

Family Department.

TEACH ME TO LIVE.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.—Psalm cxix. 33.

Teach me to live! 'Tis easier far to die!

Gently and silently to glide away.

On earth's long night to close the heavy eye,
And waken in the realms of glorious day.

Teach me that hard lesson—*how to live*,

To serve Thee in the darkest paths of life;

Arm me for conflict now—fresh vigour give,

And make me more than conqueror in the strife.

Teach me to live!—Thy purpose to fulfill:

Bright for Thy glory let my taper shine!

Each day renew, re-mould this stubborn will:

Closer round Thee my heart's affections twine.

Teach me to live for self and sin no more;

But use the time remaining to me yet,

Not mine own pleasure seeking, as before—

Wasting no precious hours in vain regret.

Teach me to live! No idler let me be,

But in Thy service hand and heart employ;

Prepared to do Thy bidding cheerfully.

Be this my highest and my holiest joy.

Teach me to live!—my daily cross to bear;

Nor murmur though I bend beneath its load.

Only be with me! Let me feel Thee near:

Thy smile sheds gladness on the darkest road.

Teach me to live!—and find my life in Thee—

Looking from earth and earthly things away;

Let me not falter, but untiringly

Press on; and gain new strength and power
each day.

Teach me to live!—with kindly words for all—

Wearing no cold, repulsive brow of gloom;

Waiting, with cheerful patience, till Thy call

Summons my spirit to her heavenly home. Amen.

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"ESPECIALLY THOSE."

CHAPTER II.—ON SICK LEAVE.

Flo is no longer a little girl; she is a grown up woman. Years have passed away, and many of the old faces are gone, and voices silent, that she knew and loved when she was young. Nurse Kettleby is dead, and the pleasant old nursery at the top of the large London house, in which she used to reign supreme, and sit reading her Bible so peacefully on Sunday afternoons, has passed into other hands, and is looked back to by Flo with that feeling of tender regret with which we are so apt to look back to certain places and scenes of our childhood. It may be a nursery or a garden, a riverside or a church, a particular window, or a nook in a shady dell, but I suppose in everybody's heart, the most unromantic of all, there is at least one spot in the world, associated with their childhood, round which the memorial ivy clings more regretfully and tenderly than all the rest! Flo's little brother, Plucky, who used to laugh, and crow, and play in the sunshine of that dear old nursery, is now a grown man, a soldier in India; and though he is so far away, and can only talk to her in letters, he is still to Flo the dearest brother in all the world. Flo's father and mother are both dead. Flo lives in a quiet house in the country, with an aunt and two cousins, who are not always very kind to her. Nobody calls her Flo now; the pet name has been dropped, and the full name of Florence substituted. In the same way no one calls her brother Plucky any more; he is Robert to every one except herself. Ah, how the old things, that were so highly

prized and little thought of in earlier days, are sometimes remembered by us in later ones, when they have all drifted away into the past, as being so sweet, we can scarcely believe that they can ever have been ours!

"Strange we never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown!
Strange that we should slight the violets
Till the lovely flowers are gone!
Strange that summer skies and sunshine
Never seem one half so fair.
As when winter's snowy pinions
Shake the white down in the air!"

Flo often longs that some one would call her by the old pet name again, and tearfully she thinks of those happy old days in the big London house, when the world seemed such a much brighter, kinder place than it does now. It seems somehow since then to have grown into a rather cold, unsympathetic world; hearts do not seem so true or so warm as they used to be; people not to be so kind or thoughtful as they were when her mother and Nurse Kettleby were alive. Aunt Lucretia is a very different woman to her own dear mother. Cold and uncertain in temper, she is not a person to be depended upon at all reasons. Sometimes she is kind and indulgent, but at others she is much the contrary, and Flo has to look out very sharply for the signal which, luckily for the household, appears on her forehead at times, announcing, "Weather stormy; beware!" The two cousins Pris and Di are not much better with regard to temper. They do not altogether love Flo, for the reason that she is so much more popular and clever than themselves. They feel that somehow or other she is a superior being. Nature has cut her out on a better pattern than themselves; and without exactly acknowledging it, they dislike her for it very cordially. This crops up at every turn, and embitters Flo's life in a way that only noble natures, subject to the petty jealousies of inferior ones, can possibly understand. Flo returns good for evil in an exemplary way. She tries to disregard her cousins' unpleasant little actions and speeches, knowing well from whence they come; but occasionally they are too much for her. Then she retires to her room, and is to be seen pacing up and down there for some minutes, like a tragedy queen, exclaiming at intervals, with emphasis, "Horrid! puny! miserable! dreadful! despicable little creatures, why do I care what you say—why, why, why? Am I getting miserable and puny, and wretched too, like you, I wonder, that I care so much and put myself in this rage? Wouldn't the grandest war-horse go mad, though, after a time, if only a sufficient number of gnats came and bit at him at once? Pris, you are really horrid; Di, you are not a bit better. I despise you both, utterly!" And having let off her wrath in a measure, she would grow calm again, and go down stairs and be ready to do anything with a kind grace that her cousins chose to ask her.

How true it is that "little foxes spoil the vines!" How many lives we see spoiled by the little foxes which creep in, and which are yet so small, they seem scarcely worthy of being taken notice of at all! Do you know, children, what are meant by "the little foxes?" They are unkind actions, and the little neglects, the cold looks, and the hasty words which have power to wound and grieve in the same measure as kind actions, graceful little attentions, and loving words heal and delight. We have much to do with our neighbor's happiness; God holds us greatly responsible for it. By infinitesimal things, God knows that we can either add to it much or take away from it much. We can either send in little foxes to spoil our brother's vineyard, or we can help to keep them out.

Remember this the next time when you are going to speak an unkind word, or give an angry look; remember that "little foxes spoil the vines," and carefully refrain. If only Pris and Di had taken to heart this truth and acted upon it, poor Flo would have had a far happier and easier time of it.

"Let us gather up the sunbeams
Lying all around our path;
Let us keep the wheat and roses,
Casting out the thorns and chaff;
Let us find our sweetest comfort
In the blessings of to-day,
With a patient hand removing
All the briars from the way."

One morning in summer time, they were all seated at breakfast; Aunt Lucretia at the top of the table facing Pris; Di and Flo at the side. Flo was a great contrast to her cousins in appearance, as well as in character. They were both very tall, and rather raw boned, with pale faces and black hair. Flo was of middle height, with a beautiful figure and fair hair, and small, pretty features, that looked quite baby like by the side of her cousins' large noses and determined chins. The signal was out very plainly on Aunt Lucretia's forehead—"Weather stormy; beware!" To the bright "Good morning" with which Flo had greeted her on first coming down, she had replied with a positive growl, "Morning," and had not said a word since. Everybody felt it best to confine themselves to general topics, and to start no subject of conversation which could possibly admit of argument; it was so clear that the mistress of the house would not argue and dispute facts this morning if she could.

"Mother will you take some more tea?" asked Pris at the end of the meal, thinking this would surely be a safe question.

"No. Don't you know, Priscilla, I *never* take more than one cup," answered her mother, in an injured tone, bristling up. "Not since we were at Hastings, three years ago, have I taken two cups at breakfast."

"Oh, I forgot," answered Pris. "To be sure it was Doctor Todd that said we ought never to take more than one cup. What a nice, clever little man he was!"

"*Has*," repeated her mother fractionally.

"Why don't you say he *is*? He isn't dead."

"Oh, well he *is*," said Priscilla, with an impatient movement, rising from the table and beginning to fold up her table napkin with an air of saying, "I can't stand this any longer. I'm off. And off she went, out at the open window into the sunny garden, to meet the postman, who was coming up the path.

Di quickly followed her, and then Aunt Lucretia and Flo were left alone. Aunt Lucretia immediately put up her glass, and began staring at her niece very pointedly through it. She fixed her eyes on the top of Flo's head, as though greatly struck by something she saw. At last Flo put her hand up to feel if the cat or the parrot had perched there by mistake; but feeling nothing more than the usual coil of plaits, she said, "Aunt Lucretia, what are you looking at? Is there anything queer or peculiar about me this morning?"

Aunt Lucretia dropped her glass, and then said deliberately, "Yes, Florence, I'm looking at your *head*. Of all the grotesque objects I ever saw!"

Aunt Lucretia here became speechless for a moment, but she presently went on:

"As I sit here, you look exactly like a Parsee with his cap on. I can compare you to nothing else."

"But it's the way I always do it," said Flo, laughing good humoredly at the comparison. "I may have done it, though, a trifle higher than usual," giving her hair a pat with her hand to suppress it. "Is that better, Aunt?"

"No, not a bit, rather worse," answered the aunt shortly. "Here, pray let me do it."

"Do what?" asked Flo, looking horrified.

"Why, put it as it should be," said her aunt.

"Oh, I couldn't!" exclaimed Flo, with an irresistible twinkle, knowing well how her aunt would come down upon her with her hand in her present mood. "I'll try to do it lower to-morrow, and I'll think of the Parsee. Hair is such a bother! you don't know how difficult it is to do, Aunt."

"Haven't I hair of my own?" snapped her