

Choice Literature.

AT SUNSET.

It isn't the thing you do, dear,
It's the thing you've left undone,
Which gives you a bit of heartache
At the setting of the sun.
The tender word forgotten,
The letter you did not write,
The flowers you might have sent, dear,
Are your haunting ghosts to-night.

The stone you might have lifted
Out of a brother's way,
The bit of heartsome counsel
You were hurried too much to say.
The loving touch of the hand, dear,
The gentle and winsome tone,
That you had no time or thought for,
With troubles enough of your own.

The little act of kindness,
So easily out of mind;
Those chances to be angels
Which every mortal finds—
They come in night and silence,
Each chill, reproachful wraith,
When hope is faint and flagging,
And the blight has dropped on faith.

For life is all too short, dear,
And sorrow is all too great,
To suffer our slow compassion
That tarries until too late.
And it's not the thing you do, dear,
It's the thing you leave undone,
Which gives you the bit of heartache
At the setting of the sun.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

A VERY COMMONPLACE GIRL.

Bethena Cass stood before the little mirror in her own room, critically examining her appearance. She turned this way and that way, arched her eyebrows and craned her neck; and then, as if perfectly satisfied with the scrutiny, she said aloud, "No, I am not handsome, not even pretty, neither can I claim the distinction of being decidedly homely. I am exceedingly plain, quite commonplace; no more, no less. Yes, Miss Veneer was right. I am very commonplace, a girl with one talent, and I don't know what to do with it. Now, if I possessed Miriam's beauty or Eldora's genius—but I don't, I have not one redeeming trait; but I do not consider it altogether kind in Miss Veneer to discuss my blemishes in such a heartless fashion."

It was not Miss Veneer's idle gossip that opened poor Bethena's eyes to her own defects, for from her earliest recollection she had been chafing against the providence that gave to her sisters gifts that had been denied to herself. Her one comfort had always been that she would not be held responsible for what she did not possess, but the conversation which she had chanced to overhear concerning the single talent which she did possess, without knowing how to develop it, started a new train of thoughts in her mind. If she would not be held accountable for five or ten talents, she realized now quite fully that she could not bury even one without being called upon to answer for the use made of it.

"There is no use in coveting the gifts of others," she admitted, after a few minutes' quiet study. "I may just as well make the best of my own, knowing that to whom little is given, of them little will be required. As this is vacation, and there are no lessons to prepare, I will have abundance of time to turn over the new leaf and keep it down, for I know there is a struggle before me. If I am homely and commonplace, there is no reason why I should not be necessary to some one's comfort or pleasure. Though I cannot shine with the brightness of my more favoured sisters, it is plainly my duty to send my feeble rays into dark places where their light fails to penetrate."

With this new determination she went to work at once, arguing against her own inclination that it was always best to "strike while the iron was hot." The evening was close and warm, and the kitchen where she began the reform was far from being as pleasant as her own cozy little room; but the smile that lighted her mother's face, when she offered to take her place over the hot stove more than repaid her for the sac-

rifice she had made. It was Eldora's week to wash the supper dishes, but as that young lady was particularly anxious to join in a game of croquet in progress on the lawn, Bethena expressed a willingness to take her place, and was rewarded with an affectionate little pat that sent the blood tingling through her veins with far more force than even the heat of the kitchen had done.

When the tea-things were out of the way and the kitchen in apple-pie order, she went with the twins, Grace and Gordon, for a walk, although she had promised herself the twilight hour to finish the interesting book awaiting her upstairs.

"As commonplace looking as ever, but oh dear! what a happy heart I do carry to-night," she mused, as she took a farewell peep into the little mirror before she crept into bed. "I am glad I chanced to overhear Miss Veneer's spiteful words, though they did sting at the time. I needed to be aroused, so as to look after the one talent I do possess."

She awoke in the morning with the monotonous drip, drip of the rain against the window-pane. "What a delightful morning to sleep!" she exclaimed, turning over for another nap. But the next minute she sprang out of bed and began to dress. "Mother needs the rest worse than I do, and I am going to surprise her by having breakfast ready when she gets up."

Pausing only to read a verse in her Bible and kneel a moment to ask strength and direction for the day, she ran noiselessly down the stairs and half an hour later, when her mother came wearily into the kitchen to light the fire, she was greeted with the aroma of boiling coffee and frying steak.

"What does this mean, Bethena?" she asked, glancing at the daintily laid table.

"It means, mother dear, that both you and I are to have a vacation," replied Bethena; and then noticing the look of inquiry on her mother's face, she explained, "I read an article on vacation the other day, and it recommended in case an outing was impossible a change of occupation. As we cannot afford a trip even into the country, I am going to see if I cannot manage a change in occupation—you from work to rest, and I from rest to work."

"You are a dear, thoughtful child," said her mother, kissing her tenderly, "but I cannot allow you to bear all the burden. I do not count school duties rest by any means."

"It is different from house-work, at any rate," insisted Bethena. "Besides, I wish to learn to bake and cook and keep house, just as you do."

"Sensibly spoken," said her father, who just then made his appearance at the dining-room door. "When girls get to take as much interest in house-work as in drumming on the piano, or painting third-class pictures, it will be a happy day for themselves as well as worn-out mothers."

"I have no talent for anything better or higher, even if I had the ambition to make honest efforts," answered Bethena, her voice a little husky.

"I am glad you haven't, if you can be reconciled to more prosy employment," her father answered kindly.

During the week that followed, the commonplace girl found plenty of scope for the development of her one talent, and she was surprised to find how much real enjoyment she could get out of life in her effort to forget self in living for others.

"Bethena's sunshine factory seems to be turning out some pretty fair wares," said her big brother Tom one day, after an unsuccessful effort to provoke her to a sharp retort, such as she was accustomed to indulge in in the old days.

"Never mind," exclaimed Miriam impatiently, "she will get over this freak in a very short time—as soon as the novelty of the experiment wears off. Her heroic actions will eventually die a natural death."

"We shall see," said Tom, sullenly, even if she does go back to the old way, the brief vacation she has given us will make us all better and happier for the glimpse of sunshiny human nature she has shown us."

"I do not like these people who go by fits and starts," Miriam returned, with a disdainful toss of her pretty head, "I always feel somewhat sceptical concerning their real motives."

"Motives be hanged," sneered Tom. "It is the acting that reaches out and touches such lives as mine. If Bethena does me a kindness in a gracious way, I am quite willing to accept it in the spirit in which she appears to make it, without troubling myself about the motive which may have prompted the kindly deed."

Miriam did not continue the controversy farther, but a few days later, when, through the generous withdrawal of her younger sister, she was permitted to accept an invitation for a fortnight's visit to the sea-side, which had been given to them jointly, she put her arms around Bethena's neck and kissed her with as much tenderness as if she were not in the least sceptical concerning her motives.

"I am glad you did not leave us, Bethena, dear," said her father, after Miriam had gone. "Perhaps you don't know it, but Tom will do more to please you than any other person in the world, and I didn't like the thought of losing your influence over him even for a fortnight, for the poor fellow is not going right, you know, not going the way we would like to see him walk."

"I did not know this, father, but now that I know your wish, you may be sure that I will stand by Tom," replied Bethena, with shining eyes. And she did; a fact which Tom fully appreciates, for if it had not been for the self-sacrificing of this commonplace sister, he is certain he would not have made an effort to regain the position he had lost.

Though an outing for such a large family, with limited means, was wholly impracticable, Bethena's plan for giving her mother a rest while she served, worked beautifully, and the serving gave to herself such an insight into the art of home-making and home-keeping as she would not have obtained in years by following the old method of helping, a little here and a little there, always subject to her own pleasure or convenience.

Besides the home entertainments and amusements, which Bethena managed in such a quiet way as not to excite suspicion that they were managed at all, there were sundry little trips into the country and moonlight sails on the lake, in which the whole family joined, and through which the members of the household not only became better acquainted with each other, but also learned to give expression of their love to one another, a custom that had not prevailed among them heretofore as it should have done.

Though Bethena's kindly ministries have not transformed her plain face into one of marvellous beauty, or developed, by some mysterious process, her one talent into ten, they have made for her a name and a place in the home and among her young associates, better a thousand-fold than all the emoluments which beauty and genius could confer.

She is only a commonplace girl yet, but she fits into the common places of life with so much tact and sweetness, as to create a demand for other commonplace girls to fill like positions in similar homes all over the land.—Belle V. Chisholm, in United Presbyterian.

A stranger, on being introduced, said: "I feel as if I had known you for years. I have been so much with your friend S., and he has spoken of you so often and so kindly." Then my friend S. has been true to me. Have I been as true to my best friend? Are there those who feel that they know my Saviour because they have seen and heard so much of Him in my life and conversation? My friend puts me to shame. He has done for me more than I have done for Christ.

GIVE THE POOR MAN A CHANCE.

My son, the poor man takes all the chances without waiting to have one given him. If you give him any more chances than he takes he will soon own everything and run the Texas man out of the country. The fact is, we must curtail the poor man's chances a little. We must sit down on him and hold him down, and give the rich man a chance. The poor man has had his own way too long. He has crowded the rich out. But for the poor man, the world would have cast anchor six thousand years ago, and be covered with moss and lichens to-day, like a United States man-of-war. Edgar Allen Poe was the son of a strolling player; George Peabody was a boy in a small grocery; Benjamin Franklin, the printer, was the son of a tallow chandler; John Adams was the son of a poor farmer; Gifford, the first editor of the Quarterly Review, was a common sailor; Ben Jonson, rare Ben Jonson, was a brick-layer; the father of Shakespeare couldn't spell and couldn't write his own name; neither can you; even his illustrious son couldn't spell it twice alike; Robert Burns was a child of poverty, the eldest son of seven children, the family of a poor bankrupt; John Milton was the son of a scrivener; Andrew Jackson was the son of a poor Irishman; Andrew Johnson was a tailor; Garfield was a boy of all work, too poor to even have a trade; Grant was a tanner; Lincoln was a keel-boatman and common farm hand; and the Prince of Wales is the son of a queen. It is his misfortune, not his fault; he couldn't help it, and he can't help it now. But you see, my dear boy, that's all there is of him, he's just the Prince of Wales, and he's only that because he can't help it. Be thankful, my son, that you weren't born a prince; be glad that you did not strike twelve the first time. If there's a patch on your knee and your elbows are glossy, there is some hope for you, but never again let me hear you say that the poor man has no chance. True, a poor lawyer, a poor doctor, a poor printer, a poor workman of any kind, has no chance; he deserves to have none, but the poor man monopolizes all the chances there are.—Robert J. Burdette.

SHEAVES OF LOVE.

Dr. George Shradly, the great physician left his rich patients and went on a vacation in the mountains for absolute rest. He left orders that he should be called on no account; he would answer no call as a physician. While resting in the hammock at the country house a little barefoot, ragged urchin came up to where he was lying, accompanied by a grandmother. The little fellow looked wistfully up at the great physician, while the grandmother explained: "I could not keep him away, doctor. He heard that you were here; that you were the greatest doctor in the world. He said that you could cure him and make him like the other boys. I told him he had no money and he could not come; that you would not be bothered with him. He said he knew you would cure him, and he could come. So here he is, sir."

The doctor, moved by his simple faith, by his helplessness, by his poverty and rags, hastened to prescribe for him. He gave him two weeks of personal attention, and at the end of that time, he was romping in the fields, strong and well with the other boys. Thanksgiving day the doctor received by express a rude box, and when opened, found in it a large turkey, on one leg of which was tied a card on which was scrawled: "Dear Doctor—Here is a big, fat turkey for you. It's the best I could send, but I know he's young and tender, for I raised him from the egg myself." Signed by the boy's name. The doctor treasures this gift above all the gifts from millionaires, above all the treasures of money ever received. Life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man may possess.