



Little  
Things



[Henrietta Wilson]

a gift from Aunt  
to her nieces

Rachel Mary & Janet

4<sup>th</sup> June 1853



# LITTLE THINGS.

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“ He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little.”

*Eccles. xix. 1.*

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Tenth Impression of Five Thousand.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THERE is in many persons an undefined dread of paying attention to little things, as if they thought that doing so was the sign of a little mind; and that by neglecting trifles, as they call them, they show themselves to be superior in intellect. It is far from my intention to justify, or even excuse, that wearisome attention to minutiae, that incessant fidgettiness about trifles, which all must have at some time or other suffered from; but I would wish, if I could, to convince some of my sisterhood, that all things are not trifles that are called so, and that, as "little things" may have great consequences, they are well worth attending to.

For small things as well as great, the Christian's rule should be, to "do all to the glory of God;" and if we are enabled from this motive

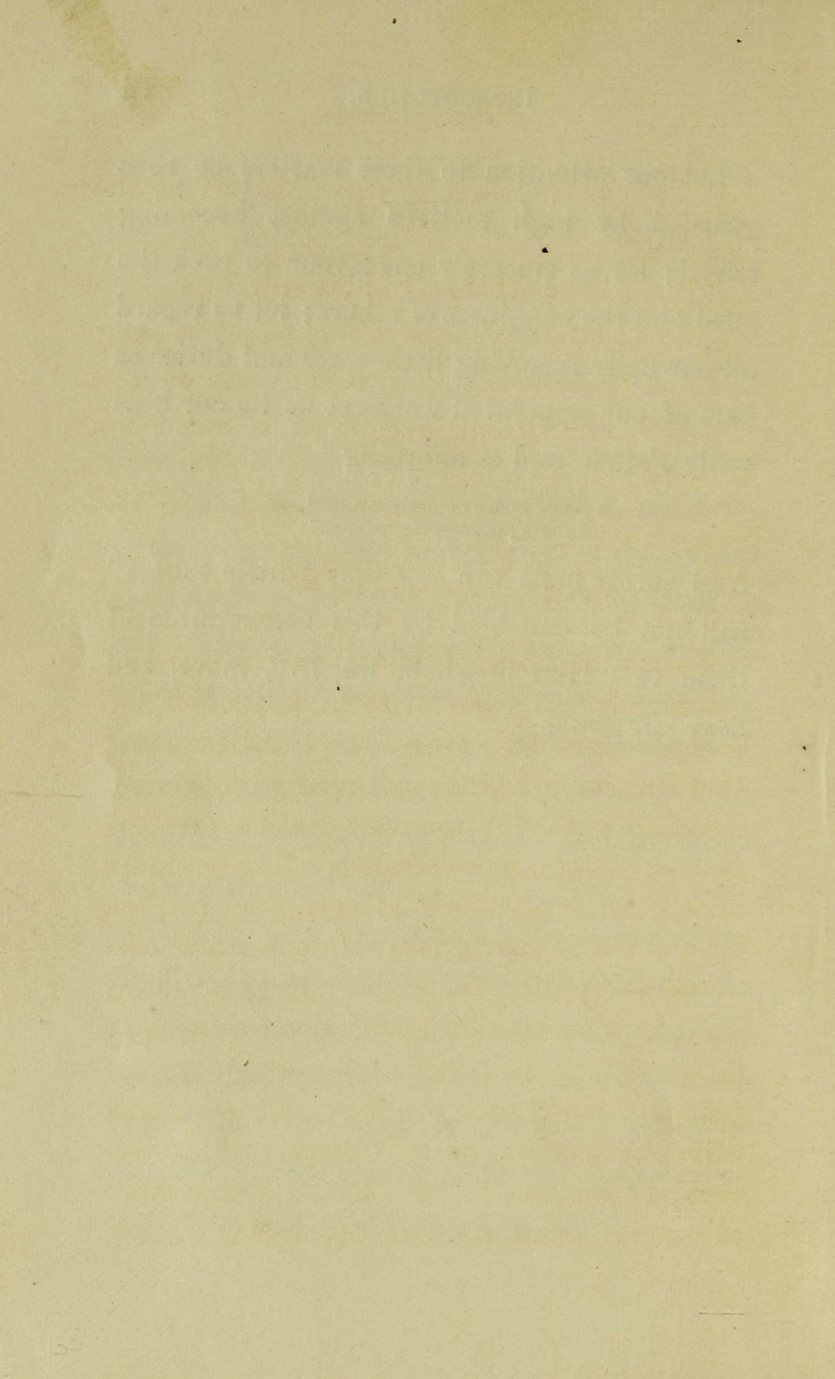
to perform our little duties, to bear our little cares, to strive against our little sins, we surely shall run no danger of degenerating either into anxious carefulness about trifles, or careless neglect of them. In the adorning of the person, or the decoration of a room, it is the little finishing touches that give elegance and grace; so, in the adorning of our profession as Christians, it is the little things that make or mar the beauty of holiness. Attention to them is part of the duty commanded, when we are told, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." A neglect of them dims that light, and may be a stumbling-block in the path of others.

Dr Chalmers' expression, "the power of littles," has become almost a proverb, and may be applied to many other subjects than contributions of money; for who has not felt how much power there is in "little things," to act either as constant sweeteners of life, or as perpetual sources of discomfort and annoyance?

Let our attention to these matters be thus guarded by high motives against becoming trivial; let us sincerely endeavour to seek the good and the happiness of others; let us regard all our daily recurring little cares and duties as part of our appointed work set us by our heavenly Father, and as affording

“Room to deny ourselves, a road  
To bring us daily nearer God.”

And surely none can say that “little things” will not be ennobled by this consecration of them to “Him in whom we live, move, and have our being.”



# LITTLE THINGS.

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## Little Duties.

“ Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever* ye do, do all to the glory of God.”—1 Cor. x. 31

“ Who sweeps a room, as for Thy law,  
Makes that and th’ action fine.”

*Herbert.*

UNDER this head I would wish to enforce, not merely the doing of little duties, but the doing of these little things *as duties*; for many of them are irksome and seem trifling, and therefore require all the more that they be performed under a sense of duty. It does indeed require no small share of energy to perform little duties regularly; they seem so small, that we think omitting them this once can signify little, it seems hardly worth while to summon up our energy for such a trifle, and so by degrees self-indulgence prevails; and when once little duties are neglected, discomfort and discontent invariably follow. The acquiring habits of method, order, and punctuality, can scarcely

be classed among *little* duties, for these habits are required on every occasion of life, the great and important, as well as the small and insignificant; but I am convinced that much of the irksomeness and worry sometimes attendant on "little duties," would be lessened or removed, were they performed punctually and methodically, all things kept in their proper place, and all things done at the proper time.

The first little duty I would mention, is one on which so many of the others depend, that on that account alone it must be acknowledged to have a strong claim,—I mean *early rising*; and a difficult and most disagreeable duty it is generally acknowledged to be. Who does not know how readily excuses are listened to in the morning on this subject? Who has not suffered from want of courage and resolution in this matter? Who has not felt the intense pleasure of ascertaining that it is really too early to rise yet? I doubt if any grown-up person likes early rising; they may and do like being up, having the bright, quiet morning hours all undisturbed to themselves, and they may feel this to be well worth the struggle of rising, but a struggle it is, and in most cases a daily one. But there are times when any one can rise

early and without much difficulty,—on going a journey for instance, or taking our place at a sick-bed, or even while anxious to get time to pursue some pleasant occupation for which we have no leisure otherwise. “Where there is a will, there is a way,” is true here; but how to get the will, is the difficulty, I acknowledge, and even where habit makes it easier, it seldom, I suspect, makes it pleasant. We must urge it on ourselves as a duty, by every motive that we feel influential: it is good for the health, it redeems time more than any other plan, it is a daily opportunity of self-denial, and it promotes cheerfulness and good humour. Besides, is securing a quiet and uninterrupted time for prayer and reading the Scriptures not an all-important reason for rising early? for by this means we not only benefit our souls, by seeking our daily-needed supply of grace and strength, but we are striving against those foes of the soul, sloth and self-indulgence.

The duties that generally devolve on ladies who are their own housekeepers, are among the little duties that it may be expected I should refer to here; but as these must vary in different households, all I can say of them is to enforce the necessity of their being performed

with punctuality and method, and as early in the day as possible. There should be a fixed hour for these domestic duties—all orders to servants should be given at that time, and by a little foresight and method in planning, the little wants and cares of the day may be anticipated and provided for, and the machinery of the household set a-going in a much shorter time than those can believe who work without a plan, and leave each want to be supplied when it occurs. Method and order generally go together, and in little duties both are indispensable; for where the latter only prevails, there is often a worrying, fidgetty way of being perpetually engaged in looking after servants' work, or putting the room in order, or interrupting others by doing things at wrong times; but where there is method and punctuality, the plan for the day is laid, and all little duties got over at their own time. It does require a little energy to acquire the habit of doing things at the right time, by resolutely laying aside whatever we are engaged in, and actively getting through little, it may be irksome duties; but if any one doubts its being a duty to do so, let them spend a short time in a house where this is not attended to, and see if the discomfort



there produced is not sufficient so show how essential attention to these little duties is. Punctuality is one of the duties most frequently neglected by our sex—by this I mean minute punctuality; for whether it be that railway travelling has taught ladies the necessity of being in time or not, I do not think that in greater matters, such as going a journey, we are unpunctual. It is in the daily and hourly occasions that we are apt to fail,—just to be *a little* too late for meals—not *quite* ready when it is time to go out—just a quarter of an hour behind our engagement—and so on; and because it is so small a matter, we forget that its constant recurrence makes it most annoying to others. One great cause of this fault is the eagerness to finish something we are about, the unwillingness to lay aside some favourite occupation; and another is, a sauntering way of getting ready, an idle way of putting off our time, for it is almost always the idle who are unpunctual. Connected with this duty of punctuality, is the still rarer habit of never procrastinating. I do not believe there is one human being who stands clear on this point; but I shall have more to say on this subject, when I come to speak of procrastination as one of our

“little sins;” so here I shall merely urge as a duty, the resolute striving against this fault in little things. Letters to answer, a small account to pay, a stitch in time, a trifling service to be rendered to another,—who is not apt to procrastinate in these things? No one can be punctual, or attain to what Southey calls “the virtue of *reliability*,” who does not struggle against the encroachments of this foe. There are so many little things to do, that need not be done at any particular time, that we are very apt to fall into this fault; but if we felt the duty of being faithful to our own resolutions in small matters, we surely should not make light of our frequent failures, owing to this vile habit of procrastination.

There is an old saying, which was often repeated to me in my youth, “*Can do* is easily carried about with you.” And really I think it amounts to a duty in woman to attend to this saying, for we hardly ever learn to do anything that we do not find the advantage of at some time or other. Some persons are naturally more neat-handed and notable than others; but every woman should endeavour to learn all she can of the little arts that make life comfortable, and, above all, of whatever can make

her useful in a sick-room. No doubt the same qualities of method, order, and good management, will show themselves in every department of duty; but much may be gained by observation, and a desire to learn, from whatever source. There are some people who never go from home without bringing back some useful hint in housekeeping, in the arrangement of a room, the order of the table, or, it may be, the planning and planting of the flower-garden. These are the persons who know the best way of doing everything; their homes may be known by the air of comfort and elegance they contrive to give by attention to little things, not merely by tidiness, but by tasteful arrangement, and a degree of attention to decoration. Some one speaks of the little things that mark the whereabouts of woman—flowers especially do so; and trifling as some may think it, I uphold it as one of our little duties, to make our homes not only as comfortable, but as pretty and pleasing as possible. There are some people who pay no heed to niceties of this kind, either esteeming them beneath their care, or not having taste enough to feel the want of them. Their rooms have a blank, uncomfortable, uninhabited look, their

personal attire is always unlike other people's, they never seem to notice any improved way of managing little matters, or they do not like the trouble of learning and practising it; and it is ten chances to one, that by beginning with despising decoration and taste, they end by neglecting comfort and tidiness.

I hope I may not be mistaken as advocating any dangerous Popish doctrine, if I suggest, as one of our little duties, what may be called small self-denials. There are few duties, indeed, which do not involve self-denial in one form or another; but what I mean now, is self-denial, for self-denial's sake, as a means of strengthening the character, and of keeping under self-indulgence, sloth, and love of our own way.

Many people deny this to be a duty at all, and others deny that there is any self-denial involved in the little matters referred to; but I suspect these latter have never tried the experiment, and many of the former mistake self-denial for penance, or a desire to atone for sin. Of course, in this light, I should consider self-denial to be as erroneous as it would be inefficacious; but if we are not to deny ourselves in little things, what mean the frequent exhortations of Scripture to this effect:—"Take up

your cross daily and follow me." "Keeping under the body, and bringing it into subjection." "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

I think there can be no doubt that little self-denials in comfort, ease, or food, have the good effect of making us less dependent on these things, less selfish, and more energetic when action is required; while a conscientious watch kept up on the subject of personal expenditure, will convince most of us how much we stand in need of this duty. There is often a restless desire to buy something we think we need, or, at all events, that we wish for, which, if habitually indulged, leads to extravagance, and is one of the most specious forms of self-pleasing. Compel yourself to wait, to see if you cannot do without it, if you really need it, or whether your eager desire is not just a fancy; and you will find this exercise of self-denial sometimes not a small one, but always a useful check upon an impatient and covetous spirit. Another exercise of self-denial that may be mentioned, is, not uttering a sharp retort, however witty or well-deserved it may be, and this helps us more to attain to a mild and Christian spirit, than almost any exercise

of gentleness I know. This last piece of self-denial leads to another, and, alas, much-neglected little duty,—I mean forbearance.

How does it come to pass, that while we all allow the duty of forgiveness, so few of us think as we ought of the kindred duty of forbearance? The command is plain, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another:" and well may forbearing be put first, for I am sure if there was more forbearance exercised, there would be less forgiveness required. Perhaps the expression, "making allowances," may more clearly express what I mean: the aged, we admit, are entitled to this; the young generally obtain it; but among each other, between sisters-in-law, for instance, how much harm is done by the want of a little kindly forbearance! Some are provoked by another's vanity or affectation; some by their caprice; some are exasperated by a dictatorial manner, a way of laying down the law; while others cannot put up with such a one's egotism, or thinks it right to *snub* some one's self-esteem; and so we go on as if the command, "Let every one please his neighbour," were altered to, Let every one *tease* his neighbour.—Oh, let us learn to make large allowances for others, let

us cultivate a forbearing spirit in trifles, for it is there we too often fail most; remembering how much we need it ourselves, and looking in this, as in every duty, to the example of our Divine Master, whose forbearance and patience with His disciples in their waywardness and ignorance, is left us as an example that we should "follow His steps."

The duty of being always in a good humour, is so important, that I hardly should enumerate it among little things; but all else is almost valueless without it. It is like the soft balmy air and bright sunshine of a summer's morn, which when we feel and breathe, we think no other enjoyment can equal, without which the finest landscape wants a charm, and with which, the dreariest moorland is bright and beautiful. Great duties, great kindnesses lose much of their virtue and power to benefit others, if not performed in this spirit, and little duties and little kindnesses are indeed nothing without the sunshine of cheerful good humour, to gild and adorn them. Akin to this is the duty of cultivating a cheerful disposition,—a disposition to be easily pleased. There are persons to whom this seems natural, who are always pleased, and we all feel how much more agreeable

it is to have anything to do with them, than with those who, either from indifference or discontent, are seldom or never pleased. By this duty, however, I mean rather more than merely not being discontented,—I mean the disposition to show that *we are* pleased, a good-humoured way of receiving little services, a readiness to admire what we see others wish us to like, and a willingness to “do unto others as we wish they should do unto us,”—the reverse, in short, of a captious fault-finding spirit.

It may be alleged that a careful attention to some of these little duties may lead to an irksome particularity, a teasing habit of for ever *putting to rights*, and to a neglect of more important concerns. This will never be the case, however, if we remember to perform little duties with a large spirit, and consider first the comfort of others. If done as duties, they must also be done without fuss or parade, and above all, let us remember that while we thus, as it were, “tithe mint and aniseed and cummin,” we must beware of neglecting “the weightier matters of the law.” The warning against doing this, is, however, followed by the words,—“These ought ye to have done, *and not to leave the other undone.*”



## Little Kindnesses.

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another love <sup>23</sup> brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”—1 *Pet.* iii. 8.

“All joys go less,  
To the one joy of doing kindnesses.”

*Herbert.*

I THINK, if we examine our own hearts, we shall all feel ourselves to have been sadly negligent in this branch of the “little things.” How often, from want of thought and attention, do we see people, really kind people, fail to make others happy or comfortable. How often do we see in families who would do anything to oblige each other, if the matter were a great one, such a total neglect of the little kindnesses of life, that by degrees they become selfish, and unable to perceive wherein they fail, or that anything else ought to be expected of them than what they perform. How often do we hear kindly-feeling, well-intentioned people, regretting that they can do nothing, that they have nothing in their power,—while all the time these little kindnesses are unnoticed and unperformed. Life affords but few opportunities of

doing great services for others; but there is scarcely an hour of the day that does not afford us an opportunity of performing some little, it may be unnoticed service. Careful and earnest attention to little things of this kind, is of great advantage to our own characters. We can seldom perform little kindnesses without little self-denials; and the habit once formed of daily attending to others, and trying to please and serve them, is of inestimable use in repressing our natural selfishness. I speak advisedly, when I class trying to *please* others as among the little kindnesses we should study to perform. It is a command in Scripture, that every one should please his neighbour for his good to edification; and I fear it is a duty oftener neglected than trying to *serve* others. Amongst the many ways of doing this, I may mention kindly consideration of the *peculiarities* of others. There are few families where there are not some members who require to be studied a little, and if the "peculiar one" be the head of the house, or an aged member of it, this attention is generally paid. But between brothers and sisters, or between friends, how little of this kindly forbearance do we see! How often do we feel it hard to be the one that must

always give up! How apt to be provoked at the peculiarities of others, instead of endeavouring to *forbear*, and please them rather than ourselves! There is much want of knowledge of each other's characters to be met with in families, and from this sometimes, I think, proceeds the careless indifference about pleasing them; but knowledge of each other's *peculiarities* is not so uncommon, though attention to them is rare enough. The study of character may be apt (unless pursued in a Christian spirit) to lead us into critical and censorious thoughts and feelings; but if we study others, that we may know how best to please them, and make them happy, I cannot think it can be otherwise than a profitable study. One of the little kindnesses I would enforce, is "allowing people to be happy their *own way*." Never insist upon your way, and your way alone being the only one that can succeed in giving pleasure; for in doing so, you too often will only torment and annoy those you wish to serve; and sometimes this spirit, when yielded to, becomes a perpetual petty tyranny over others. Remember also the different ideas of pleasure entertained by the aged and the young; for while, in general, to old people, quiet and a

regular undisturbed routine is most pleasant, variety and a certain degree of restless excitement, are liked by the young. There is no little kindness more generally felt, than a readiness to promote the plans of others, an entering into their feelings, and an endeavour to smooth down all difficulties in the way. Who has not felt damped when a party of pleasure was planning, or a pleasant invitation received, and no one seemed to take any interest in it, or to care whether you went or not; still worse, if some one started objections, foresaw difficulties, and wondered how you could care about going at all? To the young especially this sort of kind sympathy is valuable; and how soon may you discern in a family which individual is in the habit of showing it, by the ready and constant recurrence of all to her as the one who always helps forward a plan, sympathises in a little pleasure, and enters into all the excitement of an enjoyment which perhaps she is neither to share, nor, on her own account, would care to partake of. How worse than tiresome is the "wet blanket," who, on these occasions, thinks it will rain, is sure you cannot be spared from home, or, absorbed in other things, takes no interest, and will not be put out of her own way for any

one! Look around among the families you are intimate with, and see which member of each is the one all the others go to in little difficulties, which is the one that studies to make the others happy, forgetting self till she really becomes the "one who cannot be spared from home;" and you will generally find that that one does not confine her attentions to home, but is always the person who thinks of little kindnesses to be done to others—gifts of fruit and flowers to the sick—visits to those confined to the house—the loan of a book, or a sight of engravings—or the earliest information of absent friends. I remember one who was thus distinguished for little kindnesses; she was not what is generally termed acute or clever, but I never knew any one so quick at finding out what people liked, or so ready to do it, or get it for them; her means were limited, but she gave more little gifts than any one I knew; her time was much occupied at home, and her accomplishments made her society much sought after; but she could always find time to visit those who were apt to be overlooked, and to show those who had no claim on her, a little kindness. I remember her getting herself introduced to an old lady who lived alone and

had few friends, that she might go sometimes and play chess with her; and many an hour which she might have spent in her own amusement, she bestowed on her, cheering her lonely lot by her kind cheerfulness. Little presents are said to be always acceptable; they lay no one under obligation, and they mark a kindly remembrance of you when absent, or a desire to supply some little want you have expressed; and as their value is seldom great, the giving and receiving of them is one of the many little kindnesses we should practise and indulge. "The sacred duty of giving pleasure," as it is called in an admirable little book, entitled "Passages from the Life of a Daughter at Home," may be practised daily. And, oh, if we could but feel what a sacred duty it is, surely we should wish and endeavour to make and find opportunities of practising it! Is it not a sacred duty to make life as happy as we can to the young, before life's trials and troubles come upon them? Is it not so still more to those who are enduring the heat and burden of the day? and do not all feel it to be so towards the aged, who perhaps have little left to cheer them, and may have suffered and undergone much during the weary days of their

pilgrimage? Let us seek out opportunities, let us slight nothing as too trivial or minute, not even the keeping a favourite seat at the fireside for one we know has a fancy for it, or the most trifling arrangement of household matters, if it give pleasure to others. The desire of showing little kindnesses proceeds often merely from an obliging disposition; but I think the *habit* of it must be formed on Christian motives, and on a habitual course of self-denial and thoughtfulness. It may be called a habit of preferring others before ourselves. To the young I would earnestly say, Endeavour to acquire this blessed habit; do not, because you can do so little for others, do nothing. Look around you, first in your own family, then amongst your friends and neighbours, and see whether there be not some one whose little burden you can lighten, whose little cares you may lessen, whose little pleasures you can promote, whose little wants and wishes you can gratify. Giving up cheerfully our own occupations to attend to others, is one of the little kindnesses and self-denials; doing little things that nobody likes to do, but which must be done by some one, is another. I remember how grateful I once felt when a young friend hemmed a set of pocket-handkerchiefs

for me in her play-hours when I was from home, because she knew I hated hemming. Doing a thing, and saying nothing about it, is also a kindness; for I daresay we all know how irksome it is to be told that this, that, or the other thing, was got for us, or done on our account; and how ungrateful we feel for kindnesses thus thrust upon us. A willingness to lend books, new music, or patterns, is also a kindly habit.

It may seem to many, that as they avoid little unkindnesses, they must necessarily be doing all that is right to their family and friends; but it is not enough to abstain from sharp words, sneering tones, petty contradictions, or daily little selfish cares; we must be active and earnest in kindness, not merely passive and inoffensive. In these little things it is really more from the manner in which they are done, than from any great value in the services themselves, that we see the kindly and Christian spirit. All must be done cheerfully, as if it were a pleasure, not merely a duty; and above all, we must never allow any one to feel or see that we have made a sacrifice of our own will or wishes on their account. It is contemptuously said to be a Scotch present, when



any one, in bestowing a trifling gift, tells the receiver that it is of no use to the giver; but it has often struck me that there is much true delicacy and kindness in this, for it is evidently designed to prevent the recipient feeling laid under any obligation; and this is one of the little kindnesses I am recommending.\*

Attending to any one who is overlooked in society, from whatever cause, is another of the kindly offices that may be classed under this head. Few do not feel this when the person is overlooked on account of poverty or age, or singularity of appearance; but do we consider it sufficiently, if the unfortunate individual is guilty of being tiresome and prosy? Yet a little self-sacrifice on these occasions is certainly both kind and right, as we are all ready to acknowledge when we see any one cheerfully undertaking the burden of talking to, or worse, of listening to, one who is generally voted a bore.

\* I may, however, give a hint, in passing, to the receiver, that it is, to say the least of it, not in good taste, when asking something you desire to possess, to talk of it disparagingly as a mere trifle, otherwise you would not have asked for it at all.

## Little Efforts.

"She hath done what she could."

"I find that successful exertion is a powerful means of exhilaration, which discharges itself in good humour upon others."—*Dr Chalmers.*

It has often struck me, in reading the parable of the Talents, that the servant who was slothful and hid his Lord's money, was not one of the more richly endowed, but one who had but *one* talent. Is it not too often so yet? How frequently do we feel, and act upon the feeling, that we would do more good were it not that we can do so little? There really seems a peculiar danger to those possessed of but one talent, to neglect the exercise of it; and it were well, if, while excusing ourselves for doing nothing, because we cannot do much, we recollected that the slothful servant who buried only one talent was condemned for so doing, and would have been proportionally rewarded, had he, like the others, traded with, and increased his lord's money. It is too often indolence under the guise of humility that causes us to act thus. Little efforts are troublesome to

make, and we prefer dreaming over what we would do *if* we were rich or great, or endowed with talent, to setting honestly and steadily to do what we can. There is no one, I believe, however straitened in circumstances, or inferior in capacity, who has it not in his or her power to do some good, while hundreds who are neither the one nor the other, neglect this duty because they think they can do but little. Do that little faithfully, look out for opportunities, count no effort too little, and assuredly you will find the truth of the promise, "to him that hath shall be given." If you are sincerely desirous to be useful, and willing to begin with humble efforts, do not fear but that larger and more extended spheres of duty will open before you, or if you are one of those who really do possess but one talent, and endeavour to employ it for God's glory, do not doubt His gracious acceptance of your smallest services, for has He not promised that even a cup of cold water given in His name, shall be rewarded.

To many who feel humbled and grieved that they can do so little for the Saviour's cause on earth, or for the good of others, it should be an encouraging thought, that "all members have not the same office;" the small stones of

the temple are as useful in their place as the more imposing parts of the building; and let them be assured that He who commended Mary who anointed His head, because "she had done what she could," will not despise any attempt, however small, to serve and glorify Him. For instance, in visiting the abodes of the poor, especially in sickness, we are apt at first to feel painfully what seems to us the absence of all comfort; but it is then that we learn how small an addition to their little stock will prove a comfort to them, and how many things which we thoughtlessly waste or put aside as useless, might be made serviceable. Little efforts to do good in this way, may be thought of by every one. Trifling as these may be, it is humbling sometimes to see the gratitude felt for such small services, and many a time do the words of the poet rise to mind:—

"I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning.  
*Alas! the gratitude of men  
Hath oft'ner left me mourning!"*

There are many cases in which, in giving clothes to the poor, it is an additional assistance to send them ready-made or mended; for, often

the hard-worked mother cannot find time to sew, and the younger members who might assist, are at school or in places, and too often have not the ability to do much for themselves in this way. No doubt those who are in circumstances to do so, can generally contrive better for themselves in this respect than we can do for them, and a *handy* person will turn almost any old thing given to them to good account; but in many cases, their "time is their money;" and at all events the trial may be useful to some one who is wondering what they can do to help the poor. Where there are cases of sickness, too, it is amazing how very little is a comfort and support in the way of food, or little delicacies. Much, indeed, is wasted by servants, that might, were they so inclined, be made useful to the poor; but sometimes the trifles or fragments we have to give them seem so small, that it is not worth while to send them, and perhaps it is not,—but would they not be worth if *taken*, instead of sent? Were we more in the habit of kindly personal intercourse with the poor of our neighbourhood, there are many little services of this kind we might render them, and gratefully are they received. I have heard many speak warmly of

such kindnesses shown them by a humble-minded follower of Christ, who had not much to give, but who, as they expressed it, "never thought anything too little to be at the trouble of bringing it." These little personal kindnesses often open the hearts of the poor, so that a word of counsel, or even of reproof, is kindly taken, and opportunities of speaking "a word in season" are thus often procured, where otherwise it might be felt intrusive. Many who are desirous of doing good to the souls as well as the bodies of others, and yet feel painfully conscious that they cannot speak as they wish, may benefit them by giving or lending books; and sometimes this plan gives an opening for conversation on the book, and frequently a word of warning and rebuke may be thus conveyed, and make an impression, where a direct appeal or personal address would offend. Reading a few verses of Scripture, even without a remark, is also one of the little efforts that may be blessed, for, "the entrance of His words giveth light." These are but meant as hints to those who really desire to begin this good work; but once begun, not only will opportunities of doing good increase, but the ability to do so will grow likewise. You will find a use for many a little

thing you now cast aside, you will become quick in suggesting and supplying little comforts; and while thus following His example who went about doing good, you will experience the truth of the promise, that "He who watereth others, shall be watered also himself."

Under this title of little efforts, I may also class endeavours to improve ourselves; for I believe many neglect the important work of self-education after they are grown up, from the erroneous idea, that because they can do little, they need therefore do nothing. Even when our time is not much at our own disposal, when domestic and social duties demand a large share of attention, I believe a great deal might be done by a careful employment of the fragments of time that so often run to waste. Southey has an amusing calculation of how much may be learnt by a regular application of ten minutes a-day. In fifty years seven languages may be thus acquired, so as to read them with facility and pleasure, if not critically, and to travel without needing an interpreter. But without attempting any such effort as this, the hint is worth attending to; for, as Southey says, "Any man who will, may command ten minutes;" and if there is any truth in the idea,

it may serve to show that little efforts for our own improvement, where greater are not in our power, should not be despised and neglected as useless. Besides this careful redeeming of our fragments of time, however, we must remember that no efforts, great or small, will be of much avail, unless they are *continuous*. If even great but intermitted efforts are useless, how powerless must little ones be, unless steadily and perseveringly carried on! Southey's ten minutes were to be *daily* devoted to the study; and we must bear in mind, that if only little efforts are in our power, we must endeavour to make up for their insignificance by their frequency. It is not to be denied that sometimes it requires a greater exertion to make a little effort, than one of a more important nature, but the power of habit will go far to aid us, if we were once but aroused to the importance of making these efforts. May I give a hint on what may be called little exertions, that in some cases may be found useful; I mean, in slight feelings of indisposition. Exertion, active exertion, is often the best remedy for these feelings, but it is one we are not always willing to apply, for even when we can plead no bodily ailment, every one must have felt at times a



tendency to ennui, or a listless weariness, without any definite cause. Then it is that we should arouse ourselves, and by a little exertion we can do so, and after a short time of active bodily or mental exercise, we shall find these feelings disappear, and experience the truth of those words of Dr Chalmers, which serve as a motto to this chapter. Take the advice given by the Rev. Sidney Smith, to those suffering under listless ennui and want of earnestness: "Make yourself care, get up, shake yourself well, *pretend* to care, make-believe to care, and very soon you will care, and care so much, that you will be extremely angry with any one who interrupts your pursuits."

## Little Cares.

“Casting all your care upon Him, for he careth for you.”—1 *Pet.* v. 7.

“Commit thy trifles unto God, for to him is nothing trivial.

“Thou art wise if thou beat off petty troubles, nor suffer their stinging to fret thee.

“Thrust not thine hand among the thorns, but with a leathern glove.”—*Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy.*

THESE fall much within a woman's sphere of duty, and are of almost daily occurrence to her; yet they are often of so trifling a nature, that one feels ashamed to mention them, or even to allow that they *are cares*. I would make a distinction between little cares and little annoyances; for the latter, if disregarded and cheerfully borne, generally disappear; but our little cares cannot be so easily got quit of, and sometimes arise so much from constitutional causes, that they require the exercise of religious principle and trust, to keep them within due bounds. To all who feel the tendency to “be anxious and careful about many things”—who have a Martha's spirit—the gentle rebuke of our Saviour may still be applied; for does not an earnest heed to the one thing needful, make

all little earthly cares take their subordinate place in our esteem? But what I would wish to impress upon my readers' mind is, that we are warranted, I think, by the word of God, to carry all our cares, however trifling, to Him, to cast all our burdens, however small, on Him who has graciously promised to sustain us if we do so. Our great cares must often seem small in the eyes of Him who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing;" and our small cares will not be beneath the notice of Him, by whom the "very hairs of our head are all numbered."

Along with this, I think that a methodical distribution of time, letting each duty and occupation have its appointed time to be attended to, does much to keep down that absent, anxious spirit, which little cares are so apt to produce. We cannot well seek for sympathy from others as a resource, for sometimes these trifling cares would annoy those we wish to please; sometimes we feel that they would not be cares at all except to ourselves; but by resolutely doing each duty as its time occurs, by resolving that, except when necessary, we will not let our minds dwell on them (for truly "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"),

and by trustfully committing our way unto God, we may relieve our minds of many of our little cares, and in some cases get quit of them altogether. I allude chiefly to such as are almost inseparable from women's duties,—the charge of servants, and the care of children, or of the sick; and I would also include those cares which may exist chiefly in our own over-anxious and nervous temperaments. But there is a class of little annoyances, if I may so call them, which I would dispose of in a different way,—I mean such as we make for ourselves by a fretful or fastidious spirit. There are some who make such a fuss about trifles, tormenting themselves, and worrying others by a perpetual fault-finding and discontent, that all pleasure is spoiled by their presence, and every trifling evil magnified to a mountain. It is a good rule in little things, as well as great, that "what can't be cured, should be endured," and endured cheerfully. I am not advocating slovenly and careless endurance of little annoyances that *may be remedied*. Let them be set right by all means, and the more *quietly* as well as quickly, the better; but I have observed persons who took such things easily enough, most ludicrously discomposed by trifles, neither

they nor any one else could remedy, and which should have been overlooked with a smile, if noticed at all. I remember hearing of one lady who professed great love for the country, and summer after summer left town and established herself in country quarters. It was remarked, however, by her friends, that she never went twice to the same place, and that though at first her praises of new quarters were enthusiastic, yet when she returned to town, she had always some reason against returning to that place. Never did any one seem to be so unfortunate in smoky chimnies, disagreeable neighbours, and disobliging landladies, till at last it was shrewdly suspected the fault lay in the lady herself. One summer, however, a perfect place was found; months went on, and no fault seemed to be discovered, and it was hoped that now the fastidious lady was pleased, and that her search for country quarters was at an end. But what was the amazement and amusement of her friends to find her, when winter brought her back to town, as determined as usual not to return to her little paradise of the preceding summer. What could be the reason? Simply because a *peahen* used to come sometimes to

the garden-wall, and make *such* a noise! There are many people, I fear, who find peahens everywhere.

I used to think the catalogue of woes in that amusing book, "The Miseries of Human Life," never could be the subject of aught but laughter; but there are many Mr and Mrs Testies, too, in the world, who groan in good earnest over such little cares. It is really ludicrous to hear the gravity with which some people will allude to the fact of the road being dusty, even alleging that as a reason for not going a walk; others are as much afraid of a shower; others of sunshine; some are terrified at the idea of being overheated, while others tremble at the notion of taking cold. There is no end to these idle fancies and fears; if laughed at, they think you unfeeling; if sympathised with, they multiply and increase. Let us all beware of making much of little annoyances; let us learn to laugh at them, remembering how very annoying such freaks are to others, as well as inconvenient to ourselves. A cheerful spirit that will not see, or be put about by trifles, soon ceases to feel them; while to those who seem to find a perverse pleasure in dwelling on, and being daunted by them, these little dis-

comforts will actually become real cares, and will eat out half the comfort of their lives.

Southey remarks in one of his letters, that "there is a pleasure in extracting matter of jest from discomfort and bodily pain." It is certainly a pleasure few indulge in; but he is right when he adds, "that it is a wholesome habit when it extends no further, but a deadly one if it be encouraged when the heart is sore."

## Little Pleasures.

“Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”—1 *Tim.* vi. 17.

“Thou art wise and shalt find comfort, if thou study thy pleasures in trifles. For slender joys, often repeated, fall as sunshine on the heart.”—*Proverbial Philosophy.*

“Happiness is made up of small pleasures, and domestic peace is the column which these light traceries grace and adorn.

“Everything which busies the mind innocently, and gilds the domestic scene, is worthy of attention. Life, happy life, is made up of small pleasures; and we may plant here a shrub, and there a flower, and water them innocently, and cultivate them profitably.”—*Shades of Character.*

I COULD multiply extracts to prove that little pleasures are the great sweeteners of life. The theme is trite and commonplace; we know all that can be said in favour of common and simple pleasures, and say we believe it; and yet, how few, when past the age of childhood, really do enjoy themselves by means of little pleasures? It is generally agreed that the man who has a hobby is a happy man, however trifling his hobby be; and though I by no means wish to advocate an earnest pursuit of trifles as a means of enjoyment, it is no doubt the case that the happiness of the man with a trifling hobby is caused mainly by his power of giving



his mind to it, of being occupied by it. The pursuit of pleasure, and the finding pleasure in little things, are, however, very different; for, while the first is perhaps the most selfish of all ways of wasting time, the latter is a duty we owe both to ourselves and others. There are many little varieties in our daily life that might be made pleasures of, were we so inclined. A country walk, a little excursion, making trifling alterations in domestic arrangements, preparing some little surprise for an absent member of the family, obtaining some little thing we have long wished for, any innocent variety or change in our every-day life,—may be made a source of pleasure; and happy, indeed, are they who keep this child-like spirit in mature years.

To those who are continually seeking their own gratification, there can be little enjoyment of pure and simple pleasures, for these soon lose their effect, unless combined with self-denial and a steady adherence to the rule of “duty first, and pleasure afterwards;” and though, no doubt, the capacity of little pleasures to give pleasure, depends more on the mood of our own minds, than more striking incidents do, yet to those who cultivate the disposition already alluded to—of being easily pleased, it is wonderful

how many are the sources, and how frequent the occurrence, of little pleasures—

“The common air, the earth, the skies,  
To them are opening paradise.”

To those who have a love of nature, there never can be any want of varied and simple pleasure. To some, the mere sight of green trees and hedges suffices; and even where the grander and more picturesque forms of beauty are wanting in the scenery, the true lover of nature will find much to enjoy. It is one great argument in favour of intellectual cultivation, and acquiring knowledge, that to a well-stored mind the effect of little pleasures is greatly enhanced. A love and knowledge of art, however slight, increases the pleasures of all country excursions. So do botany, geology, and entomology; while to those less favoured individuals, whose lives are spent in cities and amidst the works of men, an acquaintance with, and interest in, any branch of knowledge, adds to their more limited stock of pleasures tenfold.

We are too apt to turn from the pleasures that lie in our daily path, and to sigh after others that seem to us unattainable. How many people long for the pleasures of travelling, and envy those who have the means and time

at their command to go abroad, or to visit the more remote parts of our own country? But do they relish as they might the pleasure of those little excursions which come almost within everybody's power now-a-days? If an inhabitant of a town,—is a few hours' occasional excursion to the country thoroughly enjoyed, or a walk through beautiful grounds, or a visit to a friend's garden? or are these simple pleasures despised because they are so common, or turned from in discontent, because they are only to be enjoyed for a short time? To a cultivated and observant mind and taste, there is scarcely an object of still life, or a fine scene in nature, or an incident that occurs, that does not afford food for thought, or for the exercise of kindly feelings, or something to lay by among memory's stores for future enjoyment. If you seek for small pleasures with a small mind, however, beware lest you degenerate into a mere frivolous gossip—one on whom little things act as poison—one who is amused and interested by the tittle-tattle of the neighbourhood, or the frivolities of dress. The more the mind is cultivated, the greater will be the amount of small pleasures, and the keener and safer the relish for them; for you will turn from all that is

mean and low, and enjoy with a grateful and contented spirit the many flowers that grow in your daily path, but which sometimes must be sought for in this spirit ere they are found. I may conclude this chapter as I begun it, with an extract from "Shades of Character:"—

"How much real enjoyment there may be in modest pleasures, with little variation from what is within every one's reach. . . . We have all some one on whom to look with love, some to whom we may give pleasure; and nature smiles in some way or other on every land."

## Little Sins.

“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly, him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.”—*Eccles. x. 1.*

“Yet once more, saith the fool, yet once, and is it not a little one?”

“Spare me this folly yet an hour, for what is one among so many?”

“And he blindeth his conscience with lies, and stupifieth his heart with doubts.

“Whom shall I harm in this matter? and a little ill breedeth much good.

“My thoughts, are they not mine own? and they leave no mark behind them.

“And if God so pardoneth crime, how should these petty sins affect him?”

“So he transgresseth yet again, and falleth by little and little.

“Till the ground crumble beneath him, and he sinketh in the gulf despairing.”—*Proverbial Philosophy.*

WHAT are little sins? Surely a Christian ought to consider all sin as an offence against a holy God, and therefore the term little can never be applied to it. The distinction made by the Romish Church of deadly and venial sins, is unauthorised, we believe, by the Scriptures; yet we all look lightly, even tenderly, upon some fault, as we would fain call it; we all incline to claim indulgence for some failing, under the plea, “Is it not a little one?”

I fear this distinction which we make of

*faults* and *sins*, helps to blind us to the real nature of many little evil ways, and prevents our admitting that what has the essence of sin in it, is sin, be it in ever so small a degree. Faults we may have besides, and these should likewise be striven against, for they are very apt to grow into sins, and even at the best, when they are what is called "allowable faults," why should we cherish them and annoy others, with what a slight degree of watchfulness and resistance would enable us to conquer altogether? For instance, under this head of faults, how strict, and properly so, are those who have the care of young people in checking all faulty habits, rude manners, careless ways, waste of time by trifling, inattention to what is said to them, slovenliness, and all the many little faults of manner that offend against the rules of courtesy. Yet we who are grown up, and are aware that many of these faults are to be found in ourselves, too often excuse ourselves by alleging that we mean nothing wrong, that it is but *our way*, that it is merely a bad manner, and so on; as if we could not, or should not, strive against and conquer faults in ourselves which we expect children to watch over and subdue. Were we in the habit of tracing our little sins

up to their source, we must feel convinced that they originate in those sinful propensities, which, if followed out to their full extent, we admit to be exceeding sinful. Some of these little sins may not be the seeds of greater—too often, however, they are so; and because we think we can stop in time, because we think it does no one harm but ourselves, ought we, dare we, to indulge any habit or feeling which even we admit would, by a little excess, become sin?

I suspect also that we are apt to deceive ourselves as to the facility with which we can conquer these little sins. If it were so easy, our indulgence of them would be the more culpable, but the daily and hourly watch against them, the steady resistance to the pleading from within of “just this once,” “is it not a little one,” is no easy task, and in some respects is a harder one than those greater occasions of temptation, when we guard ourselves by putting on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day.

What should come first in our catalogue? There is one sin, or fault, call it what you will, of which we all admit we are guilty, against which we have all made many resolutions, and which visits us in so many different ways, and

with so many excuses for its indulgence, that it may in most people be called their besetting sin, I mean procrastination—and who dare say, My hands are clean, I *never* procrastinate? When some sad result has followed from our habit of procrastinating, or when we feel conscious that it was sheer indulgence and dislike of duty, that caused us to put off doing anything, we do feel how wrong this habit is; but in daily little matters, such as answering letters, settling small accounts, executing little plans for the good or even the amusement of others, which of us feels as we ought, that we are *indulging* a fault that, if carried just a little further, will bring confusion and discomfort into all our worldly affairs, and which too often ends in causing us, Felix-like, to delay till a more convenient season, the concerns of our immortal souls. Method in the arrangement of our time, so that each hour brings its own duty, would help us much against this sin; for it often arises from having so little to do, that we think we can “do it any time,” and this is generally found to be *no* time. The busy rarely procrastinate, it is the idle and indolent who do so; and there is no more effectual way of rooting out the parent sins of idleness and indolence



than by a daily hourly struggle against procrastinating in little things. Whenever any one is heard to complain of want of time, we generally find such person is guilty of procrastination, as well as of idleness. The hardest-working men complain least of this; and all, or almost all, who have distinguished themselves by industry, and by the wonderful amount of labour they have got through, men like Scott, Southey, and Chalmers, must have done their work *when* they had it to do, and not merely when they felt inclined to do it. Resolve, then, that when you have anything, however small, to do, you will do it *now*, or at the very first time set apart for that branch of duty; and remember that in steadily striving against the idle or indolent wish to procrastinate, you are strengthening your character, and improving your habits in more than one particular. Idleness is a fault we all condemn in the young, and too often indulge in without remorse ourselves. There is a busy idleness, which sometimes blinds us to its nature—we seem, to ourselves and others, to be occupied, but what is the result of it all? What Hannah More calls “a quiet and dull frittering away of time,” whether it be in “unprofitable small talk, or in constant idle reading, or saunt-

ering over some useless piece of work, is surely not "redeeming the time;" and yet how many days and hours are thus unprofitably wasted, and neither ourselves nor others benefited. All women who have much leisure, are liable to this fault; and besides its own sinfulness, for surely waste of time is a sin, it encourages a weak, unenergetic frame of mind, and is apt to produce either apathetic content in trifling occupation, or a restless desire of excitement and amusement, to help on the weary time these trifles cannot kill. Those who have their time entirely at their own disposal, with perhaps no definite duty to occupy them, should guard resolutely against waste of time; make duties for yourselves; fix hours for your different occupations; do with your might, whatsoever your hand findeth to do; and carefully, conscientiously ascertain which of your employments is *not worth* all this care; have a motive, a reason for all you do, and frequently examine yourselves as to *what* you are doing; and surely you will find time too precious to be either squandered, or frittered, or idled away. While idleness must be thus guarded against, both in its spirit and its results, indolence in its various shapes must also be considered as an insidious foe. If the

idle need to be roused to redeem the time from trifling and frittering occupation, the indolent too often need to be roused to the duty of doing anything at all. But it is against the little forms of indolence, that we must watch, remembering how encroaching it is, and how surely it grows from bad to worse. Slovenly habits and ways of action, are the result frequently of indulged indolence; it is not because we know no better, but because "*we canna be fashed,*" that we allow ourselves in many a little slovenly way, and indulge ourselves in a lazy manner of doing what we have to do. Sloth and love of ease are too often looked upon as little sins, and indulged in and excused accordingly; but besides that, they are decidedly opposed to the spirit of self-denial inculcated in Scripture, how seldom do they stop short, satisfied with small indulgences! If we begin by consulting our love of ease, our dislike to trouble, our slothful desires in trifles, what security have we that we shall not end in that self-indulgence, which is regardless of aught but its own comfort and gratification; which will not be denied, and is insatiable in its demands; and which, when indulged, makes a woman more useless, in mind and body, than almost any other of our so-called

little sins. Bodily and mental indolence do not always go together, but both must be guarded against; and perhaps the temptation to the latter is stronger in women than the former. How few women feel it a sin to neglect the cultivation of their mind. Any book or subject that requires the exertion of thought, is set aside, because they cannot be troubled with it; and this mental indolence, this dislike of mental exertion, increases and craves indulgence, quite as much as bodily indolence does, till at last the mind will submit to no control but that of amusement and excitement, or sinks into rusty, useless apathy. I have seen a plan recommended, as a check upon what may be called busy idleness, which might bring some to consider whether they might not indeed make a better use of their time, than frittering it away in trifling occupations, and perpetual visiting or sauntering. It is to keep a faithful record even for one week of all that has been done, summing up the hours thus spent, and honestly and seriously seeing what has been the result to ourselves and others. If, along with this, we would, like Jonathan Edwards, resolve "to observe after what manner we act when in a hurry, and to act as much so at

other times as we can, *without prejudice to the business,*" a stop would be put to much idle trifling, and we should learn to put more value on our time than we do. Among the various forms of self-indulgence, is one which is apt to assume, like many of our little sins, an appearance of virtue,—I refer to a dislike of finding fault even when it is our duty. I allow that it is disagreeable, that it is difficult, that it requires both temper and tact, and that a perpetual fault-finder is a nuisance not easily borne; but still it is sometimes a duty, and where, through what is called "taking things easy," this duty is neglected, domestic discomfort, if not more serious consequences, are sure to follow. How often do we hear it said with an air of complacency, "I wish now I had spoken before, and not allowed matters to go to this length; but I so dislike always finding fault." These complaints chiefly refer to servants and domestic concerns, while I believe we ought rather seriously to reproach ourselves for neglect of duty in this matter, and resolve henceforward to obey the apostle's command, "He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence." Do not find fault unnecessarily, or when irritated; but do not pass by faults or faulty ways

of doing work, merely because you dislike to find fault.

Then there are the tribe of faults that come under the head of thoughtlessness; daily and hourly the source of little neglects, little debts, little unkindnesses, which we never see in their true characters, simply because we never think about them at all. They are, however, all transgressions of the law of love, and as such, are little sins to be watched and striven against. If we would but remember that all thoughtlessness of others is selfishness; if we could but feel it as a reproach, not as a palliative, to have to say, "I never thought of it;" surely we would strive to think, to remember little services at the right time; to avoid the thoughtless word or jest that may pain another; to put ourselves sometimes to the slight inconvenience of going out of our way to pay a visit; and to be punctual and prompt in paying small debts. Carelessness in expenditure, and idle waste, are as frequently caused by thoughtlessness as by wilful extravagance, but the result is the same; and who that has ever seen the distress and discomfort arising from *not thinking* on these subjects, will deny the duty of steadily guarding against sins of thoughtlessness at their com-

mencement. To be inconsiderate of others is universally allowed to be a most unamiable trait, but I fear it is one of which all thoughtless persons are more or less guilty; and unless watched against in the young, it will be apt to end in the more determined form of self-seeking, and neglect of others altogether.

Can I class bad *temper* among little sins? I think not; but why is it, then, that, go almost where we may, we meet with little manifestations of this hydra, which seem to be yielded to without shame, and excused as of little consequence? It is true that, except in childhood, we rarely meet with violent fits of passion, or determined attacks of the sulks; for even where religious principle does not suppress such sinful displays of temper, shame, and a regard to the opinions of others, would prevent indulgence in such degrading and absurd manifestations of displeasure. But there are ways and means of letting others feel that we are out of humour, and of indulging and betraying temper, that we are apt to think too lightly of, and to class among our little sins, if indeed we class them among sins at all. One frequent excuse is, that our *manner* is bad; but is our manner bad when we are in a good humour? Does the presence

of a stranger at these times cause an alteration in the said bad manner to gentleness and courtesy? If it is merely a bad manner, surely that is under our own control, and may be more easily amended than the deeper-seated evil from which in reality it springs. No one would judge harshly those, who, from ill health, or worrying and anxious care, are betrayed into irritability, though those who are thus situated, ought to watch and strive against yielding to it. But the consideration of the duty of bearing with the tempers and caprices of others, and of making allowances for them, is not the question at present; my wish is rather to warn and arouse those who are hardly conscious, it may be, of how annoying their little indulgences of temper are to others. Who does not know the symptoms of this disease in others,—the cold averted look, the monosyllabic dry reply, the utter want of interest shown in what you are saying or doing? Or, worse still, the short snappish voice and manner, the sullen gloom, the determination not to smile or be pleased, the air of being a martyr, or of having suffered some deep affliction, the talking *at* but not *to* the offender, the quiet sneer, the affected wonder at something you or your friends have



done, the mock humility, the desire to be neglected? Who has not seen, grieved over, or smiled at, such manifestations of the evil spirit within another, yet perhaps gone and done likewise, ay, and justified herself, saying, "We do well to be angry?" One reason why bad temper is not felt to be sinful, perhaps is, that it is frequently disguised under some other name, and excused to our own hearts, as even an amiable weakness. A fit of regular snappish irritability perhaps, can hardly be thus disguised, though we may try to excuse it as "impossible to help being angry;" but for the more silent and sullen indulgences, how often do we plead *hurt feelings*, or that we are too sensitive, are often misunderstood, or that we only wished to awaken others to a sense of how ill they had behaved to us.

Akin to this, is liability to take offence, touchiness, a quickness to fancy slights, and to magnify small, and often unintentional slights into great offences. Wisely did Southey counsel his daughters to avoid giving offence, but still more carefully to guard against taking offence. The worst of all these little exhibitions of temper, is, that we too often indulge in them only towards those we love, only at home, and to our

own family. The presence of a stranger enables us to repress them, or rouses us up to cast them aside; for we are rarely petulant, snappish, gloomy, sullen, or discontented, except in the home circle. These things ought not so to be. Is it not most ungrateful to Him who maketh the solitary to dwell in families, thus to poison our own and others' enjoyment of such a blessing as the bonds of family ties are when employed for his glory? "Be courteous," is His command, and is meant to be applied to our daily home-life, as much as to strangers and acquaintances. In some cases, perhaps, it is more the manner that is in fault, than the temper; but if a bad manner rouses and irritates others, and is thereby an occasion of sin, ought we not sedulously to guard against it? How few, for instance, are not provoked to resistance by a dictatorial manner, a laying down the law as if there could be no appeal from our opinion or judgment, or fretted by a sharp manner of rebuke or remonstrance, as if the person speaking were personally injured, or checked and chilled by the gruff and ungracious manner in which some little service has been received, even when the recipient was gratified by the kindness.

Many, indeed, and various are the defects of manner; and in too many cases, we shall find, if we trace them honestly to their source, that they spring from our selfish disregard to the feelings of others, and would be checked and improved, were we more "kindly affectioned one to another."

The habit of viewing everything in a ridiculous light, is one of the family failings that I would warn against. It too often leads to an unamiable desire to detect and hold up to ridicule the faults of others, and it almost always destroys the finer feelings of admiration for what is beautiful, and the tender and more loveable qualities of putting the best construction upon the actions of others, &c. A critical, censorious, fault-finding woman is a most unamiable being; and let us not conceal the true odiousness of such propensities in ourselves, under the guise of a sense of the ludicrous. In many families, however, where both love and good temper prevail, there is what may be called an irksome, rather than a sinful, mode of carping and contradicting one another. No harm is meant, and no offence is taken; but what can be more irksome, than to hear two sisters, for instance, continually setting each

other right upon trifling points, and differing from each other's opinions, for no apparent reason, than a habit of contradiction; and such a habit does it become, that one may sometimes see persons who have acquired it, contradict their own statements just made, the moment any one advances the same opinion. It is generally on such trifles that this bad habit exercises itself, that it may seem needless to advert to it; but it is a family fault, and should be watched against, for it is an annoyance, though but a petty one, never to be able to open your lips without being harassed by such contradictions as "Oh, no, that happened on Tuesday, not Wednesday," or, if you remark that the clouds look threatening, to be asked with a tone of surprise, "Do you think it looks like rain? I am sure there is no appearance of such a thing." Narrate an incident, every small item is corrected; hazard an opinion, it is wondered at or contradicted; assert a fact, it is doubted and questioned; till you at length keep silence in despair. If such a habit is teasing, so also is the habit of indecision in trifles. "Have a choice," is a good rule sometimes. How often is a whole day wasted, discussing what is to be done, where

we should walk, what such a one would like; and how frequently does all this wavering and wondering end in doing nothing, or something the very reverse of what the person consulted would like, if she had just said what she wished, when asked. It is rather painful sometimes to give a decided opinion on some such trifle, it looks like wilfulness, in small matters; but, when asked from a really kind motive, try if possible to have a choice, and do not bandy civil speeches for ever, such as,—“Just what others wish,”—“I have no choice,” &c., &c., till at last no one will go either here or there, or do this or that, lest some one else should prefer going elsewhere, or doing another thing. Going a-shopping with one of these undecided ones, is a regular worry; and many a time have I wondered at the patience of the shopman thus tried. Quiet decision in those little matters may be quite consistent with a readiness to give up one's own way, and to oblige others. If it is not so, then it becomes wilfulness; which generally proceeds from a selfish desire to have one's own way, cost what it may to others. I mean, however, to confine myself to “little things,” and, therefore, this sin can only be considered in its smaller manifesta-

tions, and it is to the young I chiefly address myself. There is a vast amount of little wilfulnesses too often indulged in by young people when just released from the restraint of childhood, and when of an age to be swayed by advice, rather than governed by command. Inattention to their health, by not wearing warm clothing, and by exposing themselves unnecessarily to over-fatigue, or bad weather, is one of the most frequent ways of displaying wilfulness among the young. Good advice is rejected or ridiculed; and those who would be shocked and grieved at the thoughts of disobeying a parent's command, or showing determined obstinacy in greater matters, too often act so wilfully against the known and expressed wishes of their friends on these little points, that rather than keep up the perpetual fault-finding and irritation, they are abandoned to their headstrong ways, and soon forget, that in thus "pleasing themselves," they are indulging sin, as well as grieving others. It is no easy thing to be denied one's own way in trifles, to obey the rule, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." But let us go honestly to the root of these and many other evil ways, and must

we not acknowledge that the spirit which prompts them is very different indeed from that of Him who pleased not Himself, and who has left us an example that we should follow His steps. It may seem too solemn a view to take of such little things; but are we not in *all* things, in *whatever* we do, to glorify God? Surely, then, nothing is too trifling to be made the subject of prayer and watchfulness. Those who are most liable to indulge wilfulness themselves, are generally those who wish to impose their own way on others; and anything more annoying, more unlovely, than this petty tyranny, exists not. Do not excuse yourself, however, reader, by saying, "I may be, and perhaps am, a little wilful, but I am sure I would let others have their own way, if they let me have mine."

All wilful people are not dictatorial; and you will have quite enough to do with your own sin, for such it is, before you rejoice in not having another added to it. Wilfulness in your case may spring more from selfishness, while love of power, and a certain strength of character, are combined in the wilful ones, who not only love their own way, but wish that others also should follow it. I have alluded to this

subject in "Little Kindnesses," and refer to it again here, chiefly to guard my readers against both kinds of wilfulness,—a determination to take one's own way in trifles, or small things, and a resolution to force others to give up theirs to please you. Watch and pray against this spirit, either in one case or the other. Both are alike opposed to Christian love and kindness.

The next little sin I would refer to is "slighting and breaking resolutions." These resolutions may be made on small and trifling matters; the thing resolved on may be of little consequence; but is the habit not a fatal one to our moral welfare? and, alas! too often so to our eternal peace. "Vow, and defer not to pay thy vow," is a solemn warning on this point; and we may well feel overwhelmed with guilt in the sight of God, when we recollect the many solemn resolutions and vows we have forgotten and broken. Weak as we feel ourselves to be in those more important points, we are more apt to seek strength from on high to enable us to be faithful to our God; but do we feel sufficiently that we owe it as a duty to ourselves to be faithful in small resolutions? It would go far to help us to acquire resolution



of character, and to strengthen us against self-indulgence, were we faithfully to adhere to our resolutions, spite of the pleadings of indolence, carelessness, indifference and love of ease. Observe, I say, faithfully, not obstinately, for the sin I am speaking of has reference only to good resolutions, not to any little matters that may concern others, or our own pleasure or convenience merely, and where resolution to carry out an intention becomes obstinacy and self-will. We do not consider this breaking of little resolves a sin, and we excuse ourselves by pleading forgetfulness, that it matters little, that we cannot be always on the watch, or that we resolved in a moment of excitement, and do not now care much about it. All true, but sad proofs of our unfaithful spirit, by every such indulgence of which we harden our hearts, and are in danger of finding that "he that is unfaithful in little, is unfaithful also in much." Did we keep a list of our small resolutions, and at the end of a month mark how many had been fulfilled, how many needlessly procrastinated, and how many more remained unfulfilled, it may be forgotten, surely we should be humbled, and aroused to strive against this foe by every means in our power, not on

account of the items done, or left undone, but on account of the danger to our own souls by indulging it. Much of this unfaithfulness in known duty arises from our want of earnestness. We do not really care much about what we thus neglect. And there is another sin also arising out of this lukewarm spirit, that I would warn my readers against. It is, laughing at sin, either in ourselves or others, putting off with a joke what should be deeply felt, treating as light, and sometimes as amusing, what is displeasing to God, and what, in our more serious moments, we feel a cause of deep humbling and sorrow. Oh, surely, this is not a little sin! It cannot be so to make light of that abominable thing which He hates, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Then let us guard against it in its smaller manifestations, as well as in its more daring form. "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong," may be applied to those who, either from a desire not to be found in the wrong, or from the ill-natured habit of finding amusement in the faults of others, make a jest of their own and their neighbours' failings, turn into ridicule what they should silently grieve over, and thus harden their hearts against any loving endea-

vours to set them right, and against all tenderness of conscience as to their own sins and shortcomings. "Fools make a mock at sin;" and surely they only; and if we feel inclined to shield ourselves under the excuse that it is only at little sins we laugh, let us remember,—

"'Twas but a little sin this morn that entered in,  
And lo. at eventide the world is drowned."

THE END.

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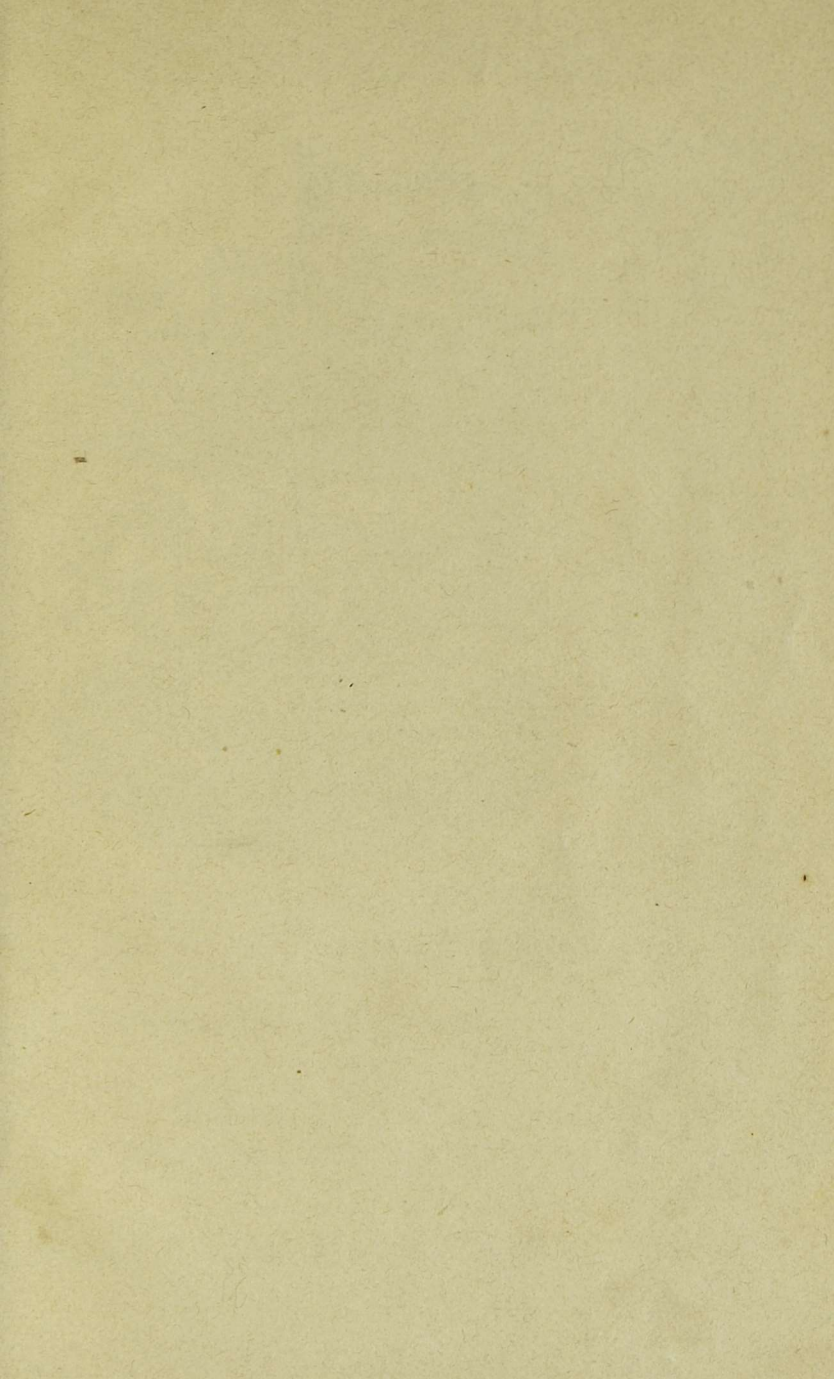
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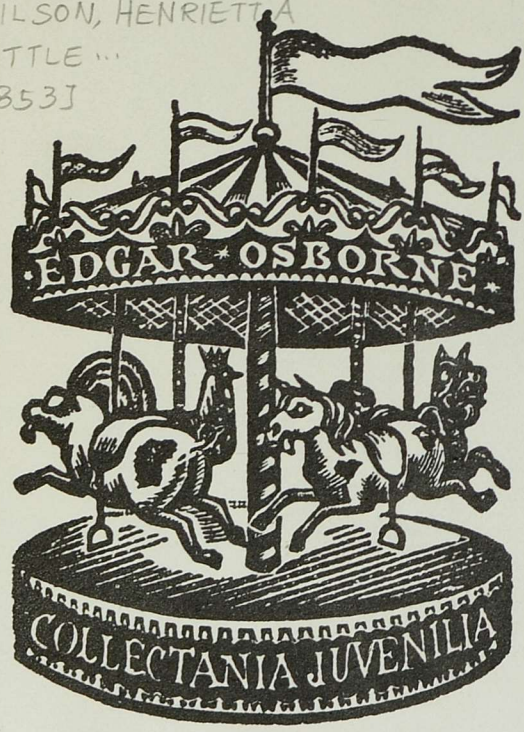




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