

Literature, &c.

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IDEALS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

Is it yet settled *what life is?* Has experience long since tried and made the most of it? Shall the son plod on in the footsteps of the father? Shall the first child's blunders be fastened upon his children's children, and the experiment of the ignorant first comer be law to all them that come after? Is there no room for improvement? May not life in all its forms be lifted up, and hackneyed drudgery be inspired with an idea, an energy, a heartiness, which shall make it drudgery no longer? Must man forever continue the slave of habit, doing things for no more convincing reason than custom, and positively making life a dull thing, lest he should be guilty of finding it in his experience not quite so dull as represented (for it would be a shame to differ from all the world in such a comforting conclusion)?

Let us see then. There are certain things which fall to the lot of all humanity; certain things which man must do and bear. In what spirit does he do them and bear them? In what spirit does he work, walk abroad, talk with his neighbor, bury his dead, store himself with knowledge, betake himself to the house of worship? According to the spirit with which he does these things, will the field or shop, the school or study, the walk, the fireside circle, the church, the scene of suffering be to him dull, discouraging and degrading, or beautiful and full of ever increasing interest and hope.—The Christian finds his heaven in each of these; and each of them may be enumerated among the pleasures of religion.

First, then, behold the religious man at work. The first question asked about every one is: What does he do? What is his business? And this very justly; for, until a man have something to do, he has no right to be thought off in any other relation.

It is the law of Nature that man must work. An outward necessity, if not an inward one, compels him to it. Two causes keeps us always active. A restlessness of our own, an inward natural tendency to do things, or what is called an active impulse, keeps us busy always, with one or more of our faculties, creating or destroying; keeps us working for the pleasure of it, whether profitable or not. But should this inward impulse fail, Want, our stern taskmaster, threatening to cut off our supplies, still warns us from without that we must either work or die. All men work, then, somehow, either because they love to do so, or because they must. Labor affords the only means of keeping ourselves alive; and when life is secured, labor is the first condition of enjoying it. Yet labor is full of hardship. It is oftentimes degrading, narrowing and enslaving to the mind. It is so precisely as it is the labor of necessity, rather than of choice. Man's daily occupation may be a dull routine, to which he dooms himself, although a weariness, or it may be a cheerful, entertaining, instructing and improving exercise. Most men only support themselves by labor. A wise man both supports and educates and amuses himself by it. To one it is all drudgery, to another a delight. One man by the labor of his hands is rendered coarse and ignorant, the slave of habit, slow to detect opportunities of improvement, unaware of his own resources and capabilities, blind to the beauties there are around him, uninteresting for lack of thought, with nothing to say for himself when he meets his friends, a weariness to himself and others, a mere hand on the field, a mere eater and sleeper at home, to whom life is an old story altogether, slightly varied from day to day, but always duller, want and vexations of all sorts continually pressing upon him, without balanced by a little mental faculty or cheerful occupation of the mind within. The slave of circumstances, he in these dull arts of keeping himself alive. Another man from the same labor gains strength and dignity and intelligence, and becomes more and more a man, to every task to which he stops. His observation grows more active, his judgment more sound, his heart warmer and stouter, he learns to rely upon himself; he finds the resources he has within himself to draw from, he sees the significance of common sights and sounds. Nature becomes full of meaning to him, the beauty of the world increases upon him, God is manifest in every shifting cloud, or opening flower; in the mysterious process of growth he traces analogies and

correspondences with his own mental and moral growth, his soul fills with wisdom, his heart with hope and confidence, and to him life becomes more new and beautiful and interesting, the longer he lives.

So different a thing may the same work be to two men working side by side. It is the end that dignifies the means. The meanest occupation through which shines a lofty purpose, becomes glorious. No work is low or degrading in itself. The coarsest handicraft is as honorable as the most respectable profession, when the laborer respects himself, and is working for a noble end, namely, the perfection of his own nature, or the happiness of those he loves. Let a man propose to himself the higher object for which to live, and all he does partakes of the dignity of his life-plan, of his being's end and aim. Then the toil which looks immediately to bread and subsistence, looks farther too, and becomes in a higher sense part of the eternal culture of the soul; and the fruits of one's labor are not only bread to eat, but bread of life.

The religious man lives for one great object;—to perfect himself, to unite himself by purity with God, to fit himself for Heaven by cherishing within him a heavenly disposition. He has discovered that he has a soul; that his soul is himself; that it changes not with the changing things of life, but receives its discipline from them; that man does not live by bread alone, but that the most real of all things, inasmuch as they are the most enduring, are the things which are not seen; that faith and love and virtue are the sources of his life, and that he realizes nothing, except he lay fast hold upon them. For these, then, he lives. And, whatever may be his trade, to whatever work, impelled by physical necessity, or the habits of his neighbourhood, he turns his hand, this purpose of his life appears in it. He extracts a moral lesson, a lesson of endurance or perseverance, for himself, or a new evidence of God and of his own immortal destiny, from every day's hard task. He builds up not only his fortune, but himself by it; he stores not only his garner, but his mind. As he drops the seeds into the earth, all instructive Nature having caught his eye, drops other seeds that bear fruit more than once, into his soul. As he clears the ground of weeds, with unseen hand the while he pulls away the weeds of prejudice and wrong desire that are growing up to choke the plants of paradise within the garden of his heart. The sunshine on his fertile fields looks doubly clear to him, because of the sunshine of conscience in his own breast. And, as he reaps his golden grain, his soul reaps golden hopes and golden approbation in the field which he is tilling for his God.

Drudgery is one thing. True labor is another. No man has any right to be a drudge; no man was ever made for that. If true to himself, he cannot but be something more. The seeds of something more are in him. In his very nature there wait faculties to be unfolded, which he has no right whatever to neglect, faculties religious, moral, intellectual, exercising when he lifts himself above the sense of want, above the power of fear, of fortune, or of death, feels his immortality, becomes himself, what God intended him to be.—In any kind of business or labor he can find sphere for the exercise of these, his greatest faculties; if he cannot, he is bound to labor somewhere else. No one has any right to live, merely to 'get a living.' And this is what is meant by *drudgery*. Drudgery is not confined to the labor of the hands, not to any one class of occupations. There are intellectual and fashionable drudges. And there are hard-working, humble, laborers, more free, more dignified and manly in all they do, or look, or think, than any who look down upon them. Some soil their hands with the earth; others soil their minds indelibly by the pride and vanity which keeps their hands so delicate. The true man stops to conquer. The vain man wears his head aloft, while the rock is wasting from under his feet, and the glow of disinterested activity, the beauty on which he prides himself, fades from his face.

The Christian makes his business, of whatever sort, contribute equally to his acquisition of knowledge, to his amusement, to the trial of his faith, the growth of his affections, no less than to his health and his support. Into all his work he carries *thought*. He makes it a science; and so saves time for other things, while he makes his labor interesting, not the same old story every day, but full of new and valuable suggestions to his mind. To his curious mind the work of his hands becomes a practical illustration of principles; and so the thorough going doer becomes the healthy thinker.

He thinks for whom and what he labors, a quiet enthusiasm kindles in the heart of the farmer, and a new source of happiness is unlocked to him. An intelligent farmer is certainly the happiest of men. His daily toil is reconcilable with every kind of higher culture. He may make himself in every sense a man. He need not be a mere *hand*. He may trace out the laws of Nature, and let the sight of principles inspire him. He may be a philosopher on the field. He may cultivate a sympathy for all men, while every thing around him may fill him with sweet gratitude to God. The all-surrounding beauty may take possession of his soul, till in his heart unconsciously he becomes a poet. To insure this, it only needs a religious spirit, a spirit of constant self-improvement. For religion unlocks all the fountains of the soul, and puts a man gradually in possession of all his powers. He first finds out what he is and what is in him, when he devotes himself to God. If he is truly religious, he will grow intelligent, free and happy; and life to him will never lose its interest, rest will not be idleness; toil will not be drudgery. But while he bends to his work, he will be seeking truth, loving his neighbor, and communing with his God.

In labor, too, the Christian feels a sweet remuneration, when he makes himself independent of his comforts; and so is he both happy in himself without them, enjoying the triumph of his own spirit; and he returns to them with keener zest. We know not the sweetness of any pleasure, until we can forego it; we appreciate none of our advantages, until we cease to depend upon them. All things become more beautiful to us, when we find we can do without them. There can be no rest where there has been no labor. There is no sabbath to him who has not had his week of work.

From the Ladies' Companion
FORMS OF THE PAST.

Sometimes, to cheer me, as I pass
This vale of life adown,
In various forms o'er Fancy's glass
Flit shapes of old renown—
Shapes that, in history or romance,
Thronged round the author's brain—
The haughty chivalry of France,
The high grandees of Spain.

I love upon the magic scene
In dreamy mood to gaze—
For lo! before me lies the scene
That most I wish to raise.
I see, if such my bold desire,
Grey Kings by ages hid—
Whose tomb, 'till Nature's final fire,
The mighty pyramid!

I see the monarch of the East
With nations at his call—
I am, Balshazzar, at thy feast,
And view the lurid wall.
Darkness fell on the blazing light,
And from its shroud there came,
An armless, bloodless hand to write
Strange syllables of flame.

Uriah's wife—oh, fair, too fair!
Pale, statue-like she stands
Veiled only by her golden hair,
And by her marble hands.
Wild with the vision, Israel's king
Forgets his holy lyre,
Or from its chords his fingers fling
Eut sparks of passion's fire.

And, if I will, to classic land,
The land of gods and men,
I turn, and with advent'rous hand
Bring heroes to my ken:
Achilles sitting by the shore—
As solemn watch he keeps,
And listens to the billows' roar—
In lonely sadness weeps.

Urge on thy cohorts, Caesar, urge,
The day and Rome are thine:
Beat backward, as the rock the surge,
The old Helvetian line.
Triumph has built her triumphed arch:
The laurel's on thy brow—
And monarchs by the chariot march—
Jove! who has empire now?

If prone, to later days I turn,
The days of England's story;
And in my sight in splendor burn
The deeds and times of glory.
Come, Richard of the Lion Heart;
Come, warriors sheathed in mail;
Come, Barons bold, for freedom's part,
The tyrant to assail!

Come lords and lovely ladies bright,
It is the tourney's sound:
The sicken pennons wave in light,
The lists are ranged around.
Strike, minstrel, strike thy harp, to swell
The praise that none gainsay,
And in its falling measure tell,
Who bore the prize away.

Last in the glass that Fancy lends,
My native land I see;
Lo! lost in thought the hero bends,
Lo! lost in thought the hero bends,

'Tis done! we must be free!
He grasps the simple scroll that gives
Him power to lead them on:
Oh, in that face what wisdom lives—
The patriot, Washington!

Here let me drop the veil, nor try
With lesser lights to mar,
On glory's clear and lustrous sky,
That one superior star!
All heroes of the past above—
His name, on history's page,
Shines out, most worthy of the love
And worship of our age.

PARK BENJAMIN.

From the Ladies' Companion.

THE WAR-WOMAN'S CREEK.

In Georgia and North Carolina, there is hardly a river, creek, or stream, that has not connected with it some old Indian tradition. The title of the present sketch is taken from one of these—I believe one of the principal tributaries of the Notablee River, in the Cherokee Nation, North Carolina. The story, as told by the few Indians remaining since the removal in the fall of 1833, runs thus:—

Many years ago, in the first settlement of the country, a wandering party of their tribe attacked the house of a squatter somewhere upon their borders, during his absence, and massacred all his children, and left his wife covered with the mangled bodies of her butchered offspring, scalped like them, and apparently dead. She was not, however, wounded so badly as they had supposed, and no sooner did she hear the sound of their retreating footsteps, then disengaging herself from the heap of slain, haggard, pale, and drenched with her own and the blood of her children, she peered stealthily from the door, and finding her enemies no longer in sight, hastily extinguished the fire, which before leaving, they had applied to her cabin, but which had, as yet made very little impression on the green logs of which it was composed. Wiping from her eyes the warm blood which was still reeking from her scalped head, she directed her agonized gaze to the bleeding and disfigured forms of those who scarce an hour before were playing at the door, and gladdened her maternal heart with their merry laughter, and as she felt, in the full sense of her desolation, the last ray of hope die within her bosom, there stole over her ghastly face an expression as savage as was ever worn by the ruthless slayers of her innocent babes. Her eye gleamed with the wild fury of the tigress robbed of its young, as closing her cabin carefully behind her, with a countenance animated by some desperate purpose, she started off in the same path by which the murderers had departed. Heedless of her wounds and wasting blood, and lost to all sense of hunger and fatigue, in the one absorbing and fell purpose which actuated her, she paused not upon the tail of her foes, until, at night, she came up with them encamped at the side of the creek, which is indebted to her for its present name.

Emerging from the gloom of the surrounding darkness, on her hands and knees she crept noiselessly towards the fire, the blaze of which, as it flickered upwards, discovered to her the prostrate forms of the Indians, five in number, who overcome by an unusually fatiguing day's travel, were wrapped in deep sleep, with their only weapons, tomahawks, in their belts. Her own stealthily advancing figure, as the uncertain light of the burning pine fell upon it with more or less distinctness—now exposing its lineaments clotted with blood, and distorted by an expression which her wrongs, and the sight of the desolators of her hearthstone, exaggerated to a degree almost fiendish, and now shading all, save two gleaming, spectral eyes—was even more striking than the swarthy faces which she glared upon. Assuring herself that they were fast asleep, she gently removed their tomahawks, and dropped all but one into the creek. With this remaining weapon in her hand, and cool resolution in her heart, she bent over the nearest enemy, and lifting the instrument, to which her own and her children's blood still adhered, with one terrific and unerring blow, buried it in the temple of its owner. The savage moved no more than partly to turn on his side, gasped a little, quivered a minute like an aspen, and sunk back to his former position, quite dead. Smiling ghastly in his rigid face the desperate woman left him and noiselessly as before despatched all the sleepers, but one, to that long rest from which only the last trump can awaken them. The last devoted victim however, was aroused to a consciousness of his situation by the death-struggles of his companions. He sprang to his feet and felt for his weapon. It was not there, and one glance explaining