

During that month I gained in weight and strength and, what is also much needed after a prolonged illness, self-confidence. Realizing that my holiday was fast drawing to a close, I wrote a letter of application for a position as stenographer in answer to an advertisement in one of the city papers, which were delivered daily at the house by the rural mail delivery—revelation to the city-bred girl. I was trying to analyze my feelings, and find out if I was really glad or sorry to be going, upon the receipt of the acceptance of my application, when the lady of the house interrupted my musings with the information that her maid—I suppose I should say "hired help"—was leaving right away, as maids seem to have a habit of doing, and nothing would induce her to stay. There seemed to be only one way out of the difficulty—yes, we two poor semi-invalidated creatures finally decided we would try to do the work ourselves, when and how we could, until such time as a government employment agent could send someone else.

A dozen times during the following month I felt like giving up and I know my friend felt likewise. One night I lay awake—my whole body one big ache of throbbing nerves. Something must be done. Dawn came and found me wearied, oh so wearied! My eyes burned in their sockets but I could not sleep. It was just a little after four o'clock—no one would get up for another hour. Then the thought struck me—why not get up? I did, but downstairs presented the same problem—nothing to do or, at any rate, nothing which I felt equal to doing. I opened the door and looked out. Laddie, bounding towards me, gave me an inspiration. Somewhere in the pasture were the cows—why not take the dog, locate them, and bring them in ready for milking? I found the cows after much rambling, gathered them together—later I discovered Laddie could have easily done this better than I could, and saved me running after various units of the herd who seemed to hanker after the flesh pots of Egypt. No wonder they didn't want to come—poor things—but how could a city girl be expected to know that only certain of the cows came in for milking, and the others were allowed to roam at will.

However, with the assistance of Laddie I started them off. Over my attempts to put them in the barn I would like to draw a veil. Since then I have read an article by Mr. Peter McArthur on "The Thoughts of Cows." Mr. McArthur knows just how I feel about that morning's work. I am sure no pigs, however contrary, behaved worse than that herd of poorly driven cattle. The few cows I had induced to enter the stable took up their positions in every conceivable way but the right one, for tying, except one little heifer. She was not tied as a rule, so I suppose the novelty of the thing must have appealed to her. Some of my friends say I show exceptional mechanical ability for a girl. I can take various makes of typewriters apart and put them together again and do other things like that, but for some reason I could not fasten the chain around that heifer's neck.

Finally, with what I feel sure was meant for a look of withering contempt, she sauntered off and rejoined her wandering companions. Tears of rage and chagrin rolled down my cheeks but my fit of weeping was cut short by the entrance of "the boss" and the hired men, and I'm glad to say I joined in the laugh that followed. They said all kinds of nice things about my pluck and spirit and I returned to the house chastened but comforted. When breakfast was over, the dishes washed and put away, the milk pails and cans washed and scalded, I asked permission to go upstairs and rest a while, which was readily given. As soon as I laid my head on the pillow I went into a deep sleep, a quiet, restful sleep, the kind of sleep that follows extreme physical exhaustion, from which I was awakened by Molly's announcement that dinner was ready. I certainly felt ashamed of my desertion of the other invalid, but she laughed at my consternation, and I felt so rested—so free from the usual multitudinous aches and pains that I began to feel a little less sorry I had taken a morning nap. Always after the dinner dishes were cleared away the lady of the house and I took an hour off to rest, but having slept all morning and feeling unusually well, I spent my time of resting this day doing some extra work around the house. I began to think that if only both of us spent the time that we

usually took for resting in quiet walks out of doors we would accomplish more quickly what we had set about to do, namely, the building up of our depleted physical and nervous systems.

At first my friend scouted the idea. She talked, as women will, of the miles she walked in the kitchen in the discharge of her labors—she counted the number of times she travelled up and down stairs each day—she raised apparently insurmountable obstacles, all of which it was my pleasure to remove. "If the work of your house interferes with your recreation, readjust your housework" became my slogan. My enthusiasm was contagious—at any rate the other invalid was willing to give it a trial. The bedroom floors were of soft wood, wood that would not hold paint well but would hold dust. Acting on my advice the lady of the house purchased a clean-looking oil-cloth—linoleum was too dear or we should have had that—for each of the rooms. Instead of sweeping these rooms every day as we had been doing, for bedrooms in a farmhouse seem to me to be more dusty than city rooms, the result of the men coming in from the barns with their boots full of chaff or neglecting to clean their boots after tramping through the sometimes muddy yard—we ran over them with a polishing mop usually used for hardwood floors. Once a week we gave them a thorough cleaning, but the mop did the rest. The kitchen and summer kitchen floors were treated the same—formerly they had been painted but the paint had to be renewed about every six weeks.

Then we began to plan alterations in our cooking. Our men are spoiled, so we knew we must not make too drastic changes in their diet. We must give them the same food as before, but find some way of saving time in the preparation. We were already doing all we could in the matter of breakfast. The porridge was partly cooked in the early evening and left to finish cooking on the back of the stove all night. Cold potatoes left over from dinner, were cut up small ready for heating. I have found that potatoes can be much more quickly prepared for re-heating this way if they are cut up with an empty baking powder tin or something similar instead of a knife—the sharp edge of the can cuts cleaner than a knife and the cutting surface is, of course, much greater. We always had a platter of fried pork, the farm house stand-by, on the table at noon, and there was usually sufficient left over to warm up for breakfast. Soup was a big problem. Beans—they were home grown—took a long time to pick over. We needed so many for our big family between beans for soup and beans for baking. We picked them over sitting out-of-doors in the evening. Vegetables, for the kind of vegetable soup they do not serve in restaurants, take a long time too—then they too must be prepared in the evening. It always seems such a waste of good fresh air to me to do such work as preparing vegetables for cooking, or cleaning fruit for preserving in a stuffy kitchen. A good way of cutting vegetables just the right size for soup is to put them through a meat chopper. While this work was being done the soup bone simmered on the back of the stove. It was simply impossible to give it all the time it needed in the morning, and using the stove in the evening means dispensing with unnecessary heat during the hottest part of the day.

Next came the baking. Our men did not care for iced cakes, but hot biscuits, Graham gems, sponge cookies, buckwheat and cornmeal cakes were always rapidly demolished. I knew "the Boss" simply had to have hot cakes or he wouldn't be happy, so right after dinner while the kitchen was still "mussy" I mixed my hot biscuit dough or cake batter, put the mixture in the cellar and forgot about it till nearly tea time. Biscuit doughs or cake batters prepared in this way and left to stand a few hours before baking are ever so much lighter than if baked immediately after mixing. Pancake batter is better for being mixed the day before.

The working out of these time-saving devices left most of our afternoons free. Fortunately we took our attack of open-air exercise mania at the beginning of the berry season. Almost every afternoon saw the two semi-invalids, old-fashioned milk pan in hand, sauntering down the lane to the pasture land in search of wild strawberries. Strawberry shortcake was the order of the day. I use an ordinary biscuit dough for my

shortcake, baked in jelly cake pans, and split open. The same mixture makes a splendid mock meat pie—the cake being split open, and left-over lean meat put through the meat chopper, slightly cooked to make gravy, used as filling. Strawberry season was over all too soon but then came raspberries—so our walks continued, and the cellar shelves filling with sealers of the preserved fruit testified to the profitable nature of our rambles. The demand now was for raspberry shortcake, and for this I use a plain cake batter, the same as for sponge cookies, cottage puddings or iced cake.

Sundays the object of pursuit was changed to wild flowers. By the time the berry season was over it amused me to see how the good lady of the house made excuses for further walks. We both felt so much better, so much stronger, so much more fit. Our appetites were enormous, our sleep, we had both suffered from insomnia, was restful, our weights increased—our spirits—well for myself, sometimes I could hardly believe it was I—this girl who was ready for a race with Molly or a romp with Laddie.

In the late fall I returned to my former work. I hated to go—I wanted to stay on a farm for ever, but there were others who had to be considered. I have spent nearly every holiday on that same farm since, and I continue my walk daily, rain, fine, or snow.

Business girls are realizing more and more the value of out-of-doors recreation in the effort to "keep fit," but I would like to see more of their country sisters knowing the joy of getting away from the continued "keeping at it," and finding renewed stimulus for their work in this method of "keeping fit."

Hope's Quiet Hour

The Power of Habit.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.—St. Luke 16: 10.

"The heights by great men reached and kept

Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards in the night."

A Canadian, who was wounded at Vimy Ridge, wrote to a friend his conception of the battle. He said that the men had rehearsed the "drive" over and over again, and knew just what they were to do. So they went forward, through the shells and the hail of machine-gun bullets, as they had done it so often when there was no danger. "The bullets and shells made no difference." Like children, who march out of school in orderly ranks when the bell rings for fire-drill, and march out in exactly the same order when the school is on fire, we are all creatures of habit. We make our habits and then they take the reins and drive us. We may break loose—it is sometimes done—but usually we submit almost unconsciously.

Consider the truth of our Lord's words in the text given above. You know some people who can be trusted to deal faithfully with the little duties of life—you can trust those people to be faithful in great matters also. You know people who think nothing of telling what they consider "white" lies—as if any lie could be white! Gradually they lose their sense of color until they imagine that truth is a matter of little consequence, and that any lie which seems likely to be profitable is "white."

Habit can make the most difficult things easy. Look at a musician's hands flying over the keys. He does not need to look for the notes he wants to strike, for his fingers find them instinctively, as it seems. A man who understands telegraphy can easily read a message when others can only hear unmeaning clicks. It is the same with everything which we do or hear constantly. At first we do it with difficulty, then more easily, until—if we persist—we can do it subconsciously without any trouble at all. That is the reason we can speak English so easily and a Chinaman can speak Chinese. The impossible becomes quite possible by constant practice.

Think of Daniel's habits of prayer.

He had, for many years, made it a rule to pray and praise three times a day. When that daily habit, if persisted in, meant the facing of a horrible death, he was like the Canadians at Vimy: "The bullets and shells made no difference." He still kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime." The man who had faithfully formed the habit of daily prayer, found that the power of habit was a mighty strength in the day of danger.

We all form habits. It is the little things, repeated thousands of times, which make character—good or bad character—and yet we are so careless about "trifles," as we call them. The man who is faithful every day will be faithful in great matters; the man who is shift and deceitful can never be trusted in a crisis. We are making ourselves, growing a little every day. God can see whether we are growing more ugly in soul or more beautiful. Habits—good or bad—are not easily broken.

An opportunity of gaining some advantage by dishonorable means presents itself to two men. One finds it a real temptation, to be overcome or yielded to; while the other never gives it a second thought. It is simply impossible to him and no temptation at all. If you saw a purse lying on the ground, and knew the owner, it would never occur to you to keep it for yourself. But it would be a real temptation to a person who had not acquired habits of honesty.

Consider Daniel's case. Through a long life he had formed the priceless habit of daily prayer. Like other people, he was often tired or very busy; yet his daily hours of prayer were not laid aside for such reasons. Sometimes, perhaps, he did not feel in a devotional mood; but he did not give up the habit of prayer for that reason. He was prime minister of a great empire; yet neither earthly luxury nor business of state made him unfaithful to God. He always found time—or made time by giving up less vital matters—to meet his Divine Master three times a day. Was it any wonder that the habit of a life-time had grown strong enough to stand a tremendous strain?

We need strength in these days of constant anxiety. We need it for the daily living at home; and also to strengthen the hands of those who are enduring the terrific strain of life in the trenches, on the sea and under it, and in the air. We can only gain strength from God. Let us form the habit of looking up to Him and consulting Him in the little vexations and temptations of each day. Then we shall instinctively draw on His strength when big troubles confront us.

Marie Van Vorst, in the "War Letters of an American Woman," tells of a French lady whose son was at the front. This brave mother felt that it was her part to send her son uplifting help by her faith in him, her unfailing courage, and her love, which she said covered the soldiers "like great wings of strength and protection," however dark and discouraging their condition might be.

She received a letter from her son, who wrote: "Each day we go further and further away from you, I miss so terribly your strength. I can cheerfully endure all kinds of miseries and the discomforts of a soldier's life, but my hands are always reaching out to you for strength and comfort of mind."

The mother was inspired by the thought that she could really help her boy. She made a vow that never would she look forward in thought to an evil that could come to him. She gave him to God, and found marvellous peace and strength in that great surrender. That mother helped her son grandly. Her brave thoughts went up in a steady stream of prayer for him, and she did not pray alone. He carried with him into battle a prayer she had written out for him. The paper grew worn through daily folding and unfolding. The night before his last battle he spent in prayer, facing death on his knees like our dear Leader in Gethsemane. Then he led his men forward, in a place where it was impossible to stand erect, and he was kneeling when the bullet pierced his heart.

Do I write too much about the war? It doesn't seem possible to get away from it. To forget is not to endure; and I feel always as if I were writing to the mothers and wives of soldiers—who never forget. You must do your part, like that brave French mother; sending across the