

THE QUIET HOUR.

Our Toys.

My little son, who looked from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet, grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobeyed,
I struck him and dismissed
With hard words and unkind—
His mother, who was patient, being dead.

Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darkened eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet;
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put beside his reach
A box of counters and a red-veined stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach,
And six or seven shells,
A bottle of bluebells,
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art
To comfort his sad heart.

So when that night I prayed
To God, I wept and said,
"Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We make our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good,
Then fatherly, not less
Than I, whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave thy wrath and say
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

"But we are grown-up," you may say; "we have done with toys long ago." Grown-up! Surely we must continue to grow or decay, in this life at least—whether we shall be grown-up in the next remains to be seen. Our bodies continually throw off old particles and absorb new ones—mentally and spiritually we are growing up, or down.

Have we done with toys altogether? What does the word mean, anyway? My dictionary defines it as "a trifle, a plaything, a hawble-sport." The child grows away from ball and drum, only to substitute other toys. These also are soon discarded, because new playthings crowd them out of the affections. We can't work all the time, and indeed the old saying about "all work and no play" has been proved to be true over and over again. Children get on better at school if they have a reasonable amount of play—poor things, they don't get any too much nowadays!—and the same rule holds good all through life. One finds relaxation in games, another in reading, another in fancywork; and, as long as it is relaxation, it may be a great gain. It does not always rest and refresh, though. A game of football or baseball may be far more exhausting than a hard day's work in the fields, and almost as dangerous as a battle. As for fancywork—a gray-haired lady once showed me a sofa cushion she had made nearly forty years before. Working steadily at it for weeks injured her spine so seriously that she never recovered completely from the strain. Surely that cushion was a very expensive toy.

Of course this is an extreme case; but how often do people exchange priceless treasures, such as health, eyesight or time, for some trifle of which they tire almost immediately. We poor mortals are so apt to make mistakes in the relative values of things. Like the fairy gold in the old legends, the treasures we prized so highly may prove, in the clear light of day, to be only withered leaves. We may be straining every nerve to win riches, fame or some other worldly distinction, only to find that our own soul, which we had no time to attend to, was worth more than all the riches and honors of the world put together. How often do we, like Esau, value the passing gratification of the moment more highly than our birthright of true and lasting joy.

"We barter life for pottage! sell true bliss
For wealth or power, for pleasure or renown!
Thus, Esau-like, our Father's blessing miss,
Then wash with fruitless tears our faded crown."

The story is told of a widow who had recently lost a good and loving husband. Soon after her bereavement she happened to glance at a fashion magazine. Her face paled, her eyes dilated, a nervous shudder passed over her as if she had

heard of another death. "Sleeves!" she gasped; "sleeves have changed again this month! And all my new gowns have been sent home." The great calamity of being a month behind the fashion touched her almost as nearly as the loss of her husband. Of course, a woman should be interested in clothes to a reasonable extent, but these things should not be credited with a false value.

It has been said that we don't really possess anything that can be taken from us. A miner from California, with a thousand dollars' worth of gold in his belt, was shipwrecked. The gold was heavy and dragged him to the bottom. The question has been raised whether he had the gold or whether the gold had him. That is a question we might often ask in regard to what we call our possessions. Many things are lawful and yet not expedient. St. Paul's determination not to be brought "under the power of any," might well be adopted by all of us. The hurry and worry which makes people old before their time, generally comes from a mistake in values. We use up health and nerves in racing to get ahead of our neighbors, only to find that the prize is not worth one hundredth part of the price paid for it.

Let us make sure that we are working for real treasures, not for toys that lose their value almost as soon as they are grasped. Then our labor will not be thrown away. Being busy is not everything. Some are building with gold, silver, precious stones; others with wood, hay, stubble;—and "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

curious youth, who is exciting them by a doubtful prospect of a repast. Each of the prisoners wears a downcast look that is quite pathetic. It is interesting, by way of contrast, to form a mental picture of them as they will doubtless appear when the master returns to set them free; then their sorrow will be at once forgotten, as they leap in wild excess of joy, covering him with kisses, and barking in a way that seems like a frantic effort at speech.

Signor Quadrone evidently is a sympathetic interpreter of canine nature, and has given us a picture infused with appropriate sentiment.

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

The "Pass-It-Along Club."

There had been a long silence as the family sat around the center-table, papa reading, mamma sewing, and Ralph—well, what was Ralph doing?

Mamma looked up from her work once or twice, for the boy was usually talkative after supper, but now he was still, very still. He wasn't reading, and he wasn't playing a game, but there he sat looking intently at nothing.

Even papa noted the unusual silence, and lowered his paper for a moment and looked at his son with an amused expression on his face.

"Well, Ralph?" he said at length.

The boy jumped at his father's voice and colored a little.

"Is it school, or scrapes, or what?" his father continued.

Ralph put on a bold face. "It's a club we boys have formed," he explained. "Ernest Lacy started it, and we call it the 'Pass-it-along' club."

"'Twas when Ernest got that fine new bicycle and lent it one day to Clark Benson. You know Clark is very poor, and never had a chance to ride on a wheel, except an old one once in a while, and we boys were awfully astonished to see him one day on Ernest's, because his was the best wheel in town, and you don't exactly like to let other folks take your best things—that is, unless you are very fond of the person."

This last Ralph added in a different tone. The excuse seemed rather a poor one with those eyes upon him.

"Well, at any rate, he let Clark take it one whole day, and when we asked how he happened to, he said 'twas such a fine one he thought he ought to pass it along and let someone else have some."

enjoyment out of it. And somehow we got to talking about the things we had and someone else didn't have, and how 'twasn't just fair to keep things to ourselves, and I don't know just how it was, but we said we'd pass all our good things along and let other folks enjoy them, and that's how the club started."

"Aren't you splendid!" Susie clapped her hands. "I think it's just lovely, and I'd like to help pass things along."

"Well, it isn't so easy," Ralph interrupted. "Sounds easy enough, only you don't know where to stop."

"Why do you have to stop?" mamma queried. "I shouldn't suppose there would be any limit, if you are really pledged to pass it along."

"Well, it gets to be pretty serious business," Ralph explained.

"It isn't only helping fellows do sums, and lending them books and things, but it makes you want to make folks happy when you're happy, if you are really going to pass everything along, and oh, dear me, I get all bothered up!"

He came closer to his mother, and she pressed her hand tenderly over his tumbled hair. He gave her a quick little undecided look, then broke out, speaking rapidly:

"Look here—this is what I've been wanting to say, only somehow I couldn't get round to it. I wish you'd let me have some of the boys round to supper nights. Oh, yes, I know," as his mother started to speak, "you've always been just splendid about that, and let me ask the boys, only they've all been the boys' round here who are used to having things, and I was thinking to-night when that sugar gingerbread came on and I knew ma had



From the original painting by G. B. Quadrone.

"THREE PRISONERS."

"The work of our hands—establish Thou it."
How often with thoughtless lips we pray!
But He Who sits in the heavens shall say,
"Is the work of our hands so fair and fit
That we dare thus pray?"
Softly we answer, "Lord make it fit."
The work of our hands—that so we may
Lift up our eyes and dare to pray,
The work of our hands—establish Thou it."

HOPE.

"Three Prisoners."

Of all animals, none appear so peculiarly fitted for companionship with man as the dog. This implies a sensitiveness of nature and a social instinct which would tend to make the separation of a dog from his master almost as painful as the separation of attached human friends. In rare instances, it is known that emotional suffering in a dog at the loss of a master has been so great that the animal has refused food, and so languished unto death. The dogs in our picture are not in so sad a case as that. Their imprisonment and consequent separation from human society is, let us hope, but temporary. Moreover, although in durance, they are not in solitary confinement. There is an old saying, that "misery loves company," and certainly companionship of any kind does ordinarily mitigate the pains of imprisonment; yet, in the case of these dogs, it may be that each is so occupied with yearning for his master that he fails to enliven the gloom of his comrades. In any case, we can imagine how their light, fitful slumbers are roused by every passing footfall; how their ears prick up to catch some sound hopeful of release and restoration. Just at present their attention is engaged by a visit from some sympathetic or