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LAI D ASIDE:

A Reflection for Crowded Workers and Hurrying Folk

In the hurly-burly of life, with duties crowding upon us, and a feeling of "So little done, so much to do" seldom absent from our minds, about the last thing the earnest worker dwells upon is the need for rest. "Absence of occupation is not rest," he may quote; and aptly, especially if his work has many avenues of effort and interest in it.

But even to those who gratefully glory in their strength—and a healthful constitution is one of the most valuable of inheritances and assets—accident or unexpected illness may come, so that the Irresistible Imperative says: "For the present thou shalt be laid aside and literally let the rest of the world go by."

Sensible folk should not need to wait for such a time to begin pondering as to life, death and immortality. But whatever an individual's pre-dispositions to such meditations in the ordinary routine of life and work, all alike may learn to reflect on such subjects when the experience of being "shut in" for any period comes upon them. If, in such a case we realize more fully that one of the constantly-needed lessons for all mortals is that which teaches us to see this life, and all that pertains to it, in clearer proportion—in the light of a larger life—then such an off-time may not only have its uses, but refresh the spirit, as well as rest the mind and strengthen the body.

To choose to spend a holiday time alone, or with one's favorite books, is one way to exercise that freedom which is in some measure inseparable from the growth of individual souls. But to be confined to one's room for a period without the strength or capacity to read, is a challenge to the reflective powers. Then our questionings or anxious concern regarding the future of this life or any other, must be met by what we have in our mental storehouse; whereby we may all learn that the way in which we exercise memory and ima-

gination in the former years inevitably affects what those wonderful faculties provide for us in the dark or doubtful days, or days apart.

As Milton wrote:—

"The mind is its own place, and of itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

The interruption of unexpected illness naturally makes every man ponder as to how far his "house is in order," and ask himself the question—Apart from my own interest in the Great Adventure, could I be content to leave conditions as they are? And if in almost every case there may be a desire that time be given for fuller service and the adjustment of various matters, that is more likely to be applicable to those in the mid years of life, when additional time or increased income may seem essential to ensure a minimum provision for home associates.

But if reflections along that line increase under one's feeling of responsibility, observation of what happens in other conditions and relationships, should at once tend to give the true sense of proportion that most humans alike have need to learn, and foster that humility of mind which comes from sane recognition of the comparative insignificance of the Unit. In other days and ways we may have laid to heart the truth in Tennyson's words:

We pass; the path that each
man trod
Is dim, or will be dim with
weeds:
What fame is left for human
deeds
In endless age? It rests with
God.

Without being cynical, some men may find comfort in the thought that "it rests with God," and not with man. For even a comparatively brief withdrawal from this world's affairs may re-impress any one with the insignificance of the

individual and the certainty of the continuance of the human procession—no matter who drops out or is laid aside. Not only is it suggested that "each one, as before, will chase his favorite phantom;" but in certain associations affecting mundane matters, evidence may be forthcoming of how readily, under certain circumstances, one or two members may act autoeratically and others demonstrate outstanding self-centredness.

To be laid aside need not necessarily have associated with it the Scottish use of a kindred phrase, "laid awa'", to lead any reflective person to ponder the passing of the years, and the inevitable parting with this present world. But even a few days of withdrawal should make any person recall the verse or prose passages with which he or she is likely to associate comfort or encouragement for what is usually referred to, from this side, as the Dark Hour, but what in many cases may indeed be an Hour of Dawn. "Forefancy your deathbed" urged a leading divine of other years; but what if Hope grows into Conviction that the death-day shall be—but another birthday—birth into a larger life!

At the same time, one need not lose all zest for life as we know it here; for the wealth awaiting us in literature alone might, for many years, keep any sane soul from saying seriously "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world."

But the questioning of the Laid Aside naturally leads to the associations with that momentous hour which, in the ordinary course, confronts each traveller—the time when the words of Ruskin shall be supremely experienced, when "Every soul of us shall for himself do battle with the Untoward, and for himself discover the Unseen." In the days of strength it need not be amiss to ask ourselves to What shall we turn,