no one knew;  
And the man, as he sat on his hearth below,  
Said to himself, "It will surely snow,  
And fuel is dear and wages low,  
And I'll stop the leak in the chimney."

Over the chimney the night wind sang,  
And chanted a melody no one knew;  
But the poet listened and smiled, for he  
Was a man, and woman, and child, all three,  
And he said, "It is God's own harmony,  
This wind that sings in the chimney."

—Bert Harte.