

occupy her mind before long. The summer heat still further reduced Dr. Aitkin's strength, already weakened by the cold of the winter, and one by one he laid aside his customary occupations. He took no exercise beyond a short walk in the garden, leaning heavily upon Venetia's strong young arm, and before the wall fruit there had ripened even this was given up. Then, finding the fatigue of mounting the stairs at night-time a growing one, he remained in his room entirely. The once keen eye grew dimmer day by day, and the drowsy hours passed in a silence more eloquent of the approaching end than any spoken words could have been. All that could be done for him Venetia did, and in her presence he found the only comfort he was capable of receiving. Through the dim window of his aged eyes he saw, as he had never seen with his unclouded vision, that the beauty of her face and form only reflected and expressed that of her heart and soul.

But it was not until the very last that Venetia knew how he regarded her. Her generous woman's heart was melted by

the sight of the old man's helplessness. She had never cherished the memory of his harshness, and of the neglect of so many years. All that could be forgotten had been forgotten by her long ago, and the rest she had freely forgiven.

It was on an evening in August that a revelation came to Venetia. The old man, who was weaker than he had ever been, had made from earliest dawn incessant demands upon his patient nurse, whose efforts to soothe the dying man only made it hourly plainer that nothing could any longer avail him. The terrible restlessness which was so soon to be changed for an unending rest had for a few moments been lulled into repose by some rearrangement of pillows in the large easy chair by the open window, from which the sick man had watched the lingering sunset.

"You are a good child, Venetia," he murmured. "I never knew you were such a good child. I thought you were like your mother and your grandmother, and I did it for their sakes—for their sakes," he repeated, while the expression that passed over his face showed too

plainly that he had made the tender-sounding words bear a cruel meaning.

The burden that she had borne so meekly all these years, then, was not hers by right, but had been laid upon her in vengeful recollection of her grandmother; it was a legacy or an inheritance, and not a birthright.

"But I never hated you," the old man went on slowly—"no, I never hated you. I almost think if you had been another woman's child I should have loved you."

For the first time in her life Venetia raised her uncle's hand to her lips. He had never hated her. If she had been another woman's child he almost thought he could have loved her. These few words, grudging as they were, made Venetia's heart glad; perhaps there might be a little time yet in which he would forget whose daughter she was; but even as this new-born hope sprung to life she knew its futility. No words of tenderness would ever pass those ashen lips, nor ever again would her ears be wounded by their bitterness of unmerited reproach.

(To be continued.)

THE INVALID CHILDREN'S AID ASSOCIATION.

MANY of our readers must, at some time or other, have visited the wards of a general hospital, perhaps when calling on a friend among the resident medical officers or nursing staff, and some, perchance, are regular visitors associated with a mission for supplying books or flowers to the poor patients. Few girls will go to such a hospital without being especially interested in, and anxious to visit, the "children's wards": few indeed will enter these wards and depart without mingled feelings of pity for the poor little sufferers, and of consolation from the fact that they all look clean and well cared for, and in the case of such as are not in acute pain, happy: few will have failed to notice the wealth of gratitude and affection showered by these little ones on those who have ministered and are ministering to their wants and ailments. A house-surgeon who happens to be a favourite enters the ward; what a clamour arises! "Give me a ride, doctor!" "Come here, doctor!" "Look here, doctor!"

What a happy yet sad picture the whole scene presents; the convalescent children, with wooden trays on their cots loaded with toys and picture-books, sitting up and chattering in their play to their dolls and companions; and those who are able to be up and about playing all sorts of games on the hearth-rug and floor, and running to hide behind the gown of their second mother, "Sister," afflicted with sudden shyness at the approach of strangers.

There in the corner by the fire-place you see a canopied bed, and its little unconscious occupant is "the new case," for whom death is fighting against doctor and nurse; a sad and sobering sight, and one to send you away thinking. But a sadder form of suffering than all is the "old case," which is only too frequently represented in the children's ward. The thin, transparent hands, the poor drawn face with its hectic flush, the constrained position, all tell their tale, and on the bed is a card with a warning red label on it. If we ask "Sister" about the case she will probably say, "Oh! that is little George; an old hip case"; and his red ticket means that he has been in

hospital two months, and that arrangements will soon have to be made for his departure. You pity the poor child with this dreadful disease, confined to his bed for so many weary weeks, and yet in all probability you see him surrounded by the best and happiest and brightest condition of things that he has ever known. This child has in all probability come to the hospital from a dirty house in some back slum of London, its parents perhaps drunkards, everything in its home—if it deserves such a name—mean, squalid, and dirty. Its food has been scanty, and, in all likelihood, of a nature calculated to do as much harm as good; and as to means of alleviating the pain and discomfort of the disease, there have been none—nothing but harsh treatment, rough words, and sometimes blows.

From all this on admission to the hospital the child has been transferred into a kind of paradise, and has had what seems to him to be a foretaste of Heaven. Here everything is bright and clean, everyone kind and gentle; he has good food to eat and no stint of it, he sees other children, talks with them, and has toys and picture-books innumerable, and is visited by "booster ladies," who talk kindly to him, and give him flowers; and from all this he is condemned soon to depart. May you, my readers, be for ever spared from seeing the departure of such a case: full well that child knows what he is leaving and whither he goes; he is banished from all that has ever been bright in his life, and must return to a home in the first instance fearful to him, but now ten thousand times more so by comparison. Only too frequently is it the fact that such a case as this leaves hospital "Relieved," to return to a home and surroundings which mean certain death.

Surely the action of any body of people who shall set these evils right is beyond praise. We must realise at the outset that it is not the hospital that is to blame—one must not fill up the beds of a general hospital with these "chronic cases" or there will be no accommodation for emergencies or "acute cases." One must look for some other way out of the diffi-

culty, and this way has been found for us by an association called the Invalid Children's Aid Association. To form a just estimate of the good this body can do, it will only be necessary for us to remember what we have said about chronic cases, and to discuss the means and methods of work adopted by the Association.

One of the chief characteristics of the Association is a system of Visitors. On receiving intimation of the departure of such a case as that of "little George" from the hospital, the Visitor makes it his or her business to be a friend to the child, and to work as hard as possible in order that the right thing may be done for him, and that his life, instead of being wantonly sacrificed, may be saved and rendered bright and happy. The case is reported by the Visitor to an Executive Committee, which meets weekly to consider cases. Of course in many instances the home of the child may be a decent and respectable one, and all that the Visitor will need to do will be to brighten the home-life of the child by cheerful visits, and perhaps help the mother of the child by useful hints as to the care of it. Beyond this, in a case in which the little patient cannot walk, and, of course, must have fresh air, the Association provides for the lending of spinal carriages, wheel-chairs, and perambulators, at the request of the Visitor. Should the case be a more serious one, but still one that can be treated at home, the Association helps the parent to get proper medical and surgical attendance, splints, or other surgical appliances, and the more expensive dressings. If beyond all this the case cannot be treated at home on account of its gravity, the Association may obtain admission for the child by an In-Patient Letter at one of the hospitals; or, on the other hand, if the child's home and surroundings are such as to be utterly incompatible with successful treatment, a serious attempt will be made to get the child into a suitable home.

These are, in brief, the means by which this Association hopes to save the lives of maimed and crippled children of the poor. It is expected that such Visitor will leave no stone

unturned until the child is well over the boundary line between convalescence and full health. The work undertaken even in London alone is enormous, and to do this great good various things are needful. In the first place, Visitors. How many of our London girls might give some of their time to this good work; how forcibly the necessity of such work must impress itself on every sensible reasoning girl! And how great is the reward! On earth—the flush of delight on the poor little face on your entry, the detaining hands at your departure; and hereafter—the welcome that shall be accorded by the Great Master to all who have worked for His little ones.

Let all "Our Girls" then give this thing consideration, for in these days of charitable schemes—some far-reaching in their ambition and far-distant in practical realisation, others irrational, undiscerning, and clumsily managed—it is refreshing and reassuring to meet with one the characteristics of which are simplicity of construction and manifest and immediate practicability. Let every girl put the question to herself, "Cannot I too become a Visitor?" "May not I too have the care of one of these poor afflicted little ones, and bring light and peace to his or her dark life?" Most girls possess sufficient tact to do great good in this way, and in these days of "lady-probationers" many must possess some knowledge of nursing.

why should such useful knowledge lie dormant? Let no one of you bury her talent.

Of course the work undertaken by the Association necessitates the expenditure of money, and so funds must be forthcoming. To meet any sudden strain on the financial resources a list is kept in a special book, called the "Golden Book," of people each of whom is willing at any one time to bear the expense of the treatment of one emergent case. This means the expenditure of about 5s. a week, and by this method people who cannot possibly visit the children themselves can help in other ways.

Other things that are useful and are much needed are hospital "letters," especially for *in-patients*, and also letters for convalescent homes, spinal carriages, old perambulators, clothes, linen, books, toys, air and water cushions.

The good work done by such a Society as this cannot be adequately expressed by figures; but although the Society is young, having started a separate existence from the Charity Organisation Society (under the auspices of which it began and with which a close co-operation is still maintained), only since 1888, yet great numbers of children are under its care, and the number of fresh cases is about 15 a day. It has never yet been necessary to refuse relief in any single case, and the careful and increasing bestowal of charity in cases

under immediate and individual observation enables the greatest good to be done to the greatest number with least waste or misapplication of the means to hand.

It is very much to be hoped that this system may be greatly extended in London, and find fresh fields for advancement in our great provincial towns, where almost as pressing a need of an institution of the sort exists.

The address of the Society is—Invalid Children's Aid Association, 18, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.

The most convenient time for persons to call at the Office is between 11 and 4, any day *except Wednesdays and Saturdays*. The Executive Committee meet on Wednesdays at 2.30.

Let every girl who has charity in her heart consider well this scheme; for here is a field in which the woman can outstrip the man, or at any rate be his equal in ministrations to sickness and poverty. So many things a girl may do in this work that no one else can do.

The Secretary will always send a prospectus of the Association if you write to the above address. And if, after reading this prospectus, you decide to work for this good cause, throw your whole heart into it, and go about your work with the words which have been chosen for your motto ever in your mind—"Omnia Vincit Amor."

W. LAWRENCE LISTON.

THE BEAUTY OF EVENNESS.

PERHAPS there is no fault that brings more discomfort into otherwise happy homes than unevenness of temper. We are all—even the best of us—so terribly liable to let outward discomforts affect us, until we become what we have seen described as "creatures of moods and tempers, and those of not any regular verb!"

What a charming husband the hero of the favourite song must have been, of whom his wife could say—

"Always the same, Darby, my own,
Always the same to your old wife Joan."

But of how few Darbys, and we must confess, of how few Joans, could this be truthfully said in actual life. There is an expressive country phrase which says of some characters, "You never know when you have them!" The person who was astonishingly confidential last week, and you thought would thenceforth be an intimate friend, will to-day pass you in the street with a cold, preoccupied nod. The son who made his mother's heart glad with caresses and protestations that her society is the sweetest to him, will soon after shut himself up to indulge in solitary sulking, leaving her to anxious loneliness. And wherefore? Something may have gone wrong with his studies, or his business, or—shall we confess it?—it may only be the result of a foggy day, or an indigestible dinner. Were we to trace back to the true cause every fit of the blues, every root of the "depression" on which some people rather pride themselves, what ignominious nothings we should often find them!

If these ups and downs affected only ourselves it would not so much matter, but they greatly affect those around us whose happiness is to a large extent given into our keeping. Few suffer more from this fault than our servants. We have seen good, well-meaning servants treated with almost foolish indulgence one day, and rated violently for some trifle the next. The very fault which is passed over lightly in the mistress's good moods becomes a crime in her bad ones. Think how such treatment affects the young women, who have few outside interests to

turn their thoughts from the daily worries. On the more sensitive it brings a feeling of deep discouragement—"Do what I will I cannot give satisfaction;" and on the harder and commoner nature the effect is to make her toss her head and say, "I don't care, for it is no use trying to please missus."

How necessary it is to preserve an evenness of conduct where there are little children—to show them that a punishable offence is *always* a punishable offence, and not sometimes a thing to be laughed at according to the mood of mother, nurse, or elder sister; for if we allow this, the sharp little people will soon reckon on it, and act accordingly; like a small child who remarked that they might take a liberty because "Mamma had her company smile on!"

Many a little one who is accustomed to ready sympathy will now and then meet with a hasty snub, and turn away with trembling lip and bewildered mind, quite unable to comprehend that it is not want of love, but the aching head, the anxieties of business, or some other reason which is quite beyond her small understanding, which was the cause of the rebuff.

And what reader of the GIRL'S OWN PAPER has not suffered from the fitful moods of her girl friends? Katie conceives a brilliant project of a tennis club, a practising society, or a sewing circle—one of those small organisations in which girls delight, and which they often find so helpful. She does not feel self-reliance enough to start it herself, but surely Ethel will help her—Ethel, who is such a favourite, and has a standing to which quiet Katie can never aspire. Ethel is appealed to, and takes the new plan up with enthusiasm; she talks brightly and persuasively to the members of the benefits it will bring them, attends the first meeting, comes in late to the second, and then drops it altogether! Certainly this line of conduct often brings out the good qualities of the steady, plodding Katies, but that does not make Ethel's fickleness the less blamable.

We are well aware that a large measure of the unevenness which we lament comes from

boiling suffering and discomfort, and for such sufferers all loving allowance should be made. But let them learn to trace their feeling of annoyance to its true source, and say, "It is my aching back that makes Georgie seem more tiresome than usual this morning;" or, "I will not speak to Mary Ann about the rust on the fireirons until I have had a quiet rest and cup of tea."

Many who have lived lives of constant suffering have been given the victory over this temptation, and thereby have influenced for good all who came into contact with them. There is a marginal reading of a prayer of David's in Psalm xxvii. which is specially applicable to those who are feeling the responsibility of their influence over others: "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness, *because of those which observe me*; make Thy way straight before my face."

But most of my readers will be those in the full vigour of youth and health, and to these I would say, If you want to have the blessing of an even temper in your future life, begin to practise it at once. Habit is a thing of more strength for good and evil than most people give it credit for.

And the sooner we begin to practise the virtue of evenness, the better for ourselves and those around us. It will not be acquired in a day, and will be much more difficult to some natures than to others. What may be a very small effort to a dull and placid temperament, may be a sore struggle to a highly strung one. And the habit will only be learnt step by step; but if we first manage to give a soft answer with a calm face when we are inwardly boiling with indignation, we shall in time come to be as calm inwardly as outwardly. The first may only be half a victory, but it is the earnest of better things.

We firmly believe that no quality is more valuable in the home and in the world than evenness of temper, and we may rest assured that the good woman had learned a large measure of the grace of self-control in little everyday matters on whose tombstone it was written, "She always made home happy."

BEE ORCHIS.