DONE EVERY DAY

AMOS. R. WELLS

THE DAY'S WORK SERIES

DONE EVERY DAY

The Day's Work Series

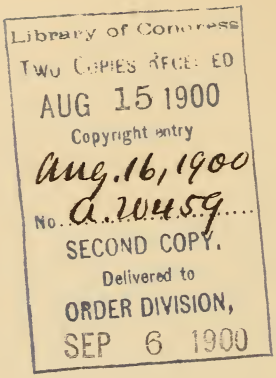
DONE EVERY DAY

Straightforward Talks
on Some Commonplaces of Life

BY

AMOS R. WELLS

BOSTON
L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
MDCCCC



Colonial Press
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, U. S. A.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

THE more frequently a thing must be done, the more need that it should be done well. The more frequently a thing must be done, the less do many men think about it. Often we plan longer, more earnestly and conscientiously, for a single unaccustomed deed that will stand alone in our lives, than through all our lives together for some of the acts of every day. This book is an attempt to show how much depends upon the "points of contact" in our social machinery, the commonplaces in which men for the most part meet. As samples I have taken the acts of bowing, talking, hearing, remembering, walking, reading, answering the door-bell, and writing letters. If I have been able to say anything helpful concerning these eight things "done every day," it will be easy to apply the truths to all other daily doings.

The essays included in this volume originally appeared in *The Outlook*, *The Union Signal*, *The New York Ledger*, *The Christian Endeavor World*, and *The Illustrated Christian Weekly*. I am grateful to the editors and publishers of those journals for their permission to send them forth in the present form.

Boston. AMOS R. WELLS.

DONE EVERY DAY.

I.

HOW TO BOW.

THE passing and momentary acts of social intercourse are more important than those of longer duration, just because they are briefer. The hand-shake which is a prelude to a conversation may be cold and distant, but the conversation may become so cheery that the hand-shake is forgotten. When, however, one merely bows and passes on, much has to be done in a short time. Assurance of sympathy and goodwill, impressions of buoyancy and heartiness, the electric thrill of friendship, fellowship, or love, — all these must be packed into that narrow act. Bowing, therefore, is one of the fine arts. Why not? To bow well one must be master of the shorthand of friendship, the stenography of brotherly kindness. Something of the nervous skill wherewith flying fingers entrap the winged thoughts of the orator must be his, to read quickly the mood of his friend, and express

prompt and cordial response to that mood. These folk of stagnant blood, who require an hour's parley to bring them to the beaming point, never bow well.

So delicate is this art that I can imagine no nicer test of the quality of a man than a walk down street with him in a town where he has many acquaintances. How the great-hearted minister, or the wise and jolly village doctor, or the kindly old maid, everybody's friend, make royal progresses wherever they go! If every bow were a bank-note and every smile a gem, they would be Vanderbilts long before their return. On the contrary, should the Gradgrinds fare abroad under such a dispensation, their surly necks would bring them hopelessly into debt!

Why, I know men upon whose lips no words are so ready as avowals of human brotherhood and arguments for social democracy, yet they will stand in converse upon these very topics and permit scores of those same well-known brothers to pass by, deigning no smile or cheery token, only at best a frigid nod. "Less bow-wow, brother," I feel like saying then, "less bow-wow and more bow!"

In truth, it is on the street, and in such incidental fashion, that we touch the greater number of lives. The president's highway is our open-air parlour, our genuine reception-room. And it would speak as loudly of a churlish spirit to be glum and absent-minded to callers in one's home, as to walk through

these thronged sky-parlours of ours in a brown study or a blue sulk.

It was my high privilege once to become acquainted with a youngster who was just learning to bow, and who enjoyed it so much that I would have gone out of my way to get a salutation from him. You could see the bow dawning while he was yet a long way off. It rose in his face like a sun. The hand on the proper side was cleared of bundles, ready for action. And as you passed, high went his hat into the air, profoundly swayed his body, and from bashful, smiling lips came fitting greeting. I always felt better for that bow.

On the contrary, there is a salute of the fingertip hand-shake order, — one which is like the passage of an iceberg in the Gulf Stream of our cheery streets, — one which hardly depresses the surly head, barely lowers the supercilious eyebrow, scarcely stirs the air with a frigid word. When will people learn why we bow with the head? We might as well perform the salutatory gesture with our toes or our elbows; we might as well remove our gloves as our hats, save for the fact that in the head are the eyes and the mouth and the muscles wherewith we smile.

A bow unaccompanied by cheery looks and words is like a fine vase with no flowers in it. If the eyes and the whole face do not bow, it is slight profit to lower the head. We have no time for Eastern, hour-

long ceremony; we have nothing but scorn for the fantastic flourishes of the dandy; but there is one glass at which all bowing must be practised, and that is the beaming, answering eye. You can never win that if you stare straight ahead, if your sullen gaze seek the ground, or if you steal a fluttering glance at your friend and uneasily shift your eyes aside. An honest, bright, and steady look from a passing friend has often been tonic to me for an entire day.

There are two personages engaged in every bow. There is — if I may coin the word without a suspicion of euchre reminiscences — there is the bow*er*, and there is the bow*ee*. And it is as difficult to receive a bow in the right way as it is to give one graciously. I suppose there is no doubt whatever that of the minor vexations of life none is so rasping as a chilly return given a warm salutation. Rightly is it called a cut, the unkindest cut of all.

If the old Greeks had had their attention directed toward this social sin, with their usual ingenuity in such matters they would have devised a fitting punishment for this class of sinners in the realm of Hades. They would have set such a man to forging horseshoes on an anvil of ice, and such a woman to cooking with ice for fuel. The bower may have all good intentions, but the bowee can thwart them; can quench his flashing eye, smother his cheeriest words, and chill his friendliest ardour. And there

are many endurable bowers in this world who are wretched bowees; active and cordial in the initiative, but cold in response. No one is an accomplished bower who is not a skilled bowee.

There are people who are always surprised by a bow. They note it with a start, open incredulous eyes, and make flurried return with the air of a convicted felon. The blinders of the horse permit it to see only what is ahead, but these persons wear blinders which permit of sudden vision only when you are at their side. They misname you, and misname the time of day, bidding you good morning when the sun is far past the meridian.

Every accomplished salutatorian (banish the fair vision this word calls up, of curls and white dresses and beribboned essays!) prepares himself beforehand for the salute. He does more than perceive the approach of an acquaintance. He bethinks himself of some interest of the man or woman, part of whose day he is to enter, — some joy or sorrow, sickness or recovery, late failure or recent success. Thus he has ready some word other than weather-remarks.

No gibe at these, however! Two beings out amid the snowflakes, the sunbeams, the wonder of blue overhead and of green underfoot — some hearty word of sympathy with each other's joy at the blessed panorama of the seasons is often the most fitting word to be spoken. But, none the less, my

Chesterfield bower must in some way make personal contact. There is no better index to the width of one's sympathies than these disjointed sentences attached to bows. An analysis of them for a single day would tell me whether you have merely that abstract, worthless interest in generalised humanity that hopes everybody is well, or the genuine article, that concerns itself with Johnny's mumps, Mrs. Broughton's trip to the city, and Mr. Capperton's lost cow.

And these whiffs of courtesy and kindness depend much for their effect upon the tone of the speaker. Let it be perfunctory and dry, and one of Mrs. Jarley's figures might profitably play your part, combined with Edison's phonograph. No phonograph cylinder, however, can catch the blessed interest wherewith certain good old ladies of my ken ask folks "how they air." Kindly dames! they have better memory for our ills than we ourselves, and keep closer tally of our joys!

I am glad that I live in a region where every one, on passing, nods and speaks to every one else, waiting for no stupid introduction any more than the wayside flower that bows good-humouredly toward you as you walk by. Especially are the farmers, the field-labourers, and the negroes fond of this hale custom. A walk along our country roads in harvest time, as the workers return jovially from their toil, ought, with its avalanche of cordial greetings, to cure

the most confirmed stickler for etiquette and calculator of who should bow first that ever studied the art of politeness with the head and not the heart.

There is no grace about it, save the grace of geniality; there is no subservience of etiquette, except the etiquette of kindly interest; but yet I must confess that the most cultured and elegant salutation I ever witnessed lacks in my eyes the charm which the old plantation uncles and aunts throw about the little ceremony. They still totter about our villages, a few of the old courtly breed, that learned finer manners from their chivalrous masters and mistresses than the younger generation is learning at our democratic schools, and then warmed the fine manners in their tropical hearts.

One of them died in our town recently, — soon all will be gone, and this earth will not see their like again, — whose manner of bowing always impressed me. He was a courtly old vagabond, was old Cuffy, and in his ragged coat and red mittens could tip his battered hat as elegantly as ever his broadcloth master of old. He would stop short to do it effectively, bow as well as his rheumatic old body would allow, call you captain, or colonel, or even general if he felt in spirits, turning to pour out after you fervent inquiries concerning the health of the ole missus and her entire family in detail, if you waited long enough, avowing each favourable report to be good hearin'.

Though I often tried to stem this tide by questions regarding his own welfare, I never elicited a word.

Now, did you ever hear how Shrewd Sally chose her husband? She was a charming girl, with hosts of admirers, and whenever she felt herself a wee bit interested in one of them, she would manage to walk down street with him in the daytime. If she found him curt in saluting his friends, or lazy, or absent-minded (though she should have excused *that*), — if she saw his arm raised always from etiquette and never from the heart, and especially if the act was performed more courteously toward a sealskin sacque than toward a faded checked shawl, and if there was never a friendly inquiry to accompany the bow, in short, if the young man exhibited any of the salutatory blemishes I have expatiated upon, she never walked with that young man again. That is how it chanced that Shrewd Sally is to-day a happy old maid!

II.

THE GIFT OF GAB.

This is a gift of God, for certainly man does not know how to give it. And in most of us it lies undeveloped. Some day our schools will develop it. Some rare day a happy conjunction of wisdom and wealth will establish in some university or other a

professorship of conversation, and find a talker fit to fill the chair. And to that favoured spot will crowd our hosts of mute philosophers, bashful wits, and tongue-tied thinkers. In our present colleges we are so taught that the conversational extraction of a fact, idea, or fancy is as difficult as a similar process applied to the beard of wheat, the barbs all pointing the wrong way! This choking, gasping simile is not a bit too fantastic. Now I do not know just how our professor of conversation will go to work to emancipate our tongues, but I am tolerably sure of some of the things he will say. When he comes, he will find his work greatly simplified, for I have made a synopsis of a course of lessons, which he will undoubtedly be glad to use!

His first lesson will teach his class that conversation is worth while. "Beloved mutes," he will begin, "you may be apologising for your muteness by the old saying: 'Speech is silver, silence is gold.' Be it so. But note that a single silver dollar will do more work, and represent at the end of a day the transfer of more value, than a double eagle in a year. 'Deep waters run still,' the proverbs continue. But they are not doing any good then. Set the deepest river to run a mill-wheel, and it plashes like a little brooklet. 'An empty kettle makes the most noise.' An empty kettle makes no noise at all unless you hammer it. Not till it is full and put to work over a

stove, does it begin to sing. No, my dear mutes, cease consoling yourselves with Carlyle's apostrophies to the Great Realm of Silence. No man yet had anything worth telling this world and left it untold. A 'mute, inglorious Milton'? That were not merely inglorious, but incredible. God does not waste his messages any more than his matter. 'Murder will out,' but all things good, too, bring their own utterance. You have been silent, my shrewd scholars, that fools might hold you wise; and wise men call you fools.

"And have any of you ever said, 'I know what I want to say, but can't say it. I can't express my thoughts'? My charming, deluded mutes, that is because you have no thoughts. You mistake emotion for thought. Moonstruck lovers, tongue-tied and lock-jawed by darts through the heart, these have *feelings*, hosts of feelings, that they cannot easily express. It is hard to translate feelings into words. That is the office of the highest poetry. But any *thought* worth the utterance seems to come direct from the higher world, and to gather in its downward rush a momentum that soon forces it from the mind through the door of the mouth. Fie, fie, ye silent ones! Your muteness is token, not of wisdom, but of emptiness. It is a thing to be ashamed of, and good talking is a thing to be proud of. Thus ends the first lesson."

In his second lesson our professor of conversation will teach his class that talking is far more than words, or even thought. "But you will quote Shakespeare, will you? Who was it that said, 'Words without thoughts never to heaven go'? That was said by the paltry king of Denmark, and is as false as he was. The commonplace conversation of lovers is proverbial. Think you those words without thoughts never to heaven go? Their wings fly straight upward as fire from the altar. There is an unspoken language which makes eloquent the 'patter of words,' as sunshine transforms the pattering raindrops into an iridescent arch of promise. The true talker must never forget that.

"Why, you can never close the door against a word with a man behind it. What is the difference between one of Shakespeare's sonnets read by a lover and by a tax-collector? Let Webster speak behind a curtain, and to that curtain all souls will turn. What if an elocutionist made the most perfect imitation of Webster's tones, accents, and inflections? Oh, words of themselves are meaningless things! Say 'birthplace' to a man from Switzerland, who does not understand English, and it will not move him. Explain the thing which the word embodies, and before his tear-veiled eyes will rise the vision of white mountain peaks lifted into the blue in solemn company, and of a rude cottage half-way up the steeps,

where the green is overhung by the white. The sheep-bell will tinkle down the slope, the shepherd's song will echo from the hills, and the lofty heights will be fingers of a giant hand pointing his soul to heaven.

"Not words or thoughts make the talker, then, but what stands back of both. For talking is the transfer of life. How to talk? Let your life speak. This does not mean to open your soul to the world as a pedler opens his pack, but as an innocent girl lets her heart make eloquent her face. Tom Raisin, the grocer, may read 'In Memoriam' to his barrel-head audience, and he will not stir their hearts as by the announcement that the price of butter has fallen. If I care for metaphysics, my metaphysical talk will draw my hearers with it; if for reaping-machines, upon reaping-machines I shall be eloquent. If I am wont to breathe air, I can only squeak in an atmosphere of hydrogen. Talking, effective talking, my attentive mutes, is the outcome of living. That is the second lesson."

And finally will come a lesson on the long and short of talking. "Brevity is the soul of wit, dear tongue-tied folk. That's the reason, by the way, why long men can never be funny. 'It will be given you in that hour what you shall say.' Oh, why is it never given us when to leave off saying? Your best talkers are masters of epigram-making, an art nearly

lost. Strange that the mail-coach trundled away, and left to our quick transit age is Johnsonian prolixities; that, having Pitman's shorthand, we have not Bacon's short tongue. I do not mean that in his desire for brevity our talker is to fall into our nineteenth-century, polite-society, timid-lazy dread of an argument. No, he will love the keen flash of word-swords in the clear air of thought, the curvetting of the steeds of evasion, the bright glitter of the armour of facts, the waving plumes of fancy, the final unhorsing shock of the Q. E. D. And he will groan in spirit as his hostess, at tournament height, dexterously switches the conversation off on a side track, fearing, forsooth, a quarrel, where was only a contest!

"And, too, ye mute ones, to be good talkers you must be good listeners. Men hate tongue-tyranny. It must be, however, an active, not a passive listening. Such a listening as the dewdrop gives the sun, flashing back his light in a myriad glorious colours; such a listening — the image is absurd — but just exactly such a listening as the deep-eyed dog gives, with ears, eyes, and wagging tail responsive to a word!

"Moreover, you must be on good terms with total silence, that terrible bugbear. We moderns are so ready to translate enthusiasm into noise that it really seems necessary, if one goes into anything with all

one's soul, to come out of it with half one's throat. To be sure, silence is a severe test. Those friends are truly knit with bonds of steel who can sit together mutely for half a day without constraint. When the friendship is of cobweb, these spiders of words must spin back and forth continually, or the frail bond will break. A holy life, prayerless because it has become itself a prayer; the teeth-clenched battle-frenzy, lying in breathless ambush; the applauding hush of a spellbound audience; these, and all silences, speak louder than words — when they speak at all.

"But there is a dead silence. Wherever warmth of feeling would naturally burst into the flame of words, silence means the coldness of indifference. Ah, the horrible moment when the talking wavers, congeals, and the benumbed assembly sits helpless as if the conversation were a wintry pond, and they had been solidly frozen in! Then must the good talker become a chatterbox, a chatterbox with a purpose, whose cheer will shame the ice to vapour. In such an emergency he will not count it a disgrace to discuss the weather. No ignoble subject, that — the ever fresh face the world puts on, now veiled in tears, now wreathed in smiles, now blushing as a young bride on her wedding-day, now stern as Lear out in the tempest. 'Good morning! Splendid weather, this!' 'Good morning to *you!* Glorious! Glorious!' Such speech is sign of a wider sympathy

with nature than the poets give the rest of us mortals credit for."

Having reached this topic of the weather, my professor of conversation will probably deem it wise to stop, and proceed to the practical application of his principles by setting the members of his class to talking together; which, if it is a coëducational college, will not be at all difficult to accomplish.

III.

ETHICS OF THE DOOR-BELL.

At the centre of the coat-of-arms which the Twentieth Century should be constructing for himself should be placed a door-bell. About few things do so many of the joys and sorrows of our modern life congregate. Its handle is seized by the postman and by the telegraph messenger. The crafty agent gives it a non-committal pull. One dainty glove of the caller clasps it, while the other clutches the card-case, and the fashionable visitor hopes that a bit of pasteboard may end the matter. Tramps ring on it their supplicatory challenge. Friends with it claim hospitality. It stands for our American accessibility of every one to every one else, — the blessed, annoying expansion and complication of our social life.

Edward Everett Hale has amusingly described the migration of a family to the wilderness to escape from door-bells. The day is not far distant when the entire human race — the civilised part of it — must go off somewhere, and stay until the tantalising wires are rusted through, and the unmerciful steel hemispheres have lost their resonance for ever. For mortal nerves can hardly endure this ceaseless tintinnabulation much longer. Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, from the early vegetable-man to the late caller or the midnight messenger-boy. One never knows what household plan it may interrupt, what train of thought throw off the track, what sweet dream startle into real terrors.

I can think of but one occasion when its din is ever welcome. That is when the dear one has risen from the dreary sick-bed, when the long suspense is over, and the muffler can be taken off. How like a salvo of happy cannon is its cheerful peal then!

In many rural districts, the small boys, keeping up an old custom, for there is no better antiquarian than your small boy, on All-hallowe'en fasten a discreetly long string to the door-bell, and from giggling ambush in the shrubbery watch the mystified housewife as she peers into the darkness, wondering "who was in such a hurry as all that?" But, in parable, this All-hallowe'en emptiness of door-bell appeal endures throughout the year. People who want to make a

market of our front door-step, beggars, formal callers, — half of our door-tendance is fruitless as the metallic vibrations which command it. And our harrassed nerves and weary feet and throttled purposes prompt us to parody a certain all too familiar poem, and cry :

"Door-bell *shall not* ring to-day,"

even though my bleeding hands must hold it!

But the majority is too strong for us. With all the world pulling at the bell, what can we do? Either emigrate with Doctor Hale's family, or dance submissive attendance. Now there is a wise proverb, approved by all good people, to the effect that whatever is worth doing, or must be done anyway, is worth doing well. Upon that proverb I base my plea for door-bell ethics. If it is fixed in the order of things that one half of mankind shall ever be dangling on the bell-handle and the other half running to open the door, let us consider how to do it as gracefully and profitably as possible.

Whoever would lay down a system of door-bell ethics must have regard to the three factors in the matter, — the bell, the person outside, and the person inside. Following this scientifically exhaustive division of the subject, let us first consider the bell.

If we must have bells, let us have bells that can be rung and that will give to the ringer some evidence that they have been rung. The door-bell is

the voice of the house. I know some fine mansions whose feeble bells always remind me of the effeminate voice of a big man I once knew. Others seem to end in a vacuum, while others yield a faint tinkling from some posterior region, like an echo from the Cliffs of Uncertainty. And not only does the house, however imposing the architecture, become inconsequential when endowed with such an utterance, but a like fate befalls the unfortunate visitor, who, no matter how bold and decisive his ordinary bearing, is made to announce his approach in a voice like a timid child's.

Then, too, it is somewhat provoking, after one has solved the Chinese puzzle of the front-gate latch, to be confronted immediately with another in the shape of a new style of door-bell. I am convinced that there will yet have to be an international congress to decide upon a uniform door-bell and front-gate latch. Shall we pull the knob out or push it in? Shall we rotate the handle or pull it up or down? And in the meantime we are in danger of breaking the apparatus or the third commandment. In the latch-string days they hindered entrance with Gordian knots; but now, with Gordian invention. Let us not permit the Patent Office to beguile us into patent discourtesy.

One word about the surroundings of the door-bell. When the high-priced man plans your house for you,

do not let him omit the shrine of Hospitality. What is it? It is the porch or the storm-door. In this safe haven, while the elements rage without, we gratefully remove our hats and lower our umbrellas, and ring on the door-bell a pæan of praise to our host. It may not harmonise well with the architecture of your house, but it will place a rare block in your celestial mansion. Leave unprotected door-bells to Polyphemus, and such cold-hearted entertainers.

But if that is the shrine of Hospitality, the cheery, well-lighted hall is her high temple. At the entrance of an ancient house stood a statue of Hermes, the god of travellers. In our Christian homes, I am sure that a bright light in the hallway is no unacceptable offering to the Father of Lights. The nature of the visit, whether it is to be constrained or easy, dull or jolly, is decided, you know, during the two minutes when the guest is taking off his wraps.

The second factor is the person outside. How impossible to separate one's character from anything one does — even the ringing of a door-bell! My caller need send in no card. That importunate peal signifies Doctor Eager. That is Miss Timid's little tip-tap. And those three jerks can mean no one but Master Hurry. It is not at all every one that knows how to ring a door-bell properly. I do not know which is worse, — the dainty pull which scarcely dis-

turbs the spider in the bell's brass dome, or the imperial pull which disturbs the entire neighbourhood. One results in the caller's leaving, unheard and angry, and the other in our angry attendance.

Either, however, is to be preferred to that summons of impatience which repeats itself while we are arising from our chair, and once again while we traverse the length of the hall. Strange, that people who would never insult us with their voice, should be so discourteous with our door-bell! You have heard the not incredible story of the philosophical English doctor, who wrote an entire volume while waiting on his patients' door-steps. If you are addicted to the ring of impatience, begin to court the Muse, and compose at least one sonnet between your pulls on the bell.

But the crowning virtue of the person outside is to know when to ring at all. Among the first of our unformulated social beatitudes is this: "Blessed are they who know when to visit, for they shall be invited to come again!" Knowledge of a person's busy days is a preliminary to calling as necessary as an introduction. Infelicities of behaviour or of speech mar fewer friendships than infelicitous ringing of door-bells. And until we know our friend well enough to know when our visitation will be a joy, and not a visitation in the more uncomplimentary sense of that word, let us stay away altogether.

And finally we come to consider the person on the inside. If the exterior virtue is patience, the interior excellence is promptness. A memory of my childhood will ever remain vivid. I was canvassing for some child's magazine, and felt, as all agents feel, that I was an outcast from humanity. I had received all degrees and varieties of rebuffs, and the world was very black, and life not worth living, when in a certain swiftly opened doorway stood the vision of a smiling young lady, who said at once, in tones whose heartiness makes sweet vibrations in my memory still, "*Come right in!*" They did not subscribe to my magazine, but, as I went away, the world was bright and life worth living again, and I registered a vow which I still occasionally think of, that *my* front door should be an equally gracious place. That was a very heretical family, I afterward learned, but I shall always hold their front door very orthodox.

I cannot help thinking that, in memory of their tardy door-bell attendance on this earth, Saint Peter will be judiciously slow in admitting through the heavenly portals some otherwise excellent persons. And those who in their life allowed their servants to perform that gracious office — will the good saint receive them in person, or send a subordinate? And I wonder if we wouldn't make more efficient use of our opportunities, ("opportunity," you know, means

an "open door,") if we were more zealous openers of these wooden doors of ours.

Indeed, I begin to see that this difficulty, like so many others, is conquered by interpreting it. Translate the door-bell's jangle into terms of Christianity, and it makes the sweetest music. I would not lose one strain of it, even the book-agent's. It stands now not merely for the tiresome accessibility of everybody to everybody else, but for neighbourliness and friendship, for helpful contact with people one would never meet did they not seek to turn one's front door-steps into a market; in short, for a thousand blessed chances to put Christianity into practice. It is the parable of human intercourse daily read out to us from the "*New* New Testament."

If we knew that in the celestial hierarchy was a certain "Angel of the Door-bell," — a testing angel, who made occasional experimental pulls at our bells for proof of our practical Christianity, — would we change any of our habits in that case? Would we urge others to go to the door or go slowly and surlily ourselves? Ah! in most real truth we are all "door-keepers in the house of our God." Let us consecrate our door-posts with the warm, red love of Him who is the ever-open Door.

IV.

A GOOD FORGITTERY.

My blessings on the old lady who gave me this title! "I've a poor memory, but a good forgittery," said she. Happy old soul!

You know Samuel Rogers's poem, "Pleasures of Memory"? Our grandfathers bound it up with Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," and Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination," and our fathers gave this "Book of Pleasures" to our mothers in courting days, when hope and imagination, at least, if not memory, held bliss galore. No one cares for poor Rogers nowadays, but if he had only added to the trio the Pleasures of Forgetting, how we would all read him!

And yet we are ashamed of a good forgittery. What school drill develops it? What sermon preaches the duty of oblivion? Professor Mnemosyne enrolls his hundreds in classes for the study of his Great Memory System. Where is Professor Lethe? "The Art of Never Forgetting," — that is the alluring title of an advertising pamphlet which has won the tuition fees of thousands.

But the comfort of a good forgittery! There comes a time to every housekeeper when a bottle of water is worth ten bottles of ink, and many a

time to every soul-keeper when a flask from Lethe's stream were more to be desired than all the writing-fluid of the recording angel. The world has scrawled upon our brain-tablets memories of harsh words, unjust deeds, scowling skies, petulant whimpers, lifted eyebrows, cold faces, all in very black ink, and we have lost the sponge! The art of forgetting at will? Let us hope that some great philosopher of the future will develop it. Until he comes, may not an ordinary human being venture upon a few hints?

In the first place, my dear Fretter, don't be ashamed to forget your worries. Be deaf to the sage's cry: "Reason them down! Argue yourself happy!" Suppose you are stifled in bad air. "Go to!" cries the chemist. "Let us purify this air. We will absorb the carbon dioxide. We will set free inspiring oxygen. Fetch me my retort!" But in the meantime you smother. So philosophy could transmute your ill to good, could prove the value of the drizzle to the plant, of the cold shoulder as a means of grace to your soul. So you would become at length optimistic, through logic and discomfort. But common sense is optimistic brightly and readily, through oblivion. Ignoble, do you say? Why, every one would call that tired man a fool who should painfully concoct a soporific, when the nearest bed would give him sleep, yet many men think happiness unworthy, unless one toils for it.

And in the second place, my dear Fretter, possibly your forgittery is poor, because your memory is too good. You have probably been taught that every fact contributes to your science. You have probably learned to delight in those indiscriminate shovelfuls of truth which are worse than emptiness. Dear me! if all meat is food to our palate, — novels of MacDonald and Ouida, history of the Tartars or the Greeks, — how can we learn wisely to receive and reject emotions and unbidden thoughts?

In the last place, you have certainly neglected, my dear Fretter, to develop and train your forgittery. And now you are indignant. "I can't control my feelings! When you have lived a little longer in the world, young man, and have had some of my bitter experience, you'll not talk such nonsense!" That is as fretful and foolish as the child's "I can't!"

You can keep from opening your hand, can't you? eat or not at your pleasure? cheat and steal, or refrain, as you will? So close is the connection between this brain and ourselves that we forget that the brain is just as much one of the soul's instruments as the hand or the tongue, — an upper servant, but still a slave.

And yet in some ways we do train this slave. We teach him to store away, compactly and curiously, all manner of rubbish, but entirely neglect to teach him

the skill and duty of housecleaning and keeping clean. Of course, I know that all the natural currents of this world flow in upon the mind, and it is hard to sweep the rubbish out against them. But it can be done. Let me give you my three rules for forgetting. They are comprised in the mystic words: "Discrimination, Occupation, Supplication."

Discrimination. Every man's mind is his castle. Fools give Dame Circumstance the key. They keep open house to her tribe. A rap at the door is passport to entrance and entertainment. In they throng, priest and tramp, king and cutthroat, and the first-comer gets the best room. My dear Fretter, learn the use of the drawbridge and the moat. Scan new arrivals through the portcullis bars. Send the devils away and let the angels in. But in some unguarded moment the devils will enter. Then,

Occupation. Crowd them out with better folk. Especially take to heart, my languid Fretter, this rugged maxim: Physical hurry best cures mental worry. You have probably run too much to head. You have no long roots buried in the moist soil. Every sunbeam wilts your surface growth. Gladstone's wood-chopping, Tolstoi's ploughing, are no small part of the lessons those great men teach.

Why, do you know the man of the future whom evolution is to bring forth, — evolution and labour-saving machinery and the higher education? A

diminutive creature, spindling legs and arms, hands just able to grasp a pen, dainty jaws, poor teeth, bald head, near-sighted eyes, but with a mighty forehead, and an absolutely unexampled cranial capacity. That is, he is to be in perfection what so many are already becoming, — a machine cunningly devised to generate immense volumes of high-pressure steam, but with the safety-valve omitted.

Men ought to be built like the Deacon's wonderful "one-horse shay," strong all over, warranted to run a hundred years to a day, and go to pieces all at once and nothing first; no long-drawn-out agony of patching up an organ here, a nerve there; no weary dragging around by overworked halves of bodies of decrepit other halves, with squeak and rattle and sway. My man of the future must have a superb set of teeth to cut up fuel for that superb thought-generator, and limbs which can draw off its superabundant energy, or I shall expect an explosion as certainly as if I had put a fulminating cap in the poor creature's upper story, with a lighted fuse at the end of it.

I do not recall a single instance of a man busy habitually at manual labour who seemed unhappy. The hand-worker has a sense of creation. Contact with Nature has given him somewhat of her large outlook. He seems transported into a wider life, with his petty worries far behind. We overwrought

thinkers, careworn men of figures and stocks, anxious household Marthas, how amused and disgusted we are by the contempt with which a farm-hand or a kitchen-maid receives our mental woes! A man who is seeing with exultation of soul a trim house growing skyward under his hammer and saw, glistening with fresh wood and firm with its accurate joints, has scant sympathy with the parson's grief over a chilling prayer-meeting, with the teacher's groaning anent the mental inertia of his pupils, with his wife's fears concerning the next payment on the mortgage, or the wildness of their son John. All these worries seem immaterial and unsubstantial by the side of the solid joy his hands have builded. The self-satisfied optimism of Nature, with whom he has been so intimately at work, has entered his soul.

Who that has tried it will deny the efficacy of this antidote to worry? Some brisk, physical task, entered upon, it may be, with shrinking and loathing and a heavy heart, — that is a sad sorrow which this will not cure; that is a deep-seated mental malaria which will not out with the perspiration; those are well-furrowed wrinkles which Nature's loving hand cannot smooth away.

But there are some papers which receive too faithfully the impression, and no complete erasure is possible. And there are some sorrows which write with indelible ink. The recourse then is to mark out with

other ink. Do you know that the best way to blot out a word is to write over it some other word? If physical work will not erase your worries, you may easily blot them out with fresh thoughts overlaid.

Here comes in play the blessed faculty of reading and study. In the good time coming, when that supersensitive, dainty product of human evolution shall have caused also, by the law of supply and demand, the appearance of the physician of the mind, to supersede our doctors of the body, books will be ranked high in the materia medica, and libraries will be added to the apothecaries' shops. For the careworn housewife with humdrum duties will be prescribed Dickens and Scott, Charles Reade and Thackeray. For the nervous scholar, worn out by failure or success, the druggist will wrap up a copy of George MacDonald, or Charles Lamb, or Emerson. For the quivering man of ledgers and day-books the wise physician will order a course of treatment in history or science.

It is perfectly possible for any one, in these days of books, to fit up for himself the withdrawing chamber of some study, however humble, in history or science or literature or art, the furnishing and adorning of which will become an increasingly attractive work, and which will serve as his all-but-impregnable castle of defence against ordinary human worries. Each for himself, however, must learn what task,

physical or mental, is best fitted to withdraw him from his vexations. But for all, occupation is the best mode of forgetting.

This will not be easy. It means the taming of those intangible, mysterious thoughts and emotions which we must conquer and capture, having never seen or touched them, upon which we must learn to play, having been so long played upon by them. Many a time, at some unexpected moment, the expelled cares and worries will sweep back upon us in a triumph all the more bitter for our temporary disenthrallment. There will be needed many stiffenings of the spiritual backbone. There will be needed even the supreme conviction that happiness is a duty, that peace and equilibrium of soul is the only worthy condition of spirits born for the calm reaches of eternity.

Yet, with all man can do by work and will to hold in thrall his spirit, there are many sorrows too strong for him, many defeats too bitter for unaided recovery. Happy his lot if through the unworded mystery of prayer he can summon Omnipotence to his aid. Natural means must be plied at first, for not even the old pagan would have the gods help the wagon out of the rut, till the wagoner had put his shoulder to the wheel. But if work and will both fail, there is an upward glance, there is an appeal whose weakness is its strength, there is a power which descends

along the trembling line of an honest prayer, in whose might we may all be able to forget the things that are behind, and reach out to the things that lie before us.

V.

THE TYRANNY OF SOUND.

HEARING is the most tyrannical of the senses. We easily shut eyes and mouth against unpleasant sights and tastes. We need not handle what is disagreeable to the touch. Closed windows and deodorisers keep the nose tranquil. "But the tongue can no man tame." Wherever I go, unless it be into a vacuum, sound, the snake, creeps sinuous in, and stings me on the ear.

There is something fearful in its omnipresence. The poet in his garret would write an elegy, but up from a neighbour's piano floats a waltz, and his mind, that should beat spondaic, flutters off into tricksy trochees. "Annie Laurie" plays havoc with the accountant's figures. "Shall we have fish for dinner, Edward?" and the inventor's bright idea is gone for ever.

Of course, the poet may go to the woods, but removal is always greater interruption than any waltz could be. The accountant may stop his ears,

but the resultant interior roar is worse than "Annie Laurie." The inventor may tell his wife to shut up, but his remorse of conscience will check invention for an hour, at least.

And sound, the snake, has a hundred arms, like the monster of mythology. You may cut off one arm, but two spring up to take its place. Whatever process you follow in diminishing the sound increases your sensitiveness in like ratio. If you still a conversation in order to think, a whisper will be greater annoyance than the conversation was. If you close doors and windows upon a street song, the act has drawn every nerve tenser for magnifying the subdued strain.

And if you chance to kill the snake, it haunts you. "Music, when soft voices die, vibrates in the memory." Every one remembers Mark Twain's pathetic account of the manner in which the ridiculous rhyme, "The conductor when he takes his fare," destroyed the mental peace of his entire circle of acquaintances. It is seldom that touches so persecute us, or that sights so harry us with haunting reproductions. Rarely do tastes and odours thus resuscitate themselves. Sound is the most tyrannical of the senses.

Of course, this is because sound speaks most familiarly to the mind. It is the least impersonal of the senses. It suggests human presence as readily as touch and taste suggest matter. These air vibrations

are more marvellous than the magic carpet of the Arabian Nights, because they not only transport us swiftly, but multiply us. By their mischievous aid, we can project our individualities at the same time into the tense thought of the philosopher, the anxious letter of the lover, the complicated designs of the capitalist. We may send ourselves wherever air is.

How recklessly people use this weird power! I shudder at thought of the millions of throbbing heads now dotting this din-ful world, the piteous closed windows through which dash victorious floods of noise, the clattering pavements, grating voices, shrill tones assaulting sick-beds, aching brows knit over books in fierce despair, the coarse, imperious thoughtlessness of selfish sound, until as I meditate I long to escape out of the quivering air, into the blessedness of still space!

Thank heaven for the quiet people! — for the people who do not insist on impressing their mood on every one else. I am glad to know that Bess is happy unto singing, but Bess's bliss is not always a mental stimulus. I rejoice to know that Ben, poor fellow, notwithstanding his trouble, is able to whistle so buoyantly and shrilly; but there are many things besides Ben's cheerfulness about which I should like to think this morning. There is no one who does not, on occasion, admire and envy the possessor of "fine animal spirits." And there is no neighbour

of one so blest who is not made often to wish those spirits a little less animal and more human: a little less irrepressibly puppyish, kittenish, and tigrine, and more self-contained and thoughtful of others.

Dear legion of girls, who will sit down this morning, light-hearted, deft-fingered, to your "practising," (strange that in this "practical" age that term should be all-but-appropriated by you and the doctors!) bethink yourselves, as your fresh voices or dainty hands "scale up and down" with laudable iteration, whether it is only fond mamma or watchful music teacher whose hours you set beating to your "la-la's" and "tum-tum's." And if you are "practising" on a nervous, fretting invalid, on brains trying to think, or even on some ugly bachelor who likes to read his newspaper in peace, then oh, kind legion, less Chopin and more Beethoven, closed windows, back parlour, soft pedal, — and there will be more music in the world, after all!

The careless question, indifferent to what fruitful current of thought it splashes in; droning conversation insistently imposed upon wandering-eyed victims; the loud voice characteristic, they say, of us Americans; the myriad interruptions, so trivial, so potent — is the sin less because it is thoughtless? Is the egotism more pardonable because it is unconscious?

Why, suppose our bodies as sensitive to the movements of others as our ears to their sounds. I dance

with joy, and set my neighbour, old Mrs. Rheumatic, to waltzing. I wring my hands, and Jack Jolly must perforce wring his. I shake my fist, and hit that stranger across the street. How long before the lawyers would make us exceedingly careful how our motions set the wonderful air vibrating? But though legal process is sometimes, rarely, invoked against church bells and factory whistles, the air is practically high sea to every one, and we may strike blows on nerves, wring them, or set them to dancing, at our lordly will.

I can imagine various stout, soft-motioned people reading this with incredulous sneers. "What a terrible ado about nothing!" Yes, I know you, good folk, that you can sleep through a political jollification. I have heard of your writing love-lyrics next door to boiler factories. My probing forefinger has often failed to rouse you from your self-communion. You have heard of Sal, standing with bare, horny feet on a live coal. To her father's exclamation she drawls out, "Which foot, paw?"

We should like such feet, and such ears, — we, the sensitive majority. We envy you your blessed stolidity, your abnormal immobility. We must wear boots, and gloves, and dark glasses for aching eyes, but what shall we wear on our ears, what sound-filter, noise-stifler? How escape the thrall of this tyran-

nical sense, whose chains are made of necessity and civilisation and neighbourliness and courtesy and even love?

Shall we set out on a crusade of education, and teach all who play with noise-explosives what a complex, delicate, sensitive process all thinking is? how intangible its tools, how elusive its formulæ? Ah! that were a task — to teach the thoughtless what thinking means — for which thinkers yet need many a year of quiet meditation. Can we divest sounds of their appealing personality, invent some philosophical charm which shall render them insignificant as the drone of bees or splash of waves? What wealth awaits such an invention!

No, I can name but one palliative for sound's tyranny, and that is love. Love, an absorbing love of one's own work, is a castle which the sound-legions assault in vain. But love for the sounds themselves, born of love for their makers — this opens our castle gates, and the sounds come in like prattling children, to play half noticed about our feet; tyrannical still, as a laughing babe is tyrannical.

We are not annoyed by the noise of our own mills, our own children, our own voices. And thus the only satisfactory conquest of annoying sounds is the loving sympathy which makes them as our own. If we would not go through this world shrinking morbidly from its multiform noises, we must know how

to become interested in the purposes, characters, and lives of all men.

And then only, I think, shall we begin to learn the blessedness of sound's omnipresence; to see how the democratic air, pulsating with machine clatter, children's shouts, maiden's light laughter, church bells and organ tones, interlaced with the myriad voices of nature, is binding all things, with what we have called sound's tyranny, close together into the one "Republic of God."

VI.

MASTERS OF THE MAIL.

I DO not mean masters of the male. That is not a disputed matter, if you consider "master" of common gender. Nor do I mean postmasters. They are slaves of the mail. But are they the only slaves? Far from it. I shudder when I read the glowing reports of the post-office department. These increasing millions of stamps sold and letters carried, these cheapened rates and wider facilities, over which governmental authorities are so cheerful and party orators so exultant, — what are they all but added chains about the necks of hundreds of thousands of my fellow creatures, whose uneasy lives are more

and more confined to the conscience pigeon-holes of their secretaries!

Slaves of the mail? Why, I wonder whether all the sighs that ascended from plantation bondmen ever equalled in bulk of unrest the groans of letter-galled humanity! I wonder if all the bricks ever made without straw, heaped in one monster pyramid, would overtop the world's pile of letters, written when one had nothing to say! Slaves of the plantation, you must remember, did useful work. But our slaves of the post-office — what time-wasting, nerve-shredding, life-desolating efforts are most of theirs!

"The heartless wretch!" shrieks Miss Sukey Sentiment. "How could I exist without my weekly letter from Clarinda? I should not know what she is wearing, or making over to wear, or how her headaches are, or what calls she is making or receiving. Life would be a blank!"

"The uncouth boor!" exclaims Mrs. Solomon Littletodo. "Doesn't he know that letters cement and perpetuate friendships, that they enrich us with the thoughts and experiences of others, that they develop powers of expression, and by the emulation of friendly example incite us to culture?"

"How he exaggerates!" cries Mr. Ralph Ready-pen. "In half a day I can write up my correspondence for a month, and spend the rest of my time in the delight of reading the answers. He is evidently

one of these lazy empty-heads who spend two hours in thinking how to begin."

Pardon me, my dear ladies and gentlemen, but I was not referring to you. Enjoy, if you can, your luxuriant inanities, your prolix sentiments, your light-weight missives of lighter-weight brains. You are not slaves of the mail, but its fools. You do not know what it means to have an epistolary conscience.

An epistolary conscience! that wakes us up in the night with a start, in order that accusing bands of unanswered letters may flap their ghostly sheets at us out of the dark! that hangs on our necks like an old man of the sea — of the seal, I should have said in the days of wax — and weighs down our spirits after our work is done with thought of other work to be done, — work that friendship and fashion and ethics bid us call enjoyment.

An epistolary conscience! that will not rest ignobly satisfied with postal cards or even with a double sheet of personal gossip! that scorns the fashionable device of inch-high script! that counts procrastination a treason to friendship! that sees ever floating before it the ideal letter-writers of the world, — men and women whose epistolary wit and wisdom have added all ages to their list of correspondents and made Time himself their postman.

To such people the post-office presents this problem: Here am I, a man who delights in making

friends and keeping them; a man who needs the help that friendships give, and loves to repay, if possible, the blessed boon. But in the uneasy state of our American population, of which it may with certainty be said that if a man is here this year it is because he was elsewhere last year, I find my friends continually exchanging the friendship of the eye, ear, and hand for the friendship of the United States mails.

Not many years pass by before, with this yearly transformation working always outward and never backward, the accumulation becomes appalling. I review the throng of them. Were these post-office friends of mine to return, how many hours a week would it require to maintain a fair acquaintance with them? More than any toiler could spare. It takes longer to write a letter than to make the most informal call; and yet I am expected to maintain an epistolary acquaintance with all these people.

They are noble men and charming women. Yes, indeed. The world would be a dismal place without their friendship. But in the days before that meddlesome Ben Franklin set on foot his pernicious letter-hotbed schemes, did friends forget each other *then*, I wonder, though sundered fifty stages? That twenty-six-cent letter once a year, when it came, did it not do more to rekindle the fires of love and kindly interest than all our thirteen two-cent missives? I trow so.

In its best estate, the letter is a bald substitute for the living voice, the flashing eye, the eloquent features. Men can help each other little by correspondence. What do I care if my friend has just bought a new encyclopedia, or had his house freshly shingled? I want to know that he has thoughts of me, that he will turn to me for advice and consolation, will share with me his greater joys, and give me the same companionship when I ask it. But this comes not by way of a monthly eight-page diary. We lived together once, and spoke in no dead language to each other. A letter a year will paint the cable that binds us, will ward off the rust of time, and I ask no more.

Think, too, of the injustice these importunate letters do to our present friends. Why, if every one lived up to his mail duties, my friends and I would be obliged to fix on some time to walk to the post-office together. We should have no other time for intercourse. "Better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off." Thus spoke the wisest of men. Better is the hearty eye-to-eye of the present than the penned narration of the past. While I can talk with my wise neighbour over the fence, I shall not write up my journal for my friend over the Rockies.

"This is selfish," you cry in horror, forgetting that my friend over the Rockies has, or should have, his own fence-comrade, also. Should have, I say, for I have small sympathy with those past-tense natures

which think any second set of friendships rank treason to the first. They are ceaselessly "dreaming of old friends far o'er the sea." Old friends may be best, together with the proverbial old wine and old books, but if a man has not brotherly kindness enough to be making new friends ever, he has not enough brotherly kindness to deserve to retain an old friend. Hold to the old friendships, I preach and I practise, but hold to them by something stronger than the thread which surrounds a packet of trivial letters.

Oh, fie! indignant lover, I am not talking to you. *Her* letters are not trivial, though they contain nothing more weighty than reports of the weather. The most aimless scribbling of that dear hand is worth its weight in diamonds, I agree with you. Mail-trains should run with extra speed, and mail-clerks give heavy bonds for the safe transmission of such precious freight. There cannot be too much of it, though the big earth be filled with the letters that should be writ.

And oh, fie! homesick boy, I am not talking to you, either. You may sit up two hours a day, after work is done, and jerk your eager, yearning pen over more space than separates you from father and mother, sister and home. It will be good for you, and good for them. What a terrible thing homesickness must have been before Ben Franklin's couriers and our express train furnished swift alleviation.

My voice is raised for those, and those alone, who with brain and body wearied by long hours of service, approach that pigeon-hole crammed with unanswered letters as a worn-out slave falters toward a treadmill. Friends, let us be slaves no longer, but masters of the mail! There is no greater treason to friendship than allowing its joys to become duties. Far better a postal card where zest is, than twenty pages interlined with groans. Far better a circular letter (would they were fashionable) with good-will, than a dozen special letters with halting will. Far better the impersonal typewriter, if it means love, than the most characteristic chirography, spun by indifferent fingers.

Let us say frankly to our correspondents, "Friends, as when you were in my town you did not gauge my love to you by the number of hours I spent at your houses, or the number of words I spoke to you, so let us not adopt such mean standards now that we are parted. When you were here we passed far beyond that uncomfortable stage of formal calls, primly alternating, far beyond the time when width of smile must match width of smile and each took jealous note of the pressure of hands. As in that happy time, let us speak only when the heart moves us, and for the rest be silent, understood."

Then, the writing of true letters will begin. Then, no bank-messenger will carry loads as valuable as the postman's. Then, letters will be prized for their

rarity as now they are dreaded for their frequency. They will be handed down as precious heirlooms. All slave-work degenerates, but free work grows nobler. Then, epistolary giants will appear again on earth, for we shall be masters of the mail.

VII.

THE ART OF WALKING.

If men and women were as stupid in their brains as in their feet, how ashamed they would be! If their hands so lacked deftness, their tongues alacrity, and their souls the faculty of continuance!

The foot is the brain's minister of introduction to things fair and worthy. Is the forest a balm for the heart-ache, is the hilltop a soul-tonic, the sunset doubt's medicine, are fresh air and sunshine the compound elixir of life? Then how shall they be wealthy with health and wisdom whose feet are clogged with the criminal cannon-balls of sloth or carelessness, or the weakness and disease which spring from these?

Hardly greater is the distance that parts the creeping baby from the strutting man than that between the ordinary walker and the owner of real feet. Feet are real when, unpierced by "venomed stangs," they are able for a series of springing, glad contacts with old earth, stretching out over forty miles, say, for a

day's delight; able to do it the next day and the next, up hill, down dale, over stone, log, or furrow, without poisoning the eye's enjoyment or the thought's musings with sharp reminders of their existence.

The wise men are now much concerned with discussions of manual training. Not at all amiss would be as vigorous a discussion of pedal training. In anticipation of it, I offer the following pedestrian maxims. "Let him who reads" — walk!

Imprimis: A purposeful walk is a delightful walk. Those who do not know *why* they walk will never know that they enjoy it.

Health is adequate object for a walk; and whithersoever he walks, the pedestrian always walks toward health.

A fine view is object sufficient. And the more miles one has travelled to see fine views, the fewer miles does he need to go to see them. Eyes open with seeing.

One does not become a good musician without a liking for music, nor a good walker without a love for nature. That is the pedestrian appetite.

The Christian is the best lover of nature; therefore the Christian makes the best walker.

As the months succeed each other in the year's transformations, precisely the same road will furnish a dozen different walks. Yes, three dozen; one for

morning's freshness, one for the open noon, and one for the holy evening.

Proud science, too, is a handmaid of pedestrianism. Have those rock scratches a meaning to you? Is there language in the river's windings and the ravine's incision? Can you talk with the stony denizens of yonder ledge? Have you a passport into the insect world, and a letter of introduction to the flowers? Are the stars your friends, so that you can tell their faces, — this, Saturn; that, a double; a nebula yonder? Then every walk is a crowded panorama of wonder and delight.

I propose some novel societies. Why not a Sunset Society, to view the great colour revel from Three-mile Hill? or even, for the more daring, a Sunrise League? Why not a Crispin Club, for the indirect benefit of the shoemakers, or a Five-mile-a-day Fraternity?

He who walks with a friend sees with four eyes, and walks with four feet; doubles the distance and halves the fatigue. A selfish pedestrian walks in a tunnel, with muffled eyes and weighted feet.

In default of a friend, let a book be your walking companion. Emerson is for hilltops, Browning for roadsides, Lowell for forests, and Shakespeare for everywhere. To a wise walker the whole township is sacred. "By that brook I read 'In Memoriam;' on that eminence, 'Heroes and Hero Worship.'" No

one has truly read the Book who has not read it with its unprinted commentary open before him; read David and the meadows together, and let the sunshine make marginal notes on John.

The skilled walker regards the quality more than the quantity of his walking, and knows that a wise mile outvalues a foolish league. One whose walking is a race, whose watch is ever out to time his speed, walk swiftly as he may, will never reach the pedestrian's goal. He has weighted his mind with a pedometer. On the contrary, all ailments and worries keep up with the languid walker. If he moved more briskly, they would fall behind.

If you would walk well, you must eat well, and dress well, and think well.

You must eat well. A walk has higher duties than those of the stomach, nobler tasks than to drive away dyspepsia.

You must dress well; dress for the walk. There are those who do not take long walks because of the wear of leather! Body is worth more than boots; the soul, than the sole. And, by the way, (no "by the way" for the highways!) to walk in spike-toed shoes is as foolish as to play the piano with buckskin gloves or paint a picture blindfold.

You must think well. Not even a professional walker, not even Weston himself, could walk away from a bad conscience.

One further requirement, and only one: you must have a regular time for walking. What may be done at any time will probably be done at no time. If men should set apart time for walking as carefully as for eating, they would set a much later date for the visit of the doctor and the old gentleman with the scythe.

Walking, it will be seen, has ethics, the ethics of self-forgetfulness; it has science, the science of common sense; it has logic, the logic of action; it has religion, the religion of nature. And this is the test of it all: On your return do you find that this fair world and a little brisk activity in it has beguiled you away from your gloomy self, and into a more sensible and cheerful mood? Then you have learned the art of walking.

VIII.

READING FROM A SENSE OF DUTY.

THERE was a small boy once, who, like most small boys, was an ideal reader. He had never heard of the One Hundred Best Books, and it wouldn't have spoiled him if he had. Flat on the floor in the sun, reclined on a slanting roof, or (fantastic but delectable posture!) roosting midway up a tall ladder, he read from love, not duty.

Every boy is his own critic. And so this young literary dictator set on his right hand Fanny Fern and on his left Charles Dickens; seated Thackeray at the foot of the table, and sent George Eliot out to eat in the kitchen. If he read "Kenilworth" many times, he read "Major Jones's Courtship" at least as often. If he yielded his heart to Mrs. Stowe, it was with the reservation of a large part of it for Holmes (Mary J., not the wise Doctor).

Ah me! The sad revolution of a few years! That happy dictator, tumbled headlong from his quondam throne, now sits quaking on its bottom step at the feet of a sceptred hobgoblin, Onehundredbestbooks Rex. He has learned that Tolstoi is approved by superior intellects. In an evil hour he has heard of Ibsen. He crunches, with long teeth, clerks, society belles, social problems, and theological mysteries, dubbed novels, though all the while he is half devoured with unconfessed hunger for dark moats and clanking armour and secret dungeons, and Sir Gilbert to the rescue, ho!

But in a moment of sublime daring he has risen from that lower step and cries, in desperation, "Why read from a sense of duty?" Duty to whom? Come, tell me! Duty to whom?

Is it to the author? Oh, those ill-starred books, up among the bottles of the literary apothecary's shop, ready to be portioned out in doses, though

they wish (as every book that has meat in it must wish) to be in the fragrant pantry, to be nibbled at by the small boy on the sly!

An author wants to be read from a sense of duty? What must be the sensations of some large-hearted man, who had hoped that the product of his thought would become the very staff of life — of mental life — to others, when he finds it become merely a yard-stick, up against which one's discernment and literary taste are measured! "Heigh-ho! There's so much talk about this R——t El——e, I suppose I must — seven hundred pages! Oh, dear me!" Is that fame?

And what of the poor, dead authors, whose works have become duty-branded classics? What if dear Lamb, from some heavenly window, is able to see the dozen, more or less, who are constantly yawning over his delicious pages, because, forsooth, he is in "the course," — excellent people, devoid of humour, tenderness, and imagination, yawning over Lamb! How must his placid spirit be tempted to utterance of words not suited to the environment!

If, then, one need not read from a sense of duty to authors, possibly one should read from a sense of duty to other people? Never! Never! Who that is a lover of good books has not been annoyed by the rabble who are toadies to good books? who put them in conspicuous places in their conversation,

as they push the visiting-cards of the upper two hundred into prominence on their tables. The insufferable, unwarranted conceit of these readers from duty! Why, a book-lover is charmed into a blessed humility in the presence of his author, and mentions him in conversation as one would lift the curtain of some precious shrine. Brag of having read Augustine Birrell? As soon brag of a savoury stroll through a sunny, rich-laden orchard.

And besides, though some few can talk showily as a result of this duty-goaded reading, none can talk to edification. Usually the conversation of such readers amounts to this: "Have I read the Inmost Revelations of Susy Thrilling? Why, *of course!* Every one reads it, you know. Gladstone wrote a review of it, you know. Let's see. It came out in the Seavell Square Library, didn't it? Number 2139. Double number, and forty cents. Splendid, wasn't it?"

When will people learn that they can't talk helpfully or entertainingly about what they do not understand, and that they cannot understand through a sense of duty, or in any way except through sympathy and love? What pleasure in hearing people talk about their literary loves! "All the world loves a lover." But what is more insipid than an account of a literary flirtation?

And finally, if one is not to read from a sense of

duty to the author or to society, it remains to ask whether one is not to read from a sense of duty to one's self. No, again, and many times, no! In the first place, such reading is not done with the understanding, but with the conscience. Foreign interests and thoughts float above the pages of the unlucky volume like a shimmering, tantalising veil, through which one reads confusedly enough.

And then, one can't remember books read from duty. Ah, mute confession of the book-mark or the leaf turned down! A small boy doesn't forget how far he has gone through the dinner, — whether he has yet eaten pie or not, for instance, — though, to be sure, he may feign forgetfulness, for reasons well known to himself. And in the same way one who has read with an appetite knows well how far he has read.

How often we hear the confession, "I have read that book, but forgotten all about it!" If there is added the statement, "and yet I liked it very much," you may respectfully and silently demur. For if there is forgetfulness when interest and therefore attention are aroused, the sufferer manifests a weakness of mind suggestive of an asylum. No, take my word for it, though it defies mythology: Memory and Love are sister muses.

Then, too, reading from a sense of duty is directly injurious to the reader, because it cultivates an insidious sort of insincerity. We go into hiding from

ourselves and others. We put the *Atlantic Monthly* on our library table when *Life*, *Puck*, or *Judge* are in our heart, and most often in our hands. We pretend to admire realism, when we know we idolise romance. We bow with a traitor's lying heart at the throne of Onehundredbestbooks Rex. We speak finically of a "chaste literary conscience," while our own honest monitor is imploring us to make a clean breast of our fondness for Mark Twain and our detestation of Tolstoi. And we lie so often to others that at last we convince ourselves.

And now by insisting thus that reading should spring from liking and not from a sense of duty, I seem to have plunged into a dilemma, — an alarming one. For suppose we do not like the right kind of literature? I do not take into consideration vicious and criminal books, mark you. Probably even reading from a sense of duty is less of a crime than the reading of such books! But in case one does not like the best books, should he not read them, anyway, from a sense of duty, and try to learn to like them?

Before I answer that question, let me say that your dislike may not be your fault, but the author's. We should have less reading from a sense of duty, if the best authors always had a realising sense of their duty, which is, at starting, to interest. Yes, even to make prefaces attractive, high though the ideal be.

Did not Lowell succeed in writing for the "Biglow Papers" a preface whose wit was worthy of the volume, and, marvel of marvels, a witty index?

But if the author has character and force and sparkle, and should interest you, but does not, then must you not read from a sense of duty? No, not even then. "But will not the best books," you ask, "read dutifully though painfully, develop a taste for themselves?" Develop a taste! Is good literature buttermilk or tobacco? I do not like your metaphor. I will answer your question with a pleasanter one. I believe that while a young man is in love with a certain young woman, no course of forced acquaintance and marriage with another girl will "develop" a union worth the parson's fee. In other words, to which I ask your best attention, because they make my climax and conclusion:

I believe that when one likes inferior books and does not like the best, no easy process of substituting best books for inferior reading will lead to right love of the best, but that the life must be changed, and the books will follow the life. No one ever led an "Old Sleuth" life and read Shakespeare to profit, or a Shakespeare life and liked "Old Sleuth." If you have the *Forum* on your table and the *Police Gazette* in your heart, don't put the *Police Gazette* on the table, — that is not the moral of this essay, I hope! — but get the *Forum* into your heart.

Book-likings follow life, they seldom lead it. Your choice of books is an index to your character, and if you change your index without changing your character, you have gained only a lying index. Become modest, simple, thoughtful, and you will demand these qualities in your books. Develop an affectionate interest in human life about you, its humour, pathos, and tragedy, and you will come to like Shakespeare and history. Try to help others and to pray, and you will hunger for the Bible. Use your eyes, and you will require science.

So that one must live one's way into a love for good literature, and it must come gradually. Yet ever as it comes, by a subtle reaction which it would be folly to deny, the helpful books stimulate the life, enlarge it, concentrate it, make it sincere and thorough and enjoyable. Book-reviewers used to say that such a book was one "which every gentleman should have in his library." Now they have advanced to the eulogy, "a book which every one should read." And there's a good time coming when the formula of highest praise will run: "It's a book which every one should like!"

THE END.