

NOT EASILY PROVOKED.

"A tone of pride or petulance repressed—  
A selfish inclination firmly fought—  
A shadow of annoyance set at naught—  
A murmur of disquietude suppressed—  
A peace in importunity possessed—  
A reconciliation generously sought—  
A purpose put aside—a banished thought—  
A word of self-explaining unexpressed:  
Trifles they seem, these petty soul restraints;  
Yet he who proves them such must needs possess  
A constancy and courage grand and bold.  
They are the trifles that have made the saints;  
Give me to practice them in humbleness,  
And nobler power than mine doth no man hold."

When St. Paul strings together the magnificent cluster of jewels which he calls by the comprehensive name of Charity or Love, he does not forget the stone which is bright and sparkling as a diamond, and, like a diamond, hard enough to stand the friction of everyday wear and tear. Charity is "not easily provoked," or, in the stronger words of the revised version, "is not provoked." Now, I am afraid charity is a very rare article, for most of us are very easily provoked. One whose manners are very polite and charming to strangers sometimes uses his own family as a safety-valve, letting loose on the unfortunate heads of his relations his whole supply of irritability and rudeness. Samuel Johnson has put into words what we all feel to be true: "The most authentic witnesses of any man's character are those who know him in his own family, and see him without any restraint or rule of conduct but such as he voluntarily prescribes to himself." What witness would our nearest relations bear to us if they told the exact truth? Would they say that we were never known to get cross or snappish, even when everything was in a muddle, when the children were tiresome or mischievous, when the oven refused to get hot or the sewing-machine wouldn't work, when the bicycle was punctured or mud was tracked over a clean floor. If one's own family is unappreciative there must be something wrong. Nearly all these trifling annoyances I have mentioned are women's worries, but, really, it does seem as though women had more of these little things to fret and try them than men. Then, women, especially on the farm, often work too hard. Their nerves are all on edge, and the least jar irritates them. If they only tried to get a rest in the afternoon every day it would add largely to the comfort of the whole family. Women who make an idol of work, and worship it from five in the morning until eleven at night, must indeed be angelic if they can always be pleasant and cheerful. They may keep up that sort of treadmill existence for a time, but it is pretty sure to end in a nervous condition of mind and body and a pitiable irritability of temper, which might be avoided if they would take our Lord's advice to His disciples, and "rest awhile." But an uncertain temper is not always a sign of physical overstrain. To be "easily provoked" is a habit we are apt to drift into unless we are on the watch against it. Good temper has been declared to be "nine-tenths of Christianity," and certainly it is not a virtue to be despised. How many men do you suppose have taken to loafing round the hotels and become drunkards, partly, at least, because the home atmosphere is so stormy and unpleasant and someone is always nagging or looking cross and gloomy. Perhaps we hardly realize that being cross and disagreeable is a sin at all, much less that it may do such terrible harm. Moses, who was usually so patient and long-suffering when the Israelites were mutinous and unruly, was forbidden to enter the Promised Land because his sorely-tried temper at last gave way and "they provoked his spirit so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips." Surely God must have considered his impatient anger a sin, or He would never have punished it so severely. Do you think, then, that He never notices when we are provoked and speak unadvisedly? It may happen many

THE QUIET HOUR

times in a day, when we are out of sorts or everything seems to go wrong, but that does not make it any less sinful. We may not entirely agree with the cynic who said: "Relations I detest, connections I hate, friends I dislike, acquaintances I tolerate, but the only people I really like are the people I don't know." We disagree with him, perhaps, but still we can hardly help owning that the poor man may have had some excuse for such a statement. Perhaps his relations used the privilege they too often assume of showing their worst side in the privacy of home.

"We have careful thoughts for the stranger,  
And smiles for the sometimes guest;  
But oft for 'our own' the bitter tone,  
Though we love 'our own' the best."

we are making them think Christians are disagreeable people.

Don't you think if we saw our Lord watching us—as He surely is—if we remembered that He had prepared the little things which we allow to fret and vex us, as He is said to have "prepared" the worm which annoyed the prophet Jonah, we could meet them with a smile oftener than we do? Every time we conquer the temptation to be provoked, we have gained in strength and beauty of character; and let us remember that character grows slowly and imperceptibly, even as the fruit grows and ripens in our orchards. Would you rather have such a smooth and easy life that you could never have an opportunity of being victor?



A BREATHING SPACE IN THE DAY'S WORK.

One who "shines everywhere but at home" has not really good manners, for it is most certainly true that "a really good manner is like our skin, put on from within, and never taken off while we are alive." People who would be shocked at the idea of using strong language, sometimes indulge in what has been called "wooden swearing," as children often show their anger by slamming doors, kicking or stamping or banging things about. Without speaking a word, the fact that they have lost their temper is plain to the whole family, showing itself in every gesture and every action. Don't let us rest satisfied with controlling our tongues or trying to hide our angry feelings. Every temptation to angry impatience or crossness of temper is an opportunity for a victory. Victory or defeat—which shall it be? Let us who profess to be disciples of Christ fight earnestly and prayerfully against this sin of being easily provoked, for it is no use trying by our words to draw others nearer to God if all the time

"Call no man weak who can a grievance brook  
And hold his peace against a red-hot word,  
Nor him a coward who averts his look  
For fear some sleeping passion may be stirred."

The captain is watching the battle and is always ready to give help when it is really needed. If he has placed you in a trying position, surely that is a great honor, for the most dangerous post is given to the bravest and strongest soldier. The Captain trusts you and expects you to conquer. But though we may fall over and over again, especially at first, He never loses patience, but is ready to forgive again. And I think our relations will be generally ready to forgive too when they see we are sorry that we lost our temper, especially if we are not too proud to own up that we were wrong.

"A good-bye kiss is a little thing,  
With your hand on the door to go,  
But it takes the venom out of the sting  
That you made an hour ago."

HOPE.

LEFT ALONE.

It's the loneliest house you ever saw,  
This big gray house, where I stay—  
I don't call it livin' at all, at all,—  
Since my mother went away.

Four long weeks, and it seems a year;  
"Gone home," so the preacher said,  
And I ache in my breast with wanting her  
An' my eyes are always red.

I stay out of doors till I'm almost froze,  
'Cause every corner and room  
Seems empty enough to frighten a boy,  
Yet filled to the doors with gloom.

I hate them to call me in to my meals,  
Sometimes I think I can't bear  
To swallow a mouthful of anything  
An' her not sitting up there

A-pourin' the tea, an' passin' the things  
An' laughin' to see me take  
Two big lumps of sugar instead of one,  
And more than my share of cake.

There's no one to go to when things go wrong;  
She was always so safe and sure.  
Why, not a trouble could tackle a boy,  
That she couldn't up an' cure.

I'm too big to be kissed, I used to say,  
But somehow I don't feel right,  
Crawling into bed as still as a mouse—  
Nobody saying good night.

An' tuckin' the clothes up under my chin,  
An' pushin' my hair back, so  
Things a boy makes fun of before his chums,  
But things that he likes, you know.

I can't make it out for the life of me  
Why she should have to go,  
And her boy left here in this old grey house,  
A-needin' and wantin' her so.

There are lots of women, it seems to me,  
That wouldn't be missed so much,—  
Women whose boys are all grown up,  
And old maid aunts and such.

I tell you the very loneliest thing  
In this great big world to-day,  
Is a boy of ten whose heart is broke  
Cause his mother is gone away.

—Toronto Globe.

A CHARACTER SKETCH.

I knew a man who thought he knew it all;  
He knew how earth became a rolling ball  
He knew the source and secret of all life;  
He also knew how Adam came to fall.

He knew the cause of the Glacial Age,  
And what it was that made the deluge rage.  
He knew—in fact, he knew most everything;  
In his own mind he was earth's greatest sage.

His knowledge was of such stupendous girth  
It took in everything upon the earth  
And in the heavens; but most strange of all,  
He didn't know a thing of real worth.

He knew where people go when they are dead,  
He knew all wonders ever sung or said,  
He knew the past and future; but for all  
He didn't know enough to earn his bread.

He was a marvel of omniscience—  
He knew the secret of the hence and whence,  
He was a bundle of great theories;  
The only thing he lacked was common sense.

—J. A. EDGERTON, in New York Sun.