

## LITTLE DUTIES.

I dare not pass them over,  
The little duties mine,  
Nor think the least unnoticed  
By him, our Lord divine.

The task however humble,  
He gives my hands to-day,  
Most surely for the present  
All nobler tasks outweigh.

Enough to know he orders,  
Enough to win his smile;  
Then most distasteful duties  
Grow beautiful the while.

All lowly, loving service  
To me seems strangely sweet,  
Since the King, Creator, Saviour,  
"Once washed disciples' feet."

It must be grand and glorious  
To do great things for him—  
We might see great in little  
Where not our faith so dim.

I watch vast fields of labour,  
Which other workers fill  
With deep and earnest longing  
Like them for Christ to till.

Perhaps my single acre,  
Some precious seeds may yield,  
Which stronger hands will scatter  
Upon a larger field.

God knows, and I am leaving  
My life work in His care;  
Without His aid and blessing  
No fruitage can it bear.

But O, to know my duty,  
Then never from it swerve,  
Nor heed if great or little,  
So I but truly serve!

—Mrs. Mitchell in *Christian Observer*.

## A SALON PICTURE.

(Vanderpoel.)

Just a cradle standing empty, in the twilight's  
purple gray,  
Covers tossed and pillows showing what it nestled  
yesterday,  
And a woman worn to silence by the passion of  
her pain,  
Gazing blindly, dumbly at it, stretching trem-  
bling hands in vain;  
Just the hour when once the baby nestled closely  
to her breast,  
With soft, clutching fingers, soothing all her tired  
nerves to rest,  
Ah! the downy head of yellow and the tiny vel-  
vet cheek;  
Ah! the blankness of forever—and she sinks down  
pale and weak  
'Neath the burden of her sorrow—hard against  
the cradle's side  
Pressing tight her aching bosom where the wound  
throbs deep and wide.  
Drooping low her head so heavy in a yearning,  
loving reach,  
Till her cheek the cold wood touches, with a pitiful,  
dumb speech.  
"Empty! Empty!" sigh the shadows, creeping  
close about her ear,  
And she clasps a weak arm over that she may no  
longer hear.  
Still a lullaby the winds sobs in the casement o'er  
and o'er,  
And her heart shall hear its echo, crooning to it  
evermore;  
"He hath given He hath taken; blessed be His  
name on high."  
But that little empty cradle is the mother's Cal-  
vary.

—Carolyn Waldoe Wad.

## QUEEN VICTORIA'S HIGHLAND HOME.

A HIGHLAND DANCE AT BALMORAL.

After a day's successful deer-shooting, one of the sights of the season at Balmoral or Abergeldie Castle, but chiefly at the latter, is a deer-dance, wherein the deer do not dance, but lie impassive and dead enough, head and tail, in numbers of two, three, or more, at the chief entrance. After the royal dinner—and

the darker the night the better—long heavy torches, called "sownacks," made of splints of dry bog fir bound together with green birchen withes, are lighted and held aloft by a number of stalwart kilted Highlanders, a piper or two, splendidly radiant in tartan and silver, strike up a march, and the royal sportsmen, accompanied by all the princesses, ladies, and gentlemen of their suite, come forth into the lurid circle to view the trophies of the day. After inspection and remarks, a torch is handed to each of the princes, invariably dressed in full Highland costume, four or more of whom take their places at the head of a long line of jagers, keepers, foresters, and gillies, each with a flaming torch, to dance a reel. The piper manipulates a strathspey and reel from his drones and chanter, and all foot the light fantastic "Highland Fling," with whoops and yells and wild hurrahs. To the quick pulsations of "Monymusk" and "Hulachan," tartan kilts and plaids, brawny limbs, and jewelled belts and dirks, fleet and whirl in wild yet measured confusion beneath the lines of scintillating flame. But the powers of muscle and lung soon flag on the dull gravelly surface that serves for dancing-floor. A bonfire is made of the "sownack" stumps, amid a chorus of cheers that resound far through the dark welkin. Jingling glasses are charged with the "strong wine" of the country, and emptied to toasts, by the dancers; then royalty seeks its bed-chamber, the great clock overhead chimes forth some hour near midnight, and the grand spectacular display is over—for a night.

All the royal family are fond of dancing, and among the "events" of their sojourn in the Highlands, balls, to which tenantry and servants are all invited, have held a prominent place. As might be expected, life is gayer at Abergeldie than at Balmoral. At these balls all social distinctions are disregarded. The one fiat is "dance," which the Highlanders are not slow to do. Their dancing is characterized by much vigorous leaping, kicking, swinging reeling, thumb-cracking, and interjectional "woochs."

Another occasion of merrymaking that comes with birthdaylike regularity is the great Scottish festival night of Halloween, celebrated on the 31st of October of each year. The mystic rites of that evening, so graphically portrayed by Burns, are somewhat in abeyance of Balmoral, but instead, the Highland custom of robbing witch-spells of their terrors, through the cleansing agency of fire may here be witnessed in all its pristine glory. Blazing "sownacks," carried round the castle literally in hundreds after sunset, constitute the purifying media, and form, especially at a distance, a sight that must be seen to be fully appreciated.

All these amusements are varied by the attendance of first-class concert and dramatic companies. There is no monotony. The tone of everything said and done, grave as well as gay, is decidedly healthy. Life goes "merry as a marriage bell," whose chimes bring to recollection the fact that Balmoral has ever afforded idyllic facilities for courtship. Besides the Imperial Prince of Germany, here the Grand-Duke of Hesse and the Marquis of Lorne, wooed and won their brides. In each case there was far more wooing and fewer "reasons of state" than sentimental outsiders are in the habit of believing.

Royalty in its free, unassuming, and joyous intercourse with the Highland character of proverbial independence meets with no coarseness of feeling or action, no fawning formalities, no dissimulation, and no mistrust. The social gap between the monarch and the peasant is here bridged with a facility as graceful, as cordial, that might well be imitated by the noble and commoner elsewhere.—From "Queen Victoria's Highland Home," by J. R. Hunter, in *Harper's Magazine*.

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