

THE MIND OF MA MAHONEY

BY ALICE MARGARET ASHTON.

Ma Mahoney's mind was on the clock. Eighteen years of unremitting work will train the hands to accomplish the accustomed tasks mechanically, but your mind has to be on the kitchen clock if breakfast is ready in time to get Pa to the six-thirty car and keep the older children's report cards free from tardy marks. Nor can there be any relaxing of vigilance if the children's lunch is spread on the kitchen table when they rush in precisely three minutes after the noon whistle. With such additional duties as washing, ironing, mending and the soothing of childish ills and heart-breaks, how could one's mind find much scope for excursions beyond the tyrannical dictation of the kitchen time-piece?

"Two o'clock," sighed Ma, resignedly laying aside her dish-towel at the vehement behest of her youngest, "and the wash not on the line yet. I wonder why my babies always do their teething in the hottest part of the summer?"

With a practiced hand she picked up wailing Baby Benny from his cradle and cuddled him capably against her deep and motherly breast. "There, there, honey, Ma wasn't scolding you. I did hope you'd hold off with that tooth till the weather cooled a bit, but my children are always just that forward and capable!"

Having gained his desire after persistent effort, Benny clung resolutely to his comforting refuge. Through the open window a perfect "drying" day mocked at her tubs of half-washed clothes. And the relentless hands of the clock moved forward.

"My grief, Mis Mahoney, aren't you ready to come with me to that Mother's Meeting?" The sharp voice of Sarah Bordon calling from the little front entry startled the mother from her efforts at pacifying her clinging infant.

"With my clothes still in the tubs?" she answered with her ready smile. "Not but what I'd like to go, Sarah," she added, with a longing note in her voice.

"It's always the same story," disapprovingly complained Sarah with the freedom of a friend. "It would do you good, Mary Mahoney. You just stay home and slave year in and year out."

"But I can't leave a crying baby alone—nor my wash in the tubs. School will be out in another week. Maybe then I can get away," she prosed hopefully. "Anyway, you come over to-night and tell me everything that's said and done."

Ma's resolute smile lasted until the door had closed behind her neighbor. On her way back to the kitchen she paused to lay the baby, who had dropped asleep in her arms, on the sitting-room lounge away from the heat and light. "I'll never tell why I can't go to those meetings!" she resolved grimly, as she picked up her dish-towel once more, then forgot everything else in her attempt to finish her work before supper time.

In the sultry, dusk of evening Mrs. Mahoney sought the comfort of her back porch when she heard Sarah Bordon's screen door slam. Pa Mahoney had sauntered down street, the older children had disappeared, their mother had not had time to inquire as to their destination. The two youngest had been put to bed.

Evidently indignation had not departed from the heart of Sarah Bordon.

"It's a burning shame you couldn't have been there," she began as soon as they were seated. "That talk was just intended for you, Mary Mahoney. I had as much as I could do not to come back here and take you—washing, baby and all—to that meeting! She said we wasn't to ourselves down to our kitchen tables, although she believes in good housekeeping all right. She wants us to hold meetings in our own houses, but we were all afraid to invite her. She says we must get together and get acquainted with each other and with our own front rooms! You needn't drift whichever way the wind blows," she said. "You can control your own life if you really want to and go about it right."

"How does she say we can do it?" Mrs. Mahoney's mind looked back wearily over the day just spent and over a countless procession of similar days. It was clear that she had had very little to say about her own life.

"You just do it with your mind," explained Sarah in an awed tone. "You think out just what you'd like to do and how you'd like to have things. And then you go right on acting as if it was so. And first thing you know things will be coming out that way."

"That sounds like 'made-believe' when we were children," murmured Ma reminiscently. Then indignation overcame her long-suffering soul.

"Maybe that kind of thing will work for that speaker-woman," she exclaimed scornfully. "But what'd she do, I'd like to know, if she hadn't a decent dud to her back and got only a growl when she asked for anything? What'd she do if she couldn't make her children mind, and if she had more work than two women could do and no one willing to help her do a hand's turn? How much do you suppose thinking would help then—tell me that—Sarah Bordon."

"I—I don't know," admitted Sarah faintly, rendered almost speechless by this amazing and unprecedented outburst.

Ma Mahoney drew a long breath.

Ma untied the wrappings. Carefully lifting out one of the enclosed cups she held it up for general admiration—delicate decorations of pink and green with touches of gold met their rapt gaze. "Never," she exclaimed, with tears of happiness in her eyes, "never did I expect to own such beautiful cups as these."

"I'll get you the rest of the set when I can," Pa said gruffly. "I'm a little short of money this week. Molly, you wash one of them cups and saucers for your Ma to drink her tea out of!" And handing it as if it were a high explosive, Molly eagerly complied.

Through the sultry heat of Saturday morning Molly and her mother worked happily. The house did look festive indeed with its unworked order and its jars of pretty flowers. Only from the safe precincts of the kitchen doorway were the children allowed to view its splendors.

The beautiful new china cups and plates were arranged on a spotless cloth on the little side-table. The bread was delicately sliced for the sandwiches. Molly had even laid out on her mother's bed upstairs the fresh "wrapper" and the white apron.

Ma, flushed face and hair in curl-papers, was marshaling the young ones round the dinner-table when her husband entered. Again beneath his arm was to be seen a large and aggressive package. He placed the box in his wife's hands.

Beneath the cover was a layer of snowy paper through which something blue and white shimmered softly. "You used to wear one like that," Pa managed to say awkwardly as she lifted out such a dress as she certainly had not possessed in the memory of her astonished and admiring children.

"It's true," she exclaimed in an awed whisper, "as true as fate itself!"

"What's true?" questioned Pa, who was looking for more of a demonstration.

"Why," said Ma, coming to herself, "that I have the kindest husband and the best children in all the world!"

At the appointed hour for the meeting the women poured in. If the speaker for the afternoon had lacked inspiration, she certainly could have found it in the radiant face of Mary Mahoney.

Pretty Molly, demurely serving the tea and sandwiches, filled her mother's heart with pride. The children hovering in the background were orderly and clean to an unheard-of degree. Benny Boy was conspicuous by his silence.

"It has done me good to be here," declared the pretty speaker, as she held Ma's hand in parting. "It is the mothers like you who work with their heads and hearts and hands who are doing the real things, Mrs. Mahoney."

"But I couldn't have done it if I hadn't all helped," remonstrated Ma, thinking only of her initial flight into the realms of social eminence. "Molly took care of Benny Boy and made the tea, spread the sandwiches and dusted. And all the children have been so good. I really haven't had anything to do except enjoy myself!"

The speaker smiled on Molly who came and gave the lady her hand with pretty timidity and stood in the little front porch with Ma, while the guests passed down the street.

Pa came in from the back yard where he had spent the afternoon playing with Benny Boy and surreptitiously listening to the talk through the open windows. "You keep on your toes, Ma, and we'll go down to the park to-night and listen to the band play," he suggested rather shyly for a man given to the arbitrary ruling of his household. "Molly will get supper and look after the young ones to-night, I guess."

"Sure, I will," agreed Molly. "You go on up and get Pa's other clothes ready."

In her room upstairs Mary Mahoney listened to the labored preparations for supper going on below. Eight separate times before had she remained in this room listening to the household machinery which always creaked audibly without her supervising guidance. But this time she was not helpless and weary with a warm new little bundle of humanity pressed to her heart. This time she was standing before her mirror, well, radiant, her hair waved back becomingly, the blue dress shining below her blue eyes. And she and Pa were going out together.

"Only to think," murmured Ma Mahoney with a sort of reverent wonder, "that I've brought all this about just with my mind! And it's been that easy! There'll be no telling," she added, with a deep content, "what all my family may accomplish now I'm putting my mind to it!"

Beans With Bugs In.

Every winter comes a flood of complaints about bean weevils—the little black bugs found stored in beans. Of course, after the bugs appear, it is too late to do much, but if our readers, when putting beans away in fall, would only use carbon bisulphide, they would have no trouble. This item tells how: Weevils can be killed in beans and peas by the use of carbon bisulphide. To treat these put them in a jar, tub or other vessel which can be covered tightly. Put into a glass about one teaspoonful of carbon bisulphide for each ten gallons of space in the enclosure and place the glass in with the beans. Allow them to remain in the fumes of the carbon bisulphide over night, then take them out and place in dry storage quarters. Do not take lamps or lighted matches near the material, and do not breathe the fumes.

A High Yielding Variety of Winter Wheat.

The O.A.C. No. 104 variety of winter wheat has surpassed all other varieties in average yield of grain per acre during the past few years in the experiments at Guelph and in the co-operative experiments throughout Ontario. In each of six out of seven years it yielded better than the Dawson's Golden Chaff in the experiments conducted at the homes of the farmers. In 1923 of the seventy-nine varieties, selections and crosses grown in the experimental plots at the College the six highest yielders were new varieties originated at the College by cross-fertilization.

The O.A.C. No. 104 variety is a cross between the Dawson's Golden Chaff and the Bulgarian. It is a white wheat with a white chaff and beardless head and is a vigorous grower. In comparison with the Dawson's Golden Chaff it has been even more hardy, less susceptible to smut, and almost as stiff in the straw. It has been injured by the hessian fly to a less extent than the average of forty varieties under test during the last four years.

This new hybrid wheat will be sent to Ontario farmers, free of cost, in pound lots to those who wish to conduct tests with three varieties of winter wheat this autumn and who apply to the Field Husbandry Dept., O.A.C., Guelph, Ont., for seed for this purpose.

Weeds.

The crop producing capacity of many an acre in Ontario has during the past season been reduced by twenty-five per cent. This is too heavy a charge against the land and only the rich fellows can stand the losses occasioned by weeds.

Keep weeds off the farm by plowing all the land that you intend to plant immediately after harvest. Cultivate as frequently as possible with the springtooth up to the end of October. In early November rip up the land that the weed roots may be exposed to the weather. Ribbing attachments can be placed on the springtooth cultivator which makes it possible to cover a large area in a day.

Insist on careful cleaning of the threshing machine before it comes to your farm. See that all farm machinery is free from the roots of perennial weeds before going to another field.

Rough Handling Decreases Hog Values.

A four-page leaflet has been issued by the Dominion Dept. of Agriculture (Live Stock Branch) guided by which the farmer and breeder may save many dollars. It points out that the hog is easily subject to bruises, which of course mean depreciation in value.

Rough handling is one of the causes, and one that leads to thousands of hogs being placed on the market inflected with bruises. Since, says the leaflet, 2,500,000 hogs are slaughtered in the packing plants annually, of which often 15 per cent., or 375,000 are found to have been bruised or scarred, a loss is entailed of over \$900,000. In a four-month period, during which 34,000 hogs were examined, it was ascertained that in some cases the carcasses were depreciated as much as five dollars in value, and that the average loss amounted to \$2.50 per head. In cattle, the possession of horns is often the cause of much injury and consequent loss.

Storing Apples.

Dealing with the storing of apples, the Dominion Horticulturist, M. W. T. Macoun, says that if the fruit is not disposed of at once, it should, as soon as it is picked or packed, be put where the temperature can be controlled and the fruit kept cool. A cellar often answers the purpose of a store room, but for most varieties a well ventilated room above ground with comparatively dry air, the temperature of which can be kept low, is the best. Apples such as Russets that shrivel easily, keep better in a moist atmosphere. In the autumn the temperature should be kept as cool as possible, but in the winter it should not be allowed to go below 32 to 35 degrees Fahrenheit. The cooler apples are kept without freezing the better. If kept in a private house, care should be taken that while the room is cool there is no danger of rot spreading if the fruit is wrapped in tissue or news paper.

Blue Grass With Sweet Clover.

Summer comes and away goes the blue-grass pasture. Shallow-rooted crop that it is, it cannot withstand a drought very long.

The fact of the matter is that no blue grass pasture should be permitted to grow by itself. Why not go over all the pastures and drill in a little sweet clover? This should be done in the spring for best results. I have seen farmers practicing this and they do not have to repeat the operation for several years afterward. Moreover, the blue grass is all the better and stronger for the companionship of the legume, for it profits by the added nitrogen.

Just as soon as the sweet clover is well started the blue grass becomes more robust. It may not become deep-rooted, but because of its increased nitrogen supply, it is more resistant to drought or to severe winter weather; and all the time the sweet clover continues to store more nitrogen which each year the grass improves.—G. H.

The Sunday School Lesson

SEPTEMBER 1

Jesus Heals a Nobleman's Son, John 4: 46-54. Golden Text—*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.—John 14: 6.*

I. FAITH IN JESUS, 46-50.

II. THE POWER OF FAITH, 51-54.

INTRODUCTION—Jesus has now come from Judea by way of Samaria to Galilee. He is in his own country, but Galilean unbelief warns him that there he must not expect any great success. While he is at Cana, however, there occurs an incident which becomes the occasion for an act of divine healing. We have not hitherto, in our course of studies, come face to face with this aspect of Jesus' ministry. We have seen him offering new spiritual life to men, redeeming one access to the Father for Jews and Samaritans. Now we see Jesus as the healer, both of body and of spirit. A court official of Herod Antipas, whose son is dangerously ill at Capernaum, arrives at Cana with the urgent request that Jesus will come at once to Capernaum. Jesus moved by the intensity of the father's appeal, and by the evidence of his faith, answers that his boy will live.

I. FAITH IN JESUS, 46-50.

Vs. 46, 47. The official who here comes to Jesus is in the service of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. Antipas had his seat of government at Tiberias, on the Lake of Galilee, and he would have in his employment a considerable number of administrative officers, of whom the present "nobleman" is one. Whatever was thought of Jesus at Antipas' court, this particular courtier is led to seek the Master's aid by serious illness in his home. His boy is at the point of death in Capernaum.

V. 48. Before acceding to his request, Jesus reminds the officer that the Galilean public is always demanding "signs and wonders" as the condition of faith. They will not accept a Messiah who does not perform miraculous deeds. They will not believe in God except when they see extraordinary manifestations. This is in accordance with the whole Jewish belief that God is outward, and that he is outwardly revealed. It would appear, therefore, that our Lord saw in the healing of the sick, a possible hindrance to his spiritual work, and that he only healed as necessity arose. He wished to lead men to see that God is inwardly and spiritually revealed.

In the wilderness, he had renounced the desire to make his own consciousness of divine sonship dependent on outward or miraculous chances, and hence he seeks to create in the hearts of men everywhere the same spiritual conceptions of God.

V. 49. In the present case, however, Jesus is faced not by a demand for "signs," but by a father's agony, and he consents to the request. There is in such a case no shadow of doubt that the Father wills the result, and Jesus says to the officer, "Go, your son lives." It is not even necessary for Jesus to go in person to the house.

II. THE POWER OF FAITH, 51-54.

Vs. 51-53. The event proves as Jesus had said. The nobleman is met on his way by servants who report the joyous tidings that the boy, who has passed the crisis, and is recovering. On enquiring when the change set in, he finds that it occurred at one o'clock of the seventh hour, reckoned from 6 a.m. of the previous day, the time when Jesus had said, "Your son lives," and he and his family become convinced believers in Jesus.

What appears as another tradition of the same incident is given in Matt. 8: 5-13 and Luke 7: 1-10. But in Matthew and Luke, the man is said to be a military officer, and he does not belong to the Jewish people. All the more remarkable is his faith which evokes from Jesus the surpassing tribute, "Solemnly I say to you, I have not found even in Israel so great a faith as this." We may profitably add to our study of the present incident the lessons which may be drawn from these other accounts. They show us what a great value Jesus placed on faith. Jesus wished men to see God aright, and to believe in his perfectly holy and loving will. He wished them to believe that all things are possible for God, and that no limits can be set to the power of believing prayer when men are asking not for "signs," but for grace and help, in time of need.

Equally necessary is it to remember that Jesus was conscious of being himself the special agent of God's redeeming power in Israel and among mankind. He is conscious of his divine call as the Son of God, and in the strength of that calling, and in the knowledge of his own perfect guidance by the will of God, he realizes that whatever he wills for man's good, the Father will assuredly fulfill. In a previous lesson we read that he said to his disciples, "You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This means that Jesus, as the Messiah, will be found to be the means by which God's unseen agencies of grace and healing come into communication with human life. By him our prayers ascend to the Father, and through him there descend to us pardon, light, healing and peace. He is, as we read, in another place, "The way, the truth, and the life."

DISEASE AND EVIL SPIRITS.

In the religion of the prophets there was no room for evil spirits. God filled for them the whole field of vision. But the people retained a superstitious regard for demons and spirits. People dreaded malignant spirits and sought to placate them by gifts, Lev. 17: 7; Deut. 32: 17. These frequented waste places, but they were never far away. They lived in the air and in the wilderness; they tortured man and beast. Christianity was born into a world infested by demons, like the world the Dutch missionaries entered in the East Indies (Wernick's Living Forces of the Gospel). Spirits acted in a great invisible kingdom of evil forces, with Satan at their head. Hence to cast out a demon was more than deliverance for the victim; it was a blow

struck at Satan himself. When Christ subdued a demon, it was manifest proof that he was mightier than the enemy; it was an earnest of the coming of the Kingdom of God. (See Luke 10: 18, 19; 11: 20, and compare Matt. 8: 29; Mark 1: 24; Rom. 16: 20; 1 John 3: 8.) Finally the devil and all his minions shall be destroyed in the lake of fire, Rev. 20: 10.

There was a tendency to regard disease in general as demon possession, not only derangement of the mind and nerves, but even dumbness and blindness and curvature of the spine. At the same time Jesus always speaks of two classes of infirm people, the sick as well as the possessed. Physicians might cure the sick, but in extreme cases it took the power of God to bring health just as it took the power of God to wrench a helpless demoniac out of the clutches of the evil one.

APPLICATION.

1. The nobleman in this story was of high rank and dignity in the royal service, and perhaps of royal blood. But high position, a beautiful home, lovely landscape and great wealth cannot buy immunity from human troubles and urgent need. Country life tends to freedom of social intercourse, and to free and practical expression of neighborly help. So all artificial barriers are broken down as the frantic father leaves the sick son in the home of luxury, where love and devotion and skill have done their utmost in vain, and hastens over hill and dale to distant Cana, to fall at the feet of the Galilean teacher. Jesus has been kind to others, the neighbors speak highly of him, and have great faith in him. He was the nobleman's last and only hope.

2. This is the first step toward a higher faith. It operates in the realm of the intellect. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." What are the facts? What is the truth? What principle is involved? What law explains the phenomenon? These are the questions our scientific age specializes in. The heart of this lesson is not the healing of the boy, but the inspiring of the boy's father with a true faith.

3. From believing the stories about Jesus, the nobleman passes to a higher stage of belief, that of trusting in the word of Jesus. Jesus would be loved not for his benefits, but for himself. "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken."

4. The highest and final faith is that which moves the will to decisive action. "He believed fully, altogether, in Jesus, not simply in his word, but in him, himself." This avowed discipleship included "his whole house." Vital faith is contagious, and infinitely more wholesome than discouragement or pessimism. Faith in Jesus is then a threefold process of growth, based on facts, inspired by personal trust, and coming to its fulfillment in right decisions, uplifting influence and noble deeds.



FRIEND DANDELION TELLS THE TIME.

I was in the meadow yesterday, Where the birds and the bees were all at play; I lay on the grass to look at the sky And I counted the cloud-ships floating by.

It was lovely: I'd stay there for always and all And pay no attention should anyone call.

Still, I thought, I'd better be sure— Tick! Tock! And there close by was the Children's Clock—

Dear old Friend Dandelion gone to seed;

Who dares to call it a troublesome weed?

I plucked the beautiful, silvery fluff: "Now tell me, o'd dear, when it's time enough!

Should I start for home?" I blew the seed folk,

One! Two! And three! 'Tis the children's joke!

They all flew away and I plainly heard A fairy speaking with low, sweet word:

"She's calling, calling you, calling you, dear,

In the sweetest music you ever shall hear!

When the Mothers call it is high time to fly,

For a mother's love is so deep and so high,

So wide and so wonderful, blessed and sweet—

When her voice says Come! You put wings on your feet."

—Bessie Bonbright.

"Farm products cost more than they used to." "Yes," replied the farmer. "When a farmer is supposed to know the botanical name of what he's raising and the entomological name of the insect that eats it, and the pharmaceutical name of the chemical that will kill somebody's got to pay."