

## UNTIMELY WORDS.

A frightened child is to be soothed, not scolded. Any rebuke which it deserves is not to be given while it is almost wild with terror. A despondent man needs, for the hour, words of cheer rather than merited reproof. A clergyman who valued highly his loving wife's criticisms upon his words and manner in the pulpit, asked her not to tell him what she had noticed out of the way, when he was fresh from his exhausting service; but to say all the encouraging words she could to begin with, saving her list of blunders until he had recovered sufficient nervous force to meet bravely their disheartening array. If a husband would find fault with his wife, or a wife with her husband, let it never, never be done before others. A rebuke under such circumstances is always untimely. To do it fittingly at any time requires wisdom, tact, and grace. If an author shews you a book of his, or an artist invites you to look at his latest painting, do not first point out the errors your quick eye observes there; but speak all the pleasant words you can of the work before you, and then, unless you have some very good reason for saying something else, unless there is some positive gain to be hoped for through your speaking—keep silence. "He that refraineth his lips"—at such a time—"is wise."

And if you find that you have had trouble, or have made it, through what you have spoken in hearty sincerity to others, do not console yourself with the thought that they were true words, kindly intentioned words; but consider well if they were fitting words, timely words—hence, prudent words. The speaking of untimely words may be a crying fault of yours—a fault to be recognized and battled, and by God's help corrected. The more you think it is not so, the greater is the probability that it is your besetting sin.

## THE MINISTER'S WIFE.

This morning brings me a beautiful gift. It is a memory—a brief memory—so very brief that I have hardly any right to tell it. Yet it is very precious, for it is the memory of a pure, gentle, loving life. Only the story of a minister's wife—that is all! Her husband tells it. "Her life was an exquisite poem," he says. "Her whole life was like a beautiful June morning," he says. I know it must be so from the little glimpse I had of the life nearest to him. I remember one day visiting the minister at his home. It was on a hillside. The streets leading down into the country city were lined on both sides with comfortable dwellings shaded by graceful elms and thrifty maples. Beyond the city, edging it with its silver tide, was the Merrimac River. Across it were pine-clad bluffs rising abruptly from the intervale meadows. It was a charming picture; all the more so, as, turning to the left, the rugged heights of distant mountains could be seen under broken masses of clouds. I turned my back on all that to enter the house. The minister's cheery, hearty greeting came first. "My wife will be in soon," he said before I had time to ask for her. I spoke of the view from the windows; of the bright mornings it must give him; of the clean, pure air that must come from the distant hills.

"Yes," he cordially responded, and then spoke of the pleasant neighbours he had, and of the comfort his new house gave him. He was not quite at ease, however; there was a restless expectancy about him till the door opened. All outside the house was forgotten! How the room brightened! Graceful as a lily, a delicate blush as of a rose on her cheek, a light in her eyes, like the distant shining of the sky when it is bright with silver and pearl, a voice with the ripple of loving mirth in it, a gentle, modest, winsome, Christian woman.

"Prayer was a reality to her," he says. It must have been! "I had great faith in her prayers, and it gave me great strength to know that she was asking God to bless me," he says. I have no doubt of it.

Many times I heard the minister's wife spoken of, only to praise her. The old liked her, she was so unobtrusive and kindly. The young liked her, she was so full of sisterly sympathy. All in the home of

that country city parish admired her sweet womanliness and Christian graces.

I do not hesitate to write these imperfect words because, is it not true that the "minister's wife" is sometimes forgotten too soon? How much the minister's usefulness is helped or hindered by the "minister's wife!" If the "minister's wife" be a true-hearted, loving, Christian woman, the *house-keeper*; the helpmeet; the warm, sunny heart *hopeful* and helpful and true; the life reverent with prayer and joyous with song, what contentment and happiness she must give! That minister is blessed indeed, at home and abroad, whose wife is such a wife. Her life is comfort, strength, encouragement. Her memory will be fragrant with blessing.

This "minister's wife" was named Isabel, and that means *consecrated to God*. She was consecrated to Him, and the serenity of her life, so consecrated, blessed the minister in his work and in his house.—*Congregationalist*.

## THE DISENTHRALLED.

He had bowed down to drunkenness,  
An abject worshipper,  
The pulse of manhood's pride had grown  
Too faint and cold to stir;  
And he had given his spirit up  
Unto the evil thrall;  
And, bowing to the poisoned cup,  
He gloried in his fall.

There came a change—the cloud rolled off,  
And light fell on his brain,  
And like the passing of a dream  
That cometh not again,  
The shadow of his spirit fled;  
He saw the gulf before,  
He shuddered at the waste behind,  
And was a man once more.

He shook the serpent folds away,  
That gathered round his heart,  
As shakes the wind-swept forest oak  
Its poison vine apart;  
He stood erect; returning pride,  
Grew terrible within,  
And conscience sat in judgment on  
His most familiar sin.

The light of intellect again  
Along his pathway shone,  
And reason like a monarch sat  
Upon its olden throne;  
The honoured and the wise once more  
Within his presence came,  
And lingered oft on lovely lips  
His once forbidden name.

There may be glory in the might  
That treadeth nations down—  
Wreaths for the crimson warrior,  
Pride for the kingly crown;  
More glorious is the victory won  
O'er self-indulgent lust,  
The triumph of a brave resolve  
That treads a vice in dust.

—F. G. Whittier.

## HOW TO READ HISTORY.

The idea often entertained in regard to reading history would be amusing if it were not pitiable. People say, as if announcing inevitable trial: "I really must read some history; I am mortified that I have read so little. Would you begin with Rollin?"

"Why Rollin?"

"I supposed one had to begin with him."

The tone becoming still more tragical. Then I arouse myself.

"Do you really want to read history?"

"Yes,"—sadly but firmly.

"Why?"

"Because everybody ought to know something of the past."

"Why?" I persist.

"Well, look at yourself, for instance; your knowledge of history adds so much to your pleasure when you travel, and seems to help you so much in your criticisms of the life and literature of to-day."

"But why do you sigh as if you were a martyr?"

"Because I hate history; it is dull, it is confused; I cannot remember it."

"Do you forget the novels you read last summer, or the people you met at the sea shore?"

"Certainly not; but they are so different. Why, the novels were interesting, and the people were either so charming or so disagreeable, so brilliant or so stupid, that I must be a dunce to forget them."

"Is there no one among all historical people that you care about?"

"Yes, I should like to know about Richard the Lion-Hearted."

"Then in the name of all that is sensible, why, if you want to find out about Richard the Lion-Hearted, do you begin with 'Rollin's Ancient History?'"

"I supposed you had to take a course."

And again appears the tone of heroic melancholy, as if "taking a course" was only a little less to be deplored than scaling the enemy's works with the forlorn hope. Now what should I do if I were oppressed with a sense of responsibility towards history, and the only person I cared about within her ranks was he of the Lion Heart. Go to Lingard's endless volumes; to Hallam's "Middle Ages"; Milman's "Latin Christianity"; or any of the ponderous histories of the Crusades? No; I should put my magic lantern in order, hang up my screen, and throw upon it again and again those marvellous pictures from "Ivanhoe," "The Talisman," and "The Betrothed." Through these pictures I should sit beside Richard in palace and chamber, should kneel with him at the high altar, and strike with him on the tented field. I should look into his bright blue eyes, should see his yellow hair floating in the soft southern air; and I dare say for a time should not care where, or in what century, he lived his mortal life. But after I knew Richard as I know my own brothers, I should surely ask who is the lovely woman she alternately caresses and despises? His Queen Berengaria? How came she his queen? Why lingers she here on these blood-stained sands, instead of living at ease in the stately palaces in distant England? Ah! you see I am driven to Agnes Strickland's "Lives of the Queens of England," without dreaming of them as history at all. Fancy how I should devour every word of her record! Those with whom she spent her days, whom she loved, whom hated, would be to me more than the companions of my own bed and board. And as I note how, after some act of weakness or folly, she crouches terror-stricken before her enraged husband, and read that with all the violence of his race he roughly thrusts her from him, shall I not inquire what was this man's race that he excuses his savage excesses by saying: "As of old, the Plantagenet is the offspring of a fiend." And the brothers with whom he was always striving, and that Philip, who sent like wild-fire through Europe the warning cry: "Look out for yourselves, the devil is loose again," when he escaped from one of his innumerable captivities,—can I rest until I know all that anyone knows of them?

And as I find myself in the presence of his parents, that Henry and that Eleanor of bitter memory, and see the latter hunting, like a sleuth-hound, the husband for whom she had sinned so grievously, to the hidden bower of Rosamond, and ever after, in burning revenge, stirring up the fiery hearts of their wretched brood of sons against him; or hear the shrill cries of Becket's murderers disturbing the midnight dreams of shuddering Europe; and, last of all, shrink with horror from the blasphemous curse that Henry flings back upon his God as he writhes upon his frenzied death-bed, must I not find out what age of this unhappy world could harbour so much human misery? And as Plantagenet, Angevin, Norman, and Saxon cross and recross the confused pages, shall I not be driven to Freeman's "Norman Conquest," lest my brain should reel in its frenzy of ignorance?

No fear of my stopping now. I shall trace the stream to its source, and even reach "Rollin" in time. I shall not be contented with rapid strides in that direction alone. I shall insist on understanding each particular in the lives of those who sat in Richard's seat, and won his crown after he had laid it by. So you see I should find myself possessed of all historical knowledge through my interest in this daring crusader, whose sword and shield have hung rusted and dull for so many centuries.

I am convinced, for almost all readers, this is the only way to read history with profit. As well eat when you are not hungry, as read when you are not interested; and, unfortunately, the older histories are dull through their formalism and pedantry, and will only be sought by those born with a passion to know how time has been filled up since the flood.

So the way is to take anybody you care for, and plunge in; the wave that bore him on will sweep you into the current of universal knowledge.—*Congregationalist*.

## SCENE OF PAUL'S DEATH.

They who will may follow him in imagination to the possible scene of his martyrdom, but every detail must be borrowed from imagination alone. It may be that the legendary is also the real scene of his death. If so, accompanied by the centurion and the soldiers who were to see him executed, he left Rome by the gate now called by his name. Near that gate, close beside the English cemetery stands the pyramid of C. Cestius, and under its shadow he buried the mortal remain of Keats and Shelley, and of many who have left behind them beloved or famous names. Yet even amid those touching memorials the traveller will turn with deeper interest to the old pyramid, because it was one of the last objects on which rested the eyes of Paul. For nearly three miles the sad procession walked; and doubtless the dregs of the populace, who always delight in a scene of horror, gathered round them. About three miles from Rome, not far from the Ostian road, is a green and level spot, with low hills around it, known anciently as *Ague Siltvia*, and now as *Tri Fontane*. There the word of command to halt was given; the prisoner knelt down; the sword flashed, and the life of the greatest of the apostles was shorn away.—*Farrar*.