

THE QUIET HOUR.

The Habit of Complaining.

"When thou hast thanked thy God for every blessing sent,"

What time will then remain for murmurs or lament?"

One of the commonest of all sins is that of murmuring and complaining. Perhaps we hardly realize that it is a sin at all, and, therefore, make no real, sustained effort to conquer the habit. We can see that a person who is constantly finding fault is very unpleasant to live with, but we too often forget that murmuring is a sin against God. The books of Moses are intended for the instruction of God's people in all ages, and no one can read them carefully and doubt that this sin is particularly displeasing to God. In fact, we are told that "when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; and the Lord heard it, and His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp." These are very terrible words, for if God heard their complaints and punished them so severely for their want of thankfulness, what does He think of us? He had been kind to them, but how little idea they could have of the infinite nature of the Divine love. The Cross has revealed to us something of its length and breadth and depth and height. They expected God to shower down gifts on the earth, but never thought those gifts would cost Him anything. We know that He sacrificed Himself to the uttermost because of His love for us, and yet we are not ashamed to complain when called to drink of His cup. Yes, I know we try to be patient and uncomplaining when a heavy cross is laid upon us, but such occasions are few and far between. It is not only the great troubles that come from God. He is watching us and testing us every hour of every day. We are told that God prepared a great fish to save Jonah from drowning, and it is also expressly stated that He "prepared" the worm which caused the prophet so much annoyance. Don't you think the veil is lifted in this case to warn us not to find fault with what God has "prepared," lest He say of us as of Israel of old: "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against Me?"

We should not be "so ready with complaint" if we realized that each temptation to murmur is an enemy to be conquered. The Great Captain is watching each soldier in His army; watching to see how he will meet this little disappointment and that disagreeable duty; pleased when he faces an indoor tempest with good humor, or an outdoor one with cheery, resolute determination.

Let us look again at the Israelites in the wilderness. Among other things, they murmured because the food provided for them was not to their liking. God heard these complaints and gave them their desire, but in this case, too, He was much displeased, and "smote the people with a very great plague." "How much murmuring about food does God hear every day. Why, some people can hardly eat a single meal without finding fault about something. Once a wife's patience gave way when her husband said the coffee was weak, the toast burnt to a cinder and the ham hard as leather.

"John Henry," she said, "I've tried faithfully to cook for you these twelve years, and you always find fault. Why can't you praise me once in a while, I'd like to know?"

He was quite astonished, for, as he said, "I've often sat down to a meal and never said a word about it. Anybody would know there wasn't any fault to be found or I'd have found it. That's just like a woman—she can't tell a compliment when she gets one."

A person who forms a settled habit of looking out for something to complain about, is generally disappointed when he can't find a peg to hang a grievance on. He might truthfully say:—

"Oh, don't the days seem lank and long
When all goes right and nothing wrong?
And isn't your life extremely flat
When you've nothing whatever to grumble at?"

The truth is, if we keep on grumbling until that blissful time arrives, we may make up our minds to spend a lifetime in this profitable occupation. Even millionaires might find something to complain about. I heard of one who had to be satisfied with a dinner of bread and milk on Thanksgiving Day. He could buy turkeys in plenty, but could not digest them. Would you like to change places with him? I wouldn't, for health is worth far more than millions of dollars. Anderson tells the story of a princess who proved her high birth by being easily made uncomfortable. A pea was laid on her bedstead, and over it were placed twenty mattresses and twenty down beds. Next morning she complained that she had slept on something hard, and felt black and blue all over; so they knew she must be a real princess. I should have thought a real princess would have been too courteous and high-minded to complain about a trifle. It is often

considered that a man who is very critical and hard to please is a man of fine taste; but is he not rather, as Daniel Webster says, "a man of fine distastes?" We might take a leaf out of Mark Tapley's book, who made a point of coming out strong under disadvantageous circumstances, when it was some "credit to be jolly." You know when a cold firebrand and a burning lamp went out to see the world, the former declared that the whole world was dark, while the latter found nothing but brightness wherever it went, for it carried brightness with it. Some people are by nature bright and cheery, while others are naturally inclined to look on the dark side; but the talent of wearing clouds inside out, "to show the bright lining," is one that can be cultivated—and it is worth cultivating too.

"What's the use uv worryin'?"
What's the use uv keer?
What's the use uv buryin'
Folks that's living here?

"What's the use uv ketchin'?"
Sorrers on the wing?
Let 'em go adylin'—
Stretch yer necks and sing."

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

A Christmas Chat.

Here is a letter from one of our old friends, Effie Letson, and very glad I am to hear that the "Lookout Regiment" is still alive:

Dear Cousin Dorothy,—

I have not written for a long time, so I thought I would write to you. I would like a correspondent or two belonging to the "Lookout Regiment," and not younger than ten or twelve years. I am a country girl, fourteen years of age. I would like them to write first. A friend of mine, belonging to the "Regiment," is visiting your correspondent, who also belongs to the "Regiment." I will close, hoping to receive correspondents. Ever a member,

West Montrose, Ont.

EFFIE LETSON.

I hope some of the members will write to Effie. It is a good time to consult about plans for bringing a little Christmas sunshine into darkened lives. If you try to fill some stockings yourselves, you will enjoy Christmas far more than if you are like the child who cares only to have his own well filled. This is what he says:

'I've written a letter to Santa,
But how shall I send it—how?
I don't know what his address is,
'Cept it's up 'mongst the ice and the snow.

"I want him to get it just awfully,
'Cause there's lots of things that I wrote
That I wanted, and I know he won't bring them
Unless he gets my wee note.

"I suppose that I might ask the postman
To take it to him when he went
To carry round papers and letters
That grown-up people have sent.

"But then he won't get it till morning.
Oh, dear! it can never go so.
I'll pin it right on to my stocking,
Right here on the end of my toe.

"Now, when Santa Claus fills up my stocking,
He'll find the note there on the toe.
And he carries so many things with him,
I'll get all I wanted, I know."

The little boy who wrote that letter hadn't much faith in the post-office clerks, had he? If they don't know old Santa's address it is time they learnt it. I read in the paper last Christmas that 20,000 letters addressed to him had been posted by children in the United States that year. What a huge mail-bag he will need this December, for a lot of children have learned to write since last Christmas, and of course they will want to send a note to the dear old fellow. It is just as well to let him know what you want, although he doesn't always bring exactly what is asked for—it wouldn't do, you know. Why, last year one little chap in a Canadian hospital asked for a real Billy-goat with horns. Such a present might be very suitable for a boy who could run and play out of doors, but just think what a commotion it would make in a children's hospital. It would be worse than Mary's lamb in school, for instead of making the children "laugh and play," some of them would be sure to cry with fear. Santa sent a race-horse and sulky instead: not a live horse, you know, for that would have been as unsuitable as the goat.

I think many poor children must almost enjoy being ill at Christmas time, for they have a far better time in the hospitals than they would have in their own homes, where sometimes they hardly have bread enough to eat, and never dream of tasting turkey, plum pudding or candy. You may be sure the hundreds of stockings hung up by the sick children in our hospitals are always well filled. I once heard of a doll which found its way

into one of these stockings, and did its duty of cheering and comforting a sick child as well as any nurse. Its first mother was a rich little girl who had plenty of other dolls; still she was very fond of Josephine—while she was new. Sometimes she was a baby in a long white dress, sometimes she was dressed as a bride in white satin, and often she appeared as a widow in bonnet and veil, with a tiny handkerchief to weep on. But after awhile another beauty was put carefully to bed at night in Josephine's pretty little bed. A cruel boy ill-treated her dreadfully, even scalping her one day when he was playing Indian. She lost one eye and an arm, and was tossed into a rubbish room, where she lay for months, feeling very forlorn and miserable. But one day she was picked up and sent with a lot of other broken toys to a dolls' hospital. There she recovered her spirits and her beauty, clever surgeons provided her with a new eye exactly like the old one, and a new arm. A fresh crop of golden curls suddenly appeared on her bald head. She was dressed in a pretty blue sailor suit, and started life a second time, with the determination to do her duty nobly. Josephine soon found herself clasped lovingly in the arms of a poor little girl, who lay all day in bed, and often moaned with pain. The room was large and seemed to be full of beds. Josephine never felt neglected now, for her new mother loved her dearly. "Nurse," she would say every night, "you won't take dolly away from me when it is quite dark and I am asleep, will you?"

One evening when she asks this question the nurse can hardly answer her, for there is a choking in her throat; and Josephine feels two hot tears drop on her face as the nurse stoops over the patient little sufferer. That night the Angel of Death passes through the ward, and carries the tired child lovingly in his arms to a land where there is no more pain. There is a smile on the white face, and the little thin arms are folded round the doll. The nurse does not take it away, for she fancies she can still hear the weak little voice saying, "You won't take dolly away from me when I am asleep, will you?"

You see even a doll may have a mission, although many of them seem to waste their short lives terribly, but I don't think it is altogether their fault, do you? Christmas will soon be here, and perhaps some of you may find a way to help your dolls and other toys to do some good in the world before they are quite dead. I say "quite dead," because, although they may not have nine lives like a cat, at least they may have two—like our friend Josephine.

COUSIN DOROTHY.

Puddings and Cake.

TO MAKE AN ENGLISH PLUM PUDDING.

Seed one pound of raisins when preparing to make an English plum pudding; mix with them a pound of currants and half a pound of minced orange peel; dust over a quarter of a pound of flour. Chop fine one pound of suet; add to it a quarter of a pound of brown sugar, half a nutmeg, grated, three-quarters of a pound of stale, dry bread crumbs. Mix all the ingredients together. Beat five eggs, without separating, until light; add to them half a pint of grape or orange juice; pour over the dry ingredients and mix thoroughly. The mixture should not be wet, but each particle should be moistened. Pack this into small greased kettles or moulds. It will fill two three-pound kettles. Put on the covers, stand the moulds in the steamer, and steam steadily for ten hours. The easier way is to get the ingredients ready the night before; mix and put them on early in the morning, allowing them to cook all day. Take them from the steamer, remove the lids of the kettles or moulds, and allow the puddings to cool; then replace the lids and put the puddings away. They will keep in a cool place for several months or a year.

TWO GOOD RECIPES FOR PLAIN PLUM PUDDING.

To make plain plum pudding, mix together one pint of stale, dry bread crumbs, one cupful of brown sugar, a teaspoonful of cinnamon, half a grated nutmeg, and half a pound of finely chopped suet. Stone half a pound of raisins and mix them with half a pound of cleaned currants and half a pound of shredded citron. Dissolve half a teaspoonful of soda in a tablespoonful of warm water; add it to half a cupful of New Orleans molasses. Add this to three eggs, well beaten, and pour the whole over the dry ingredients. Mix, and pack into greased moulds or kettles. Steam or boil for four hours.

A plain Christmas pudding is made as follows: Chop fine one cupful of suet. Stone one cupful of raisins. Dissolve a teaspoonful of soda in two tablespoonfuls of water and add it to one cupful of New Orleans molasses. Now add this to the suet, then half a pint of milk, half a teaspoonful of salt, a teaspoonful of cinnamon and three cupfuls of sifted flour. Beat vigorously for two minutes and add the raisins, floured. Pour into a well-greased mould, put on the lid, and steam or boil continuously for three hours.

FARMER'S FRUIT CAKE.

Chop fine half a pint of dried apples; cover with half a pint of cold water and let them soak over night. The next morning add a cupful of golden