

visited. Christina wrote of those holidays that they were "enjoyable beyond words; a pleasure in one's life never to be forgotten," adding that all she had seen made her "proud of her Italian blood." It appears that the little party walked into Italy by the Pass of Mount St. Gothard, for she says: "We did not tunnel our way like worms through its dense substance. We surmounted its crest like eagles. Or, if you please, not at all like eagles, yet assuredly as like those born monarchs as it consisted with our possibilities."

If we did not know that "Uphill" (which, short as it is, remains to many minds as her masterpiece) had been written in 1858, we might imagine it to be the outcome of such a pilgrimage. Mr. Mackenzie Bell aptly says that this "brief sixteen line poem reveals quaintly, with one flash of genius, a whole philosophy of life." It is not yet so widely known as to make quotation superfluous.

UPHILL.

"Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole
long day?
From morn to night, my friend.
But is there for the night a resting place?
A bed for when the slow dark hours
begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my
face?
You cannot miss that inn.
Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in
sight?
They will not keep you standing at
that door.
Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who
seek?
Yes, beds for all who come."

Much that had made the interests and pleasures of Christina's life till this time, now began to fade out of her daily living. The brothers got married. The very success of the circle of brilliant young people who had frequented the Rossetti household during its struggling time, now drew them apart into spheres of their own. So just as Christina's own genius had obtained some sort of worthy recognition (peculiarly unprofitable as it remained till long afterwards) her personal life settled down upon the narrowest lines. She was not very much over thirty when she found herself the youngest member of a household consisting of her ageing mother and two old maiden aunts. Even her elder sister, Maria Francesca, for whom Christina had a most reverent love, was much withdrawn by duties connected with an Anglican sisterhood to which she had attached herself, her younger sister Christina's self-devotion enabling her to do thus without dereliction of home duty.

Henceforth, Christina devoted herself to the old ladies, not in any self-conscious spirit of sacrifice, but with joyful loving service. From that time, with the exception of one or two brief visits to a friend in Scotland, her "holidays" were taken in little commonplace seaside or spa resorts not far from London, and always selected solely with a view to the comfort and pleasure of the seniors. She had no "study" to herself nor made her work of any importance in the household life. All her daily comings and goings were regulated in the interests of mother and aunts, so that as their age and infirmities increased, she was little seen in society, and could receive nothing in the way of formal visits in her own house—that house in Torrington Square where she lived on till her death. Indeed in time its

public rooms were converted into bedrooms for the bed-ridden sufferers.

Despite her tender love for her brother, the poet-painter Dante Gabriel, and her interest and pride in his genius, there was much in his history which must have touched her tender spirit to the quick. She was very true about it, too. She would not put a gloss on his infirmities.

There is no doubt that Christina Rossetti's love for her mother was the "grand passion" of her life. All her books, save two, were dedicated to her. After the mother's death, which occurred at a great age, and only eight years before Christina's own, they were dedicated to her memory. Through the revelations of her made by her gifted daughter, we gain a glimpse of a singularly sweet and strong character, not without some of the mental limitations common to her period, but a woman with whom tender caressing speeches were a daily habit, one delicately scrupulous in money matters and always careful how to spare trouble to everybody.

Such was the life and the surroundings which sufficed Christina Rossetti for well-nigh thirty years. From everything about her she drew good and satisfaction and delight. As a young girl she had been of pensive nature, but it was the avowed creed of her later years that "Cheerfulness is a fundamental and essential Christian virtue—the blithe cheerfulness which one can put over one's sadness like a veil—a bright-shining veil."

She was always ready to learn lessons from the quiet, patient lives about her, those, as she herself expresses it—

"Learned in life's sufficient school."

telling us how "a good, unobtrusive soul," whom we now know to have been her aunt Eliza, found comfort in the recollection "that no day lasted longer than twenty-four hours," and setting before herself and others the example of "an exemplary Christian" (her aunt Charlotte) who said "that she was never blamed without perceiving some justice in the charge." Sometimes such little autobiographic touches (their secret kept till after her death) take very beautiful form, as when she tells us—

"Once in conversation I happened to lay stress on the virtue of resignation, when the friend I spoke of depreciated resignation in comparison with conformity to the Divine will.

"My spiritual height was my friend's spiritual hillock."

Her quiet matter-of-fact "changes" sufficed to help her to vivid or beautiful imagery. The sight of a spider running down the bare wall of seaside bedroom, apparently frightened of its own huge shadow cast by the gas-jet, was to her a symbol of "an impenitent sinner who, having outlived enjoyment, remains isolated irrevocably with his own horrible, loathsome self."

The sight of swallows perched on a telegraph wire at Walton-on-Naze could give rise to a parable of subtle beauty, thus—

"There they sat steadily. After a while, when someone looked again, they were gone.

"This happened so late in the year as to suggest that the birds had mustered for migration and then had started.

"The sight was quaint, comfortable-looking, pretty. The small creatures seemed so fit and so ready to launch out on their pathless journey: contented to wait, contented to start, at peace and fearless.

"Altogether they formed an apt emblem of souls, willing to stay, willing to depart.

"That combination of swallows with telegraph wire sets in vivid contrast before our mental eye the sort of evidence we put confidence in, and the sort of evidence we mistrust.

"The telegraph conveys messages from man to man.

"The swallows, by dint of analogy, of suggestion, of parallel experience, if I may call it so, convey messages from the Creator to the human creature.

"We act instantly, eagerly, on telegrams. Who would dream of stopping to question their genuineness?"

"Who, watching us, could suppose that the senders of the telegrams were fallible, and that the only Sender of providential messages is infallible?"

She had, as we have said before, that love of all created life which did not only care for those which touched her own personality, as "Muff," the pet cat, but was also aware of links between her soul and those creatures which seem remotest from humanity. She did not think all is waste which does not serve man. She sang—

"And other eyes not ours
Were made to look on flowers,
Eyes of small birds and insects small:
The deep sun-blushing rose
Round which the prickles close
Opens her bosom to them all.
The tiniest living thing
That soars on feathered wing,
Or crawls among the long grass out of
sight,
Has just as good a right
To its appointed portion of delight
As any king."

Of course, such a temperament is open to soothing and consolation which could not touch the coarser natures which have not cultivated sympathy. She tells us how in her earlier, troubled times—

"One day long ago, I sat in a certain garden by a certain ornamental water.

"I sat so long and so quietly that a wild garden creature or two made its appearance: a water-rat, perhaps, or a water-haunting bird. Few have been my personal experiences of this sort, and this one gratified me. I was absorbed that afternoon in anxious thought, yet the slight incident pleased me.

"Many (I hope) whom we pity as even wretched, may in reality, as I was at that moment, be conscious of some small secret fount of pleasure: a bubble, perhaps, yet lit by a dancing rainbow.

"I hope so and I think so: for we and all creatures alike are in God's hands, and God loves us."

With such thoughts and feelings, vivisection was, of course, abhorrent to her, as much from the thought of those who inflict agony as of the dumb innocent who endure it. In her quiet way she worked in the cause of mercy and justice in this matter, as also in the effort to secure better legal protection for young people under the age of responsibility. She was much interested in endeavours to help the poorest girl-workers of London, such as the match-makers, jam-makers, and rope-makers. She had a friend actively engaged in this work and used to look for her accounts with great interest, saying—

"London makes mirth, but I know God
hears
The sobs in the dark and the dropping of
tears."

She would have liked herself to join in these labours, but felt that her duties kept her at home, for though by that time her dear mother had been taken from her—doubtless leaving a void which nothing could have filled so well as active good works—the two aged invalid aunts remained.

In neighbourhoodly services she abounded: she was ready to seek work for the workless: