

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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## In Bethany.

From out the city street,  
With weary, aching feet,  
Beyond the gates wide thrown  
And hot, brown walls of stone,  
Amid the wild-flowers set  
On slopes of Olivet,  
Across the hillside brown,  
By foot-path winding down,  
Through restful, airy shade,  
The drooping palm-trees made,  
He journeyed down to rest  
As love's divinest Guest  
In Bethany.

A home without a name  
Until the Wanderer came!  
What love was thine outspread  
Above his homeless head!  
What tender, thoughtful care,  
What busy serving there;  
Planning how he might eat,  
Cooling his way-worn feet,  
While one from care apart  
Gave him her  
royal heart,  
And thus her love  
confessed  
To love's divinest  
Guest  
In Bethany.

Oh, heart of mine,  
make way  
For Guest divine  
to-day!  
Come thou with  
presence sweet  
And make our life  
complete!  
As from the moun-  
tain side  
Come in, with us  
abide,  
And here thy rest  
shall be;  
And while we sup  
with thee,  
Let thy sweet ac-  
cents heard,  
Mould thought and  
will and word,  
And thus our love  
be told  
And Mary's love  
of old  
In Bethany.

## A WISE CHOICE.

BY THE EDITOR.

The family of Bethany seem to have enjoyed the especial regard of the Lord Jesus. To their hospitable home he loved to retire from the dust and heat and confusion of Jerusalem, in order to enjoy its cool quiet, and sometimes, too, its protection from the plots and machinations of the city. Of this favoured family is recorded the blessed fact, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus."

It is a delightful walk, scarce two miles, from Jerusalem through the vale of Kedron, and up the soft slopes of Olivet to the little village of Bethany. As one climbs the hillside, wider and ever wider views greet the vision, and as one reaches the hilltop, beneath the eye lies like a map the city of Jerusalem. In its glory, at the time of Christ, the white temple of Herod glistened in the rising or the setting sun, and the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifices ascended in the still air. It was a view calculated to call up the deepest and tenderest feelings. Small wonder, then, that our Lord, foreseeing its approaching destruction by the Romans, exclaimed: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

## THE HOUSEHOLD OF BETHANY.

The peaceful quiet of the village home is beautifully shown in our picture, the trellised vines furnishing a shelter from the noontide sun, the broad stone seats, the cool well, the fragrant flowers, and blending with the words of the Master, the "sussurrus and coo of the pigeons." Yet, into this quiet scene and into this loving family the spirit of carefulness and anxiety about the things of this world had crept—that spirit which is apt to grow into an engrossing worldliness, and to make the nature harsh and censorious. We read of Martha that she was "cumbered about much serving," overwhelmed with anxieties about the necessities of the body.

Thus, much serving was injurious to Martha, and less would have been more acceptable to Christ. Her mind, moreover, was tortured with over-solicitude. A due degree of carefulness for our temporal wants is very proper and neces-

But instead of sitting at his feet and gathering those precious pearls and treasuring in her heart his lofty teachings, Martha was anxiously engaged in some unnecessary domestic employment. Unnecessary, we say, for otherwise the gentle rebuke of our Lord would have been a harsh and cruel taunt instead of a mild and loving remonstrance, as it evidently was.

Moreover, it was over-anxiety of Martha which led to censoriousness of spirit, therefore with querulous tone she accused the meek and gentle Mary of having left her to serve alone. This was unkindly cruel, and gave evidence of bitterness of soul that ought not to have existed, far less to have been so obtrusively manifested in the presence of such an illustrious guest. But nothing will so blunt the finer feelings as the spirit of worldliness. When it takes possession of the soul all higher motives are ignored, and a spirit of thorough and absolute selfishness finds entrance.

many things. But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." The very attitude and gesture of Martha in the picture suggest the fault-finding tone of voice and reproachful words.

## MARY'S WISE CHOICE.

Let us proceed to observe the conduct and character of the loving Mary whose devotion to our Lord called forth the querulous complaint of Martha.

Mary, in the meantime, was sitting at the Master's feet, drinking in the lessons of his love, imbibing his meek and gentle spirit—at his feet, the proper place of a disciple, teachable as a little child.

Did Christ comply with the request of Martha, "Bid her, therefore, that she help me"? Not so. He never drives from his presence those who find their chief enjoyment there. He never spurns from his feet those who in meekness sit there. On the contrary, he pronounces a commendation upon her and hands her name down to remotest ages surrounded with a halo of blessing.

Let us notice the expression of Jesus.

"ONE THING IS  
NEEDFUL."

That is, there is one thing which so greatly transcends in importance all other things that they dwindle into utter insignificance, and it alone is worth a thought. The same in every age and clime, that never grows old or loses its value. What is this blessing, precious above all price and peerless above all worth? It is the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the forgiveness of our sins, the impartation of the Holy Spirit; in a word, the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whoso hath this is rich above all wealth and needs no other blessing. Whoso lacks this, though he possess all wealth beside, is poor indeed.

It is needful in health to guide and direct the powers of body and mind. It is especially needful in sickness, when grief and pain distort the brow.

"When life flies apace and death comes in view,  
The word of his grace will help us right through."

When weary days and lonely nights are appointed to us, and tears are our portion, and friends have forsaken. It is needful in the hour of death when nothing else will avail aught.

How important, therefore,

## TO CHOOSE THE GOOD PART.

It must be a voluntary choice in spite of the allurements of pleasure or engrossments of business or distractions of ambition. And how important to do it now. The present is the only time offered. "Choose well, thy choice is brief, and yet endless."

It is emphatically the good part,—good in its author and origin, good in its effect and influence, elevating the char-



MARY AND MARTHA.

"MARY HATH CHOSEN THAT GOOD PART WHICH SHALL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HER."

sary. Neither reason nor religion requires or promotes an improvident recklessness or thoughtless indifference. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

## MARTHA'S MISTAKE.

But the word careful here means over-anxiety—an anxiety which tortures and distracts the mind, which throws its dark shadows across the soul and makes it gloomy and fretful. In the case of Martha this anxiety exceedingly depressed the soul till she was troubled in spirit, perplexed and worried by her domestic duties. She had not that sweet, unruffled calm, the peace which Christ alone can give.

Hence, we find that this over-anxiety deprived Martha of many precious blessings. Here beneath her roof was the Son of God, the heavenly teacher who spake as no man ever spake, from whose lips fell the pearls of divine wisdom, sublimer lore than any of the school of Gamaliel or of the rabbis of Jerusalem.

In this respect Martha is but a type of over-anxious persons everywhere. Frequently this fault becomes a chronic habit of the soul, and fretful and peevish tempers and unlovely and fault-finding dispositions are the result.

Moreover, this spirit led Martha to

## REPROACH HER HEAVENLY GUEST

and treat him with seeming disrespect. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." No doubt she loved her Lord, it may be, loved him intensely; yet this worldly spirit so warped and biased her nature that she here conveys the tacit reproach that while she was so careful about his comfort, Christ cared not for her. She forgot his exalted dignity, his heavenly mission; she forgot or ignored the fact that his meat and drink was to do his Father's will, and not personal gratification.

This conduct we find extorted from the loving lips of Jesus the tender reproach made doubly poignant for its very gentleness. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about