

THE QUIET HOUR.

"Fault Finding."

We are too often like those Pharisees who, while Jesus was passing through the corn, and the sunshine of that quiet Sabbath was fast ripening the laden ears, began to raise a question about Sabbath-breaking with a keen eye to the supposed delinquency of the disciples. Is not that a picture of very much that passes for religious life in our own time? Instead of drawing the blessed instruction that we might from the words of God and from the words of Christ, we begin to ask, Is something that some one else is doing lawful? We cast stones at our brethren instead of learning from our Father.

"Could we but draw back the curtains
That surround each other's lives,
See the naked heart and spirit,
Know what spur the action gives,
Often we should find it better,
Purer than we judge we should—
We should love each other better
If we only understood!"

Perhaps it were better for most of us to complain less of being misunderstood and to take more care that we do not misunderstand other people. It ought to give us pause at times to remember that each one has a stock of cut-and-dry judgments on his neighbors, and that the chances are that most of them are quite erroneous. What our neighbor really is we may never know, but we may be pretty certain that he is not what we have imagined, and that many things we have thought of him are quite beside the mark. What he does we have seen, but we have no idea what may have been his thoughts and intentions. The mere surface of his character may be exposed, but of the complexity within we have not the faintest idea. People crammed with self-consciousness and self-conceit are often praised as humble, while shy and reserved people are judged to be proud. Some whose life is one subtle, studied selfishness get the name of self-sacrifice, and other silent, heroic souls are condemned for want of humanity.

"If we knew the cares and trials,
Knew the effort all in vain,
And the bitter disappointment—
Understood the loss and gain—
Would the grim external roughness
Seem, I wonder, just the same?
Should we help where now we hinder?
Should we pity where we blame?"

"Ah! we judge each other harshly,
Knowing not life's hidden force,
Knowing not the font of action
Is less turbid at its source.
Seeing not amid the evil
All the golden grains of good.
Oh, we'd love each other better
If we only understood!"

Jumping at conclusions is a dangerous habit. There are times when we cannot comfortably reach a conclusion by any other method—as when one's finger comes in contact with a red-hot stove. But as a rule, one who habitually jumps at conclusions, not only reaches many wrong conclusions, to his own injury, and often to the injury of others, but he loses the ability to reach conclusions in any other way.

"Could we judge all deeds by motives,
See the good and bad within,
Often we should love the sinner.
All the while we loathe the sin.
Could we know the power working
To overthrow integrity,
We should judge each other's errors
With more patient charity."

What is Home.

Recently a London magazine sent out 1,000 inquiries on the question, "What is home?" In selecting the classes to respond to the question it was particular to see that every one was represented. The poorest and the richest were given an equal opportunity to express their sentiments. Out of 800 replies received, seven gems were selected as follows:

1. Home—A world of strife shut out, a world of love shut in.
2. Home—The place where the small are great and the great small.
3. Home—The father's kingdom, the mother's world, and the child's paradise.
4. Home—The place where we grumble most and are treated the best.
5. Home—The centre of our affections, round which our heart's best wishes twine.
6. Home—The place where the stomachs get three square meals daily and our hearts a thousand.
7. Home—The only place on earth where the faults and failings of humanity are hidden under the sweet mantle of charity.

Two Old-time Love-letters.

In an old book, dated 1820, there is the following curious love epistle. It affords an admirable play upon words:

Madame.—Most worthy of admiration! After long consideration and much meditation on the great reputation you possess in the nation, I have a strong inclination to become your relation. On your approbation of the declaration, I

shall make preparation to remove my situation to a more convenient station, to profess my admiration; and if such oblation is worthy of observation, and can obtain consideration, it will be an aggrandizement beyond all calculation of the joy and exultation of yours.

"Sans Dissimulation."

The following is the still more curious answer: Sir,—I perused your oration with much deliberation at the great infatuation of your imagination to show such veneration on so slight a foundation. But after examination and much serious contemplation, I supposed your animation was the fruit of recreation, or had sprung from ostentation to display your education by an odd enumeration, or rather multiplication, of words of the same termination, though of great variation in each respective signification. Now, without disputation, your laborious application in so tedious an occupation deserves commendation, and thinking imitation a sufficient gratification, I am, without hesitation, yours,

"Mary Moderation."

Two Sermons by Dumb Preachers.

Jacob shall preach the first, with a motto for a text which is a sermon, with its firstly, secondly, thirdly, and lastly, all within itself: "Constancy of purpose is the secret of success." Jacob's sermon loses none of its force by its frequent repetition, nor is its effect weakened because with him it has to be "deeds, not words," the conviction of the truth of the lesson being impressed upon his hearers by every clatter of his four polished little hoofs, for Jacob is the donkey whose daily duty it is to draw water from the deep old well at Carisbrook Castle, in the Isle of Wight. How many of the readers of our Home journal have visited Carisbrook, I wonder? And how many remember seeing, in some of the remotest corners of the motherland, one or more of the old-fashioned wells from which, by windlass and bucket, the water had to be slowly drawn either by strong human hands or by a donkey kept for the purpose? To them the story of Jacob, as told by Averic Standish Francis, in the New York Churchman, may have an interest over and above that of the wordless sermon Jacob unwittingly preaches.

"Jacob lives at Carisbrook Castle, in the Isle of Wight, the castle in which Charles I. and his daughter Elizabeth were imprisoned, more than three centuries and a half ago. It is a beautiful residence, with its ivy-covered gateway and its noble wall and towers overlooking land and sea. And if you are of Jacob's mind and prefer rich turf to an extended view, you will find the green courtyard, with its spreading trees, a delightful place to spend a summer afternoon. On its upper slope stands a small detached building, and this you must enter if you wish to make Jacob's acquaintance.

"You will probably find him standing behind the rail on the left, regarding his visitors with thoughtful interest. On your right is the castle well, and an attendant is busy unrolling the long rope and letting down the bucket. At last one catches a faint splash as it touches the water, two hundred feet below.

"Come, Jacob," says the attendant. Jacob's ears move slightly, but he seems lost in thought. "Come, Jacob, come!" the attendant repeats, and thereupon Jacob wheels about and marches to the side of the great windlass wheel. He steps through one of the openings in its cross-beams and, without a moment's delay, sets it in motion. Soon the huge, clumsy contrivance is turning smoothly and rapidly, while the four tiny feet patter steadily on, climbing the hill which has no top. Not for a moment does Jacob pause or flag, not a glance does he give to right or left, but undisturbed by the shiftiness of his position in the swaying wheel, he trots steadily on, without haste and without rest, until, after what seems an interminable time, the bucket reaches the curb of the well. Then he does not need to be told that his task is accomplished. Without a moment's delay, he slips through the nearest opening in the wheel and returns to his position by the rail. Now is the time to offer any delicacies you may have with you, and they will be received with quiet dignity, the dignity of honest labor meeting its just reward. And then, after a few moments' rest and refreshment, he does it all over again, with the same steadiness, the same unflinching attention, the same constancy of purpose. Truly, Jacob understands the secret of success.

"Treadmills vary greatly in their character, but few of us can keep altogether clear of them; most of us have our daily 'round' of work to do. I recommend Jacob's method—it is an admirable one. He is only a little donkey, but one, at least, of his numerous visitors will always remember him, not only with respect, but with gratitude."

I will not spoil Jacob's little sermon by any comment of mine, but will now introduce for

your future consideration the story of another four-legged preacher, one, apparently, more irresponsible even than the donkey of Carisbrook Castle. It is called

THE CALF PATH.

(By Samuel Foss.)

One day through the primeval wood,
A calf walked home, as good calves should;

But made a trail all bent askew,
A crooked trail, as all calves do.

Since then two hundred years have fled,
And, I infer, the calf is dead.

But still he left behind his trail,
And thereby hangs my moral tale.

The trail was taken up next day
By a lone dog that passed that way;

And then a wise bell-wether sheep
Pursued the trail, o'er vale and steep.

And drew the flock behind him, too,
As good bell-wethers always do.

And from that day, o'er hill and glade,
Through those old woods a path was made,

And many men wound in and out,
And dodged and turned and bent about,

And uttered words of righteous wrath,
Because 'twas such a crooked path;

But still they followed—do not laugh—
The first migration of that calf,

And through this winding woodway stalked
Because he wobbled when he walked.

This forest path became a lane,
That bent and turned and turned again;

This crooked lane became a road,
Where many a poor horse, with his load,

Toiled on beneath the burning sun,
And travelled some three miles in one;

And thus a century and a half
They trod the footsteps of that calf.

The years passed on in swift fleet,
The road became a village street,

And this, before men were aware,
A city's crowded thoroughfare,

And soon the central street was this,
Of a renowned metropolis.

And men two centuries and a half
Trod in the footsteps of that calf;

Each day a hundred thousand rout
Followed the zigzag calf about,

And o'er his crooked journey went
The traffic of a continent.

A hundred thousand men were led
By one calf near three centuries dead.

They followed still his crooked way,
And lost one hundred years a day,

For this much reverence is lent
To well-established precedent.

A moral lesson this might teach,
Were I ordained and called to preach,

For men are prone to go it blind
Along the calf-paths of the mind,

And work away from sun to sun
To do what other men have done,

They follow in the beaten track,
And out and in, and forth and back,

And still their devious course pursue
To keep the path the others do.

But how the wise old wood-gods laugh,
Who saw the first primeval calf!

Ah! many things this tale might teach,
But I am not ordained to preach.

Am I not right in calling this, too, a sermon, for there is, although the writer disclaims all title to the office of preacher, behind its droll and caustic presentment, a heart-searching lesson for us all? The life of every one of us is bound up with that of others who are with us and of us now, and who will follow in our footprints hereafter. We are not meant to float idly down the stream of time, or to be blown like thistle-down hither and thither wherever the winds of heaven may find us. Let, then, the object-lesson presented to us by means of stories of two of the humblest of God's creatures help us to realize this truth, and by reading between the lines, also to arrive at a clearer conception of our God-given individuality and our responsibility for the same when we are each called upon to give an account of our stewardship. For "no man liveth unto himself." H. A. B.

A Scottish gentleman has in his employment a valet whose features are remarkably ugly. The other day the valet incurred the displeasure of his employer, who, in a fit of indignation, handed him a loaded revolver, and told him to go out and shoot the first man he met uglier than himself. The valet went out, and meeting an Irishman who he thought uglier than himself, said: "I've got to shoot you." "Shoot me? An' phat wud ye shoot me for?" The valet said: "My master gave me this revolver, and told me to shoot the first person I met uglier than myself." "Holy Bridget," said Pat, "and am I uglier than you?" "Yes," said the valet. "Then shoot, be jabbers, shoot," replied Paddy.