

THE CRUTCH.

Charles N. Burnham, Publisher.

U. S. GEN'L HOSPITAL, DIV. 1, SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 1864.

Our Future Records.

We often look forward to the close of this war and imagine the voluminous records that will appear, concerning men and things connected with it. What notes now kept by thousands in our vast army, and by others who have given their time and labor in behalf of those engaged in the cause before us, will then bring to light facts and incidents now supposed to be buried and forgotten. No war in all the past, has preserved and kept on record so much of the minutiae connected with the battle field, the camp and the Hospital, as this our present struggle will reveal. In the lowest ranks of the Union army, men may be found of the highest abilities and superior literary attainments. The duties of camp life and the business of war cannot hold in check minds once awakened by a love of knowledge. Expanded and taught to think, beyond the mere routine of present engagements, and daily occurrences, the opportunity will constantly besought to call into exercise such attainments. This is demonstrated by the avidity with which men seize and devour books, papers, and every variety of reading matter scattered through the army. How many diaries have been kept—how many incidents noted down and characters scanned and commented on. What myriads of letters sent to every home in the land, filled with matter which will have an important bearing in arriving at a correct opinion concerning the motives that suggested plans, purposes and actions in all this great contest; and a proper estimate of the character of each actor in its scenes. Our characters are not so clearly read and the motives which prompted our actions so easily understood, at the time when the events in which we take a part, occur, as in after years, when all can be calmly reviewed, and the excitement and mist of the occasion are driven away. But in this calm time they will be read. In the future it will be seen, and chiefly because the particulars, in the part each is taking, are observed, noted, and will be put on record. If no higher motive can influence men in their conduct this at least should deter us from allowing selfish and sordid motives from governing our conduct. Let each one, whatever his sphere, act well his part; not in reference to the ease and reward of the hour but in reference to all time.

Joy.

For the Crutch.

There is true joy to be found even in this world of wretchedness and sin. But it is a joy which lives within the soul—a joy which savoreth not of earth, but is the offspring of Christian love and holy obedience. It is an emanation from Jehovah, and savors of the bliss of heaven. Like the rays of the sun which penetrate the mists of morning, it pierces the clouds of corruption which surround the human heart, and cheers it with its beams of light divine. Like oil, which when poured upon the turbid waters, soothes the angry waves, and renders calm and transparent, that which before was dark and raging, so does joy, holy joy, calm the tempestuous passions of the heart and whisper to the waves of feeling there—"Peace be still." It sweetens the cup of life which is often bitter and repugnant to those who must drink it—illumes the pathway to the grave, and reveals faint glimpses of the glories which are beyond the boundaries of mortality. But joy like this is not the inheritance of all. As it belongs not to the world, so is it not possessed by those who make this world their portion. It is the Christian's treasure; the testimony of a good conscience; the gift of God to those whose hearts respond to His overtures of mercy—who do their duty to their fellow man and live a life of holiness by faith.

J. P. H.

The fishing season with us has commenced; and the market at Annapolis affords an abundance and variety of this delightful article. We have no doubt but an abundant supply will find its way into our Hospitals.

For the Crutch.

A Story of Self-Denial.

One lovely Sunday afternoon, during the summer of 1853, I found myself in the romantic village of E——, situated in the north of England. The glorious strains of the Evening song of the Church, were still lingering on my ears, as I passed down the aisle of the beautiful House of Prayer, where I had just been an humble worshiper, and made my way into the churchyard which surrounded the building.

While wandering among the tombstones, which were scattered in every direction, and reading the different inscriptions, which marked the last resting places of many of God's faithful people, my attention was drawn to an open grave on which the churchyard Cross was then flinging its holy shadow, as the sun sank lower and lower toward the western horizon. While standing near the newly piled-up earth, and thinking on the bright glories of heaven, which lie at the end of the valley of the shadow of death, and which can only be entered into and enjoyed through the door of the dark and silent grave, a strain of harmony broke the stillness of the scene, and floated through that old churchyard. Nearer and nearer drew the heavenly music, as the funeral procession—for such it was—advanced around the Church to the open grave, near which I was standing. I recognized the touching words of that inspired song, "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O, Lord, Lord hear my voice." Again and again did the united voices of the parish priest and white-robed choristers swell forth as the solemn, but sweet tones of the burial service of the Church ascended to heaven; and as the crumbling earth fell with hollow sound upon the coffin, as the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," were uttered, I noticed many weeping eyes around me, and many suppressed but convulsive sobs from the humble villagers who stood about that open grave.

After the services were concluded, I approached the Vicar of the parish, and introducing myself as a priest of the American Church, asked him who it was whose remains he had just consigned to the earth, and who evidently seemed to possess the respect and affections of so many of his parishioners.

"Come with me," he said, "to the vestry, and I will tell you a story of one who was in every sense a Christian, and adorned the doctrine of Jesus Christ in all things."

I expressed my hearty thanks for his offered kindness, and listened attentively while he narrated the following history of love, self-denial, and devotion to God's service:—

"Mary Brown, whose soul is now at rest in the place of departed spirits, was eighty years of age when God called her away from earthly scenes. Upon taking charge of this parish, some ten years ago, my attention was attracted by her punctual attendance upon all the services of the Church, and the apparent earnestness and reverence with which she performed her devotions. She was always accompanied by a little boy to whom she seemed deeply attached; and it was beautiful to see the affection which he showed for her; for he was always by her side, ready to anticipate her wishes, and wait upon her with the fondest attention.

"Upon visiting her, I found that with the exception of this little boy, who was her grand-son, she was entirely alone in this world; and next to fitting her own soul to stand in God's holy presence, her only object in life seemed to be the instruction and training of her grand-son in those sacred truths and duties, whose implicit belief and faithful performance make the humble Christian. But a heavy blow soon fell upon her. That beloved child was laid upon a bed of sickness; and from that hour a cloud of sorrow overshadowed the heart of that devoted woman. She hardly ever left him; and when tossing from side to side with the raging fever that assailed him, it was her hand alone that smoothed his pillow and fanned his burning brow; her voice that whispered soothing words, and spoke of Jesus and the beautiful home which He has prepared for those who love Him. And fervent prayers were hourly ascending, that God,

if it should seem good in his holy sight, would spare to her the boy who was the only earthly comfort of her old age. But she had fitted him for heaven, and God called him to dwell among the angels, while the heart of her who had been to him as a mother was left bleeding and desolate. Yet meekly did she bow beneath the blow which fell upon her; and never in all my ministerial experience have I witnessed deeper humility, greater submission, and a more confident hope of meeting again, in the realms of glory, the loved one who had gone before.

"About a year after her bereavement, a brother clergyman who had just returned on a visit from his mission in Africa, made an address and appeal for aid to my congregation, in which he stated that the sum of eight pounds would clothe and educate a heathen child. From that moment Mary determined to do more than she had hitherto done for God's service; and as God had taken from her the boy who had called for all her care and attention, she resolved to be the means of training a heathen soul for heaven, and adding another to the number of the redeemed. She therefore entered immediately upon the new duty which she had assumed; and from early morning until late at night, might be heard the hum of her spinning-wheel as she spun the coarse yarn, from the sale of which she hoped to raise the eight pounds for which she toiled, before the expiration of the year.

"Six months of cheerful industry and rigid self-denial thus passed away, and yet she had not earned even half of the sum required. But she was not discouraged.—She resolved to make still greater sacrifice; and as the garret-room of the cottage in which she lived was vacant, and as the rent was much less than that of the first floor room which she occupied, she determined to change her quarters, in order that having less to spend for her own wants, she might have more to lay by for the object which filled her thoughts.

"The change was made, and several times each day might she be seen climbing slowly up those steep stairs, in order to carry to her lonely garret the few necessaries of food and fuel which her daily wants required; and instead of seeking to provide herself with a few comforts in her old age, she was content to eat the simplest food and wear the coarsest garments to protect her old and almost worn-out body. Every thought and energy was devoted to the sacred end she had in view; and with zeal and affection thus devoted to the cause of Christ, she was enabled to rejoice more in her garret than she ever could have done in the most splendid apartment, with heart and mind set upon the world and worldly things. She felt that she was working for God and denying herself for Him, who resigned the glories of heaven for her sake, and lived and suffered on earth for her redemption. And therefore the hum of her spinning-wheel was still heard, and angels were hovering around that humble dwelling, ready to bear to heaven the prayers and praises which were always gushing from the heart of that devoted Christian.

"At last the year was ended; and its close witnessed the result of Mary's efforts. She was permitted to offer upon God's altar, the result of her labors in His service. And the offering was accepted; for it was the fruit of toil and self-denial.

"A few days since having fought a good fight, and finished her course, she rested from her labors and fell asleep in Jesus. It was my privilege to stand beside her dying couch, and prepare her for her last journey, by placing to her lips the consecrated symbols of a Saviour's death and passion; but I could teach her no lesson in holiness. I felt that I had much to learn from her; and as I commended her departing soul into the hand of a faithful Creator, and merciful Saviour, I offered a fervent prayer to heaven that my last end should be like hers."

The twilight was just stealing over the earth as I took leave of my new friend and passed through the deserted churchyard, and as my steps led me by that newly made grave, my thoughts dwelt upon these words of comfort to bereaved hearts: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

J. P. H.