

## THE CRUTCH.

Charles N. Burnham, Publisher.

U. S. GEN'L HOSPITAL, DIV. 1, SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 1864.

### Character.

It is a fact which admits of no dispute, that individual welfare and happiness are indissolubly connected with character. By an unchangeable constitution of things every man must think, choose and act for himself—must select some object, or end, or course of conduct, to which, not only his faculties become tributary, but by the constitution of the mind, also conformed. Can there be any doubt on these points? Is not every one pursuing some object or end from which he expects to derive good or happiness? Are not some devoting all their energies to the acquisition of wealth—are not others striving for power and honor—and some to obtain the greatest amount of low sensual gratification? and do not all these, and other pursuits that might be specified, so influence the mind that *Character* inevitably results? If then it be true, that every choice, purpose or act, has some influence, more or less, towards the formation of character, and its avoidable results, how careful should every one be, as he values his happiness here and hereafter, to devote himself to those objects and pursuits which are pure and elevating; through whose training influence all the powers of his mind and heart may become strengthened and ennobled; how careful should we be to avoid everything that debases or perverts the moral, intellectual, and physical powers. It is right to be "diligent in business"—to cultivate the esteem of the wise and good—to love and defend one's country—to seek our own prosperity and happiness and at the same time to promote the happiness of others. But as we cannot change that constitution which makes some things good and others evil; which makes character agree with the ends that are politically pursued; and which renders it impossible for a man to be truly happy unless his pursuits and his character be honest and good—how important it is, ever to resist and avoid those things which indirectly conflict with our highest interests. There is perhaps no class of men so much exposed to injurious influences affecting the cultivation of high character as are soldiers—but as none can escape the consequences of yielding to demoralizing influences, wherever they may be situated, the soldier should never allow himself to forget the moral peril by which he is surrounded. It is often better to lose one's life, than, by living, to acquire habits which can only end in degradation and ruin.—Let the *soldier* then place before his mind, and never forget, the bright objects of his calling—all the duties of patriotism and fidelity to the service. Let him shrink instinctively from every sensual temptation—avoid every demoralizing influence and habit—ever remembering that the best soldier, as well as the best man, is he who lives habitually in the fear of God—and, who, ever trusting in His care, has the best reason for fearing no danger and for shrinking from no duty.

### Language

I am thinking as I am sitting by my rude Hospital stand of the use of language—and as I think, so I write. Much has been said in this department of the happiness of ignorance, but the highest degree of happiness is proved to exist by the force of education and refined language. It would have been more fitting to my idea of things, had ignorance been left to its own resources to have made out its case—yet in the decision of that question we learn this lesson to profit by—in the correct use of language there is power. In order that each should understand the other correctly, we should understand our words alike, and use them so—and is it not a little amusing, this jarring of tongues—these different dialects in the English language? Here are gathered together representatives from every loyal State in the Union, and is there not a difference of speech among us though perhaps that difference be but slight. We had supposed that our language was National, yet is it really so? Let us endeavor to profit by these gatherings of our classes occasioned for the first time in a generation or more, so that "when this cruel war is over," and we go home perchance, the circles of society we have vacated for a while, may be benefited in this respect, by reason of our lots having been cast at Annapolis.

For the Crutch.

### Are we a Contented People?

As Americans we claim to be a truly happy people.—The extent of our country with all its vast resources, and the character of our institutions, inviting the ambition and energy of every class of society, in the attainment of eminence and honorable position, under our government—even to the very highest, would seem to make this impression well founded. But is it true?—Are we really enjoying that contentment and sober ease which gives strength and reliance to the mind? Just now it is true, war with all its sad consequences, is desolating the land and disturbing the peace of every family. But at any time previous, might it be said that contentment was really an American virtue? So far from it, restlessness and a state of eager pursuit after some phantom darkly glooming in the shadow of coming events, seem to mark the movements of men in every section. Retirement, in that sense where the cares of business are thrown off, is scarcely known among us. However rich a man may be, yet he is not satisfied.—He does not feel as if he wished to retire from the busy scenes of life and quietly enjoy his wealth. It matters not how rich he may be, yet he has no definite idea of what a fortune is, and he is just as anxious to make his million twice told, as he was to double his first dollar. When he amasses a fortune his idea of enjoying it consists in making it double what it is. The American has an habitual devotion to work. He is not phlegmatic but mercurial. He never recognizes the necessity of relaxation. He makes no provision for enjoyment, and when he secures enough for this, he is incapable of appreciating it. With all our vitality and our resources—our free institutions and the unrestrained efforts which men may put forth for their own advancement, we are not a cheerful, contented people, and we are peculiar as a nation in this respect; differing from other nations. With us all is bustle, tumult and rush. Perhaps as a comparatively new nation, this rush and restlessness of spirit is necessary to give us that sober sedate temperament which shall beget a more wise and sensible view of earthly things. We grow wiser through ages. And trials develop that stable and prudent character, that enables us to contrast the life here with the unending life beyond. It may truly be said however, that we are not a contented or happy nation. As much as the great Benefactor has blessed us and as liberally as he has opened the way for our enjoyment, and contentment, yet in these particulars we are less the recipients of these benefits than any other people. When all the trials of this war is over our enthusiasm and boasting will have settled down to its proper level. Men will enjoy life. Men will content themselves with a competency, and shall be satisfied that happiness is not entirely found in the violent, spasmodic, exciting and exhausting efforts of business.

SAM.

For the Crutch.

### An Orange.

The 21st of September, 1863, ended a four month imprisonment on Belle Island, and I took up my march with the skeleton procession destined for the Flag-of-truce boat *New York*. Some of us; knew we must soon lay down the burden of life, but not there, so long as a pulse throbbed—not there, so long as a nerve could be strained or a muscle moved, and panting for breath, reeling from weakness, begging God for strength, we stood once more upright and free men, beneath the Stars and Stripes! You should have seen the faded eyes raised in awe towards this glorious emblem—the pale hands lifted to salute it, as with one shout we invoked heaven's protection for it and our Country! Our trip hither, was not a smooth one; the sea was rough, the atmosphere cold and damp. Starvation had unfitted us for the bountiful ration provided for us in the Hospital, and I was one of the number destined to fast still longer, though I took some stimulus in diluted drinks, and felt myself slowly recalled to life, thereby. One morning as I laid in my narrow bed, wondering what I could eat, and wishing the Chesapeake was a punch bowl filled with lemonade, an almost invisible hand appeared through the open window at the head of my bed and dropped a yellow

globe of something that looked like solid gold into my open palm. I am an East Tennessean and was never away from home an hour before the war, and had never seen anything of the kind in my life. I turned it over and over; what tropical splendor! what grace of outline were gathered there! If I closed my eyes, the mysterious fragrance wafted visions of gorgeous lands across my brain, where every leaf was rimmed with gold, and the sky one broad perpetual sunset, floated in saffron and amber clouds, and from which the winds came laden with incense. A new presence filled the room; hope expanded, a wonderful sense of beauty had crept into my soul. To have discovered a new planet in perfect health, would not have given me greater pleasure, than the sense of holding this little globe in my hand.—Nurse caught sight of it, and brought a sharp knife to cut it, I was never more shocked in my life, and think I should have knocked him over, had I been his equal in strength; as it was, I waited patiently for an explanation of his officiousness, and at last yielded the point that the fruit was not forbidden. He who has held his soul in patience for four months on Belle Isle will pardon me for sentimentalizing on a topic so simple—will pardon my ignorance, when I confess that I suffered agonies while my new found treasure was undergoing excoriation, which were only dissipated by the compensation of eating which soon followed. Stranger, if you want to know what real happiness is, eat an orange for the first time in your life, when you are nearly starved, sent by the kind friends in the North who are providing so liberally for us.

††

For the Crutch.

### Something to be done.

How few realize how true it is, that there is always something that needs to be done; that we need never be idle. Most, like the Lorenzo to whom, Young in his "night thoughts," sings, "plead for their high prized sports," for the many hours they are idle; and the many more they spend in frivolities. "Time's numerous blanks." "The strand, like trifles on life's common stream," but Young rightly sings that these are all from him—that, "no blank no trifle nature made or meant." It is true, we need never be idle; or what is worse, be doing that which is of no use. However we may be circumstanced, there is either something to be done, that will benefit ourselves, or our fellows. If there is no manual labor to be performed, no little act of kindness to be done; we may still improve our minds, we may read, if not read, we may reflect and study. Beware how you spend your time. "Pay no moment but in purchase of its worth." Pay them, not to acquire a knowledge of games. Spend them not in perusing low, light literature. Pay them not to base vulgarities, in profanity at the degraded saloon in company with the brawling inebriate. Thus spent they will not "purchase their worth." This should be the motto of all, I will try to make the world better by having lived in it.—This done, we shall have accomplished the great end of life.

The following occurred at the General Post Office in Baltimore. A genuine Irishman approached the window, and handing the clerk in attendance a letter remarked, in the richest brogue,

"Plase, Sir, and will you send this lethur to brother Tim, who lives two miles be-yant the Re-lay House?"

The clerk, taking the letter, replied that he would send it to the post-office at that place.

"Sure, Sir, how will brother Tim get the lethur if you send it there? Don't I tell you that he lives two miles be-yant the Re-lay House!"

The clerk smilingly answered that as there was no post-office nearer to him than the Relay House, he would be compelled to send it there. The Irishman still appeared to be bothered and dissatisfied; but, after scratching his noddle a while, a bright idea seemed to strike him, and approaching the window again with beaming countenance, says,

"I have it now, Sir! Write on the back of it, Brother Tim will please call at the Re-lay House and get this lethur!"