

Ideality.

Ideality stands for a beautiful thing. Many people have dedicated this word to the poets, forgetting that we all have an interest in it, and that it is the soul of reality, enlarged and elevated above the plane of the senses. There is no quality of the mind to which we are more indebted for our happiness than ideality, no gift we possess more divine. Who ever found poet or novelist who could satisfactorily embody his idea of bliss? What soldier or sailor on his nightly watch, ever saw his home, wife and children, in print? The most brilliant romance never set his heart throbbing, as the thought of their busy hands, active feet, and beaming faces have, at his own fire-side away among the mountains, where music, love, and animated life are identified with the tasseled foliage of the pines, through which the wind makes sad melody; but he likes it, sad as it may be, it had beguiled him in childhood, and had lingered with him through all the long days of exile and hard service.

We stepped into a ward the other day, whose bare walls, and tables, white beds and smooth floor suggested the very spirit of neatness and order; the warm fire-side, the pleasant routine of household occupation only were wanting to complete a simple picture of home life. A middle aged man sat looking out of the window, apparently lost in thought. His face wore an expression deeper than content, as though his thought had life and intensity in it. We asked if time hung heavy on his hands? 'No,' he replied, he 'could not say it did; it took very little to amuse him.' Being a cripple, and unable to walk abroad, he had spent the morning looking at a bird's nest swinging from a branch of a leafless tree beneath his window. After speculating on its manifold uses, and the skill displayed in its contrivance, he drew a simple, graphic picture of the domestic beauty of bird-life, its maternal tenderness, cares, the fine charm of its morning music, and the pensive influence of its vesper-songs; the up-springing of everything necessary in nature, just at the right time, so that every day could be one of jubilee in this little elysium, over and beneath which the heavens and earth continually smiled, until, in his mind's eye the homely, ragged little receptacle for eggs had become a home-altar, blest with all those relations that human beings hold as their sacred prerogative. We give this as an instance merely of the silent influence of domestic ideality.

It was related of Bridget, just from the Emerald Isle, that when she was ushered into a small attic of a house in Boston, from whose one window you could catch a glimpse of the frog-pond on the Common, she exclaimed, 'Oh, an sure, that lake is for all the world like Killarney!' Ideality in this case, made a faithful servant of Bridget, for she could never be persuaded to leave a spot filled with such precious associations.

Constant labor, even drudgery can be made not only tolerable, but pleasant, by the ideal presence that elevates, dignifies, and renders healthy the condition of the worker, in whatever capacity he is engaged. Toil was made for us, not we for toil;—it may wear the body, smite the nerves, harass the soul; we must not surrender our faith in the beautiful to its demand, or let its incursions on our ease and rest, set our faces to stone; but seek the inspiration of noble sentiments and grateful scenes, as we would a touch-stone, in which lies hidden the essence of true life.

Personal.

On Wednesday Secretary SEWARD passed through Annapolis, on his way to City Point.

President LINCOLN arrived here on Thursday, by special train from Washington. No one was aware of this distinguished arrival, until it was heralded by the Hospital Band playing patriotic airs of welcome, as he passed from the wharf to the boat.

Our Harbor.

During the past week our wharves have been surrounded by quite a fleet of steamers and sailing vessels, which have made this their harbor during the ice-embargo on the Potomac, Baltimore harbor, and other points. This unexpected arrival has given quite an air of activity and stir to the Hospital and vicinity, as travelers from various points below pass through at all hours of the day and night, bound to Washington and Baltimore.

We have had delightful winter weather for a few days, and although all kinds of craft pass freely from and to the Bay, the lively skaters may be seen careering in all directions, making the Severn a crystal track between the two shores, on which freight is transported in half the usual time, though not with the same safety as by ferry.

On the 27th. ult., this Hospital received about three hundred patients, brought here from City Point, by the steamer State-of-Maine.

From the Jeffersonian.

Christmas at Annapolis.

The following lively sketch of Christmas with the soldiers at Annapolis, is from the pen of a Danbury lady. We are glad that she has such a pleasant sketch to present, and that our unfortunate soldiers at that place, were made so happy on Merry Christmas. The letter was not written for publication:

U. S. GENERAL HOSPITAL,  
Annapolis, Md., Dec. 28th, 1864.

You hear much of the sad sickening scenes of this hospital life, and especially of the horrible condition of the lately received inmates, but perhaps not so much of what is done to cheer their hearts and alleviate their sufferings, hence I shall make it my pleasure to tell you what I know of this 'Christmas Festival.' I came on Saturday just in time to catch the inspirings of the last preparation for a merry Christmas on the morrow. I really felt a sort of homelike gladness to be again among those whose lives are so devoted to their country's suffering heroes, and to hear again the signal bugle notes, and the 'Band' which really delights the heart and enlivens the eye to hear. But to return to our 'Merry Christmas,' on Sunday morning after breakfast with the Lady Nurses where each found 'neath their plate a token of remembrance from their amiable and devoted Directress, (Miss Hall.) I visited their reception room, which was tastefully decorated with evergreens, and on cloth an inscription, 'To Miss Hall, a Merry Christmas.' The Goddess of Liberty was represented rejuvenated with fresh wreaths, &c.

From there I accompanied one of the ladies to her 'Ward,' stopping on the way at one of the Low Diet Kitchens. If you have never been in one of these kitchens you can scarcely imagine what a busy scene they ordinarily present, but this morning more than ever busy were the cooks and lady directing. This kitchen is formed by a row of tents with board floors, and one side lined with mammoth stoves, ovens and a cauldron, from which the boiling vegetables were sending out a refreshing odor in clouds of vapory steam, and from which I saw taken numbers of nice chickens, pies and delicious custards. At a table stood a man carving turkey after turkey; filling large plates with generous slices, then from a cupboard near by drawing new supplies to carve. (There seemed to be no limit but I suppose there was.) On another table were large plates of cakes donated by the agent of the Christian Commission, made by thoughtful friends at home, and boxes of hickory-nuts to crack. Another table was covered with pies.

All this seemed to indicate that for once the soldiers might 'eat and be merry,' and they did. From here I went to the 'wards,' speaking with many of the change from their 'prison pens' to the comforts of this hospital. I can never forget the childish, pleased expression of some, nor the glad looks of nearly all. Their long confinement has too nearly accomplished the design of the traitors, that they be so returned with crippled bodies, or too emaciated in body, and imbecile in mind, to be of further use to us as soldiers.

A visit to the 'Full Diet Mess Hall' was worth a journey here. Evergreens were festooned overhead, and flags and pictures graced the sides of the building. The tables were filled with a generous supply of turkeys, chickens, pork, vegetables, plates of pickles, pies and even cranberry sauce. Around this substantial dinner-board I saw seated 600 men, most of them so lately without even a shelter or bread enough to keep off the pangs of hunger.

They seemed to enjoy their dinner 'hugely' and it did my heart good to see them eat. I believe the extras for the occasion were provided by the surgeon in charge, Dr. B. A. Vanderkief, and I think scarce one in the yard but was remembered by him in his efforts to give them a 'Merry Christmas.'

But my story would be quite incomplete without a description of the 'Chapel' beggarly though it must be. They have a very neat chapel, and I found its decorations exceeding all I had yet seen. These also were designed by Dr. Vanderkief, and executed by convalescents. On the altar pieces was a neat representation of the 'Bible, Wine Cup and Cross.' The stained glass windows were surrounded with wreaths, and above was a splendid series of circling stars, reflecting the light.— Still above this a large shield supported 'The Eagle,' and gracefully festooned the 'Fag of our Nation' and the motto 'God and our Country.' Around and about this was a magnificent Scroll Arch of evergreens and scrolls on which were painted the names of the most important battles.

Shields, flags, and wreaths were on the windows and about the pillars near the entrance. The Rev. Mr. Sloan, Chaplain of the Officers Hospital, addressed the people in the afternoon, and services were performed in the evening by the Rev. Mr. Davenport, of St. An's Episcopal Church, Annapolis, preceded by the singing of the 'Christmas Carol,' by the Chapel Choir.

I meant to have written you more of the soldiers, but I see I have filled my sheet and I fear tired you by the already long letter, and will close by wishing continual blessings on your faithful labors in behalf of our suffering soldiers.

Respectfully,

J. N. K.

Sacking Atlanta.

The Augusta *Constitutionalist* gives the following account of the disgraceful scenes which occurred in Atlanta, after the abandonment of that city by General Sherman. It is an amusing picture of the 'chivalry!'

'Soon after the Yankees left, the country people flocked by scores from all parts of the country, some coming over one hundred miles. Every description of vehicle, drawn by mules, horses, stallions, jacks, jennies, oxen, bullocks, etc., could be seen upon the streets. The scene beggars description. Iron, salt, bacon, flour, sugar, coffee, hides, and everything else left by the Yankees, were unceremoniously deposited in wagons and carts, and carried off. But our country cousins did not stop at that. They entered the dwelling-houses of those absent and gutted them of all their furniture.

'One lady who left her house for a few hours, to attend to pressing business, was astonished to find, on her return, all her furniture and wearing-apparel gone.— Fully one hundred and fifty pianos were carried off by the hoosiers, many of whom were unused to any 'concord of sweet sounds,' save that produced by a jewsharp or fiddle. One of them, an illiterate backwoodsman, who resided in an humble hut, ten by twelve, was seen carrying out a magnificent piano in a small cart drawn by a two-year-old bullock.

'A venerable dame was observed trying to haul into her cart a fine piano by means of a rope attached to the legs. When asked what she was doing, she replied that she had found a 'mighty nice table in thar, and was trying to get it in her keart.' One man alone carried off over \$50,000 worth of dry hides. Steps have been taken to secure all the articles carried off, as well as the offenders. Already much property has been recovered.'

Why are chickens liberal? Because they give a peck when they take a grain.