

"Nothing is truer than what you say," rejoined André, "but I do not very well understand why you separate these seeds, when they seem to be all alike. What is your object in thus making two portions?"

"Just look, my young friend, I pray you, through the microscope; you see the black speck upon the seeds which I lay aside. . . . But no, you would not believe me! However, if you consent, I will carry this lesson in horticulture to the end."

Whereupon, the holy man took an earthen pot and bored six holes in its side. This done, he planted in it three of the good seeds and three others having the black marks.

"Now, friend," added he, in a voice full of sweetness, "remember that the bad seeds are on the side next the holes. When you come to walk in the garden, do not forget to notice the plants as they grow."

The flowers were pink tulips, edged with silvery white.

Endowed like all true artists with a tender soul, André Grétry found a melancholy charm in frequent renewals of his ramble in the convent garden. The scene which had taken place there between the old monk and himself constantly recurred to his memory, and at each new visit he cast long glances of curiosity toward the earthen flower pot.

And in this way was unfolded before his very eyes a phenomenon worthy of commanding his serious attention.

The following spring the six stems sprang forth, all equally green and healthy; but, strange to say, those from the spotted seeds soon outstripped the others.

"Hum!" the musician muttered to himself in his great astonishment; "the good monk did not know what he was saying. Here are the three bad seeds growing better and faster than the others; the old man's science must be all wrong."

But a few days later, the young artist was forced to change his language.

One morning while taking his promenade, a feeling of sadness stole over him unawares, he had just perceived that his cherished plants were wilted.

By a singular contrast, the stalks proceeding from the three other seeds were growing slowly, it is true, but well.

He could see how they gathered nourishment from every soft breeze and fall of dew, from every kindly sunbeam and from all the perfumes which the hand of God so profusely scatters, in the balmy flower season.

Another day he discovered that the three hasty flowers were parched and blighted.

The same day, the other three had burst their green buds, and were unfolding themselves in brilliant colors.

In his *Mémoires*, the author of *Zémire et Aurore* relates how deeply his soul was stirred by this incident.

Time sped on.

Twenty years had already gone by since Grétry left Rome for Belgium on his way to Paris; and thirty years after the garden scene, when he possessed both fame and fortune, when every joy smiled on his pathway, he was to remember with increased bitterness the monk's three tulips.

André Grétry, who had married according to the choice of his heart, had three daughters, beautiful and pure as angels. Their names are well known: Jenny, Lucile, and Antoinette. Of what avail his celebrity and his wealth?

These three lovely daughters were doomed to die within a short time of one another, in the very flower of youth. When the fatal hour struck, each maiden had attained her sixteenth birthday.

To express the anguish of the great composer would exceed human power.

A somber melancholy settled upon him, and when the terrible blow had thrice fallen, he was often heard to repeat: "Oh! my God! there are my three tulips of the convent garden!"

Yet in all the violence of his grief, this Orpheus of the eighteenth century would not intrust to another the duty of homage to the mortal remains of his beloved daughters.

Toward the decline of his life, he retired to the hermitage of Jean Jacques Rousseau, in the valley of Montmorency. But from time to time he found sufficient strength to come to Paris, that he might weep and pray on the earth where his children sleep in the Père-la-Chaise.

In one of those pilgrimages, he conceived the idea of planting three pink and white tulips among the green grass.

A clause of his will made it a law to his heirs to perpetuate the sacred custom. And that is why the three flowers bloom there each year in the month of May.

Talks with Girls.

BY JENNIE JUNE.

WASTE OF POWER.



THIS is the age of manias—it is not only unfashionable, it argues a lack of intelligence, of human sympathy, not to be affected more or less by the China craze, the "decorative art" idea, the scientific hobbies, or the philanthropic method of ridding the world of its woes. That all these things leave the world very much where it was before, in all essential particulars, does not in the least dampen the enthusiasm of a devotee of any particular branch of "art," or "science," or philanthropy; the race never is, but is always to be blest, and the latest discovered road to Paradise is, of course, the right one. In the mean time everything must succumb to the craze. Time must be given to it, duties subordinated to it, life itself measured by association with it. Not that we add anything of real value to the sum of knowledge on the subject, not that we obtain anything that we can put into our lives, as permanently strengthening, elevating, and enlarging. On the contrary, we have distributed the best and brightest years in a hurried and fruitless round of small activities, out of

which, in the aggregate, we can see no good result—at least no adequate result. We have risen every morning with the burdens of Atlas upon our shoulders. Self-examination, self-cultivation, the graces of home life, of refined leisure, have all been sacrificed to the necessity for making a little study, or a little practice, of this, or that, or the other. Busy! you declare that no galley-slave ever worked as hard as you do, and yet you do experience a slight pang of mortification when you really and truly set yourself to work to count up your achievements.

The difficulty is, that the very thing you have expended so much time and labor upon seems, in the long account, as if it might as well have been let alone. Natural influences at work all the time are far more potent than our individual efforts can be, and we only appear to have aided the great results as a child might, who endeavored to add his feeble strength to that of the locomotive in pulling along the train—it would be sure to go, anyway, and going, must crush him.

The waste of power in the cultivation or gratification of one's tastes, no matter how superficial or ephemeral this cultivation may be, is nothing to the shocking waste in dancing attendance upon what is called "society." In Europe society is a state into which people are born, and from which they cannot extricate themselves except by a great convulsion. To rid themselves of its obligations, which have the force of laws, is to voluntarily deprive themselves of its countenance and deliberately accept social ostracism.

Here we have not quite reached that point, but we are fast coming to it, and we are inviting it by making the detail of social life and attention to its every form as rigid a test of decorum and position as it is in the Old World. Just so much time must be spent in receiving calls, just so much in leaving cards, just so much in writing useless notes—often false notes of explanation.

Now if one had nothing else to do but attend to these trivial formulas, then they might be a welcome break upon the dreary routine of a secluded life. But days are short; life itself is so short, and there is so much that is more important to put into it, we cannot be mere gadflies without losing somewhat of the serious attributes that belong to the human, and gaining others of less value. We cannot set our lives to a light and frivolous key, and get out of it a noble composition that will beautify and elevate it for others.

Playing at philanthropic work is, I was going to say, one of the most mischievous of all ways of wasting time, strength, and money, for it is fenced about with all human sympathies, needs, and aspirations; and its subjects not only contribute their own time and strength, but consider that they have a perfect right to demand those of other people, and if their exactions are not complied with, are often not slow to stigmatize their conduct and themselves in very unpleasant terms.

Doubtless one can get off "cheap" by giving money and nothing else; but all have not money to give, and one must give time even to consider the special scheme in hand. Should the "pressure" which is sometimes

brought to bear be strong enough to induce us to yield and put time, strength, and influence into the work, whatever it is, what a vista of important "committee" meetings, laborious efforts to sell tickets to people who do not want to buy, and who, it is almost certain, care nothing for the object, is opened up.

Now, I would not be understood as decrying or depreciating in any way charitable work, or even the usefulness of benevolent societies as a resource for the filling up of leisure time. It is only acting upon the sweetest and most truly God-given impulses to occupy the hours we have to spare in working for or helping others, according to the best light we have, and in the way that is most readily available. But this is a very different thing from the mania which sacrifices individual duty and responsibility to a craze for setting things straight, in the special way in which we want to have them set straight; or that attaches greater importance to care for the welfare of the general public than that for which we are individually responsible. It is this last which should occupy the principal share of our time and attention; if we have any left to give to other things, well and good, but let us give to these their proper place, not make serious business of them, for this they are not, or at least ought not to be, but class them with amusements, with our pleasures, not with our work. Playing at art, playing at science, playing at philosophy, playing at charity, and with all reverence be it spoken, playing at religion, is not much more praiseworthy than playing at other things which do not pretend to any specially moral purpose. What our work is and what our play is depends upon our tastes, habits, necessities, and mental and physical constitution. What is one person's work is another person's play, and what is play to a third is to a fourth the most serious and exhausting business of life.

There are persons who do not understand the positive demand of the mind and body for relaxation, or, at least, for the change which is equivalent to recreation. I remember a sermon by a well-meaning but really very ignorant pastor of a church, which consisted mainly of a violent attack upon every form of amusement. He relented a little toward the close, and admitted that a little diversion might be desirable—but what could any one want beyond the reading of a good book or a quiet walk? he asked in a tone that admitted of no question.

Reading and walking are doubtless very good things, but to some they are work, not play, and to others they are resources, but not to the exclusion of other things. The proprietor of an immense publishing firm in New York amuses himself in his leisure by managing an immense farm, and chopping wood upon it; enough at least to supply his own family.

Another man of sedentary habits takes about once a month a few days for fishing, and a third rides horseback every morning for two hours at least.

A literary woman living in the country does all her own chamberwork on principle, for exercise and amusement; also considers it

"great fun" to sweep the yard and garden-paths clear of snow after a storm; when a boy offered to do it for twenty-five cents, she gave him the money, but told him it was worth much more than that to her to do the work herself—it saved her innumerable doctor's bills. A well-known opera singer spends every moment he can spare in wood-carving, and there are plenty of ladies who resort to the same means of breaking up the monotony of household routine.

It is a modern idea that change is actual rest, because although it may be a change of work in a certain sense, it brings into play a different set of forces; it is also acknowledged that what seems to be a waste of time is not always a waste of power; it is sometimes necessary to stand still in order to collect one's strength for new efforts, and thus to prevent that utter loss which comes of using our vital energies too fast, and not allowing them time for recovery.

The waste of power is in spending time and strength to little purpose—in building up a mountain to create a mouse—in putting effort into what must be barren and fruitless of results.

The present time seems to be full of temptations to expending most precious and rapidly fleeing time and strength in bootless enterprises. Everybody wants to be doing something, because everybody else is doing something, and the consequence is confusion, a modern Babel of ill-directed, and, for the most part, ignorant effort, which is not only useless in itself, but mischievous in its absorption of what might and ought to be put to other uses.

There is a good deal of wasted power in plodding, in wearing out in a slow, monotonous drill, when double the work might be performed in one-half the time, if the other half was spent in doing something else—in the actual freshening and making ready for an effort into which all the energies of mind and body were put until the special labor was completed. But still it is to be borne in mind that the majority of people, and the greater part of the business of this life are not suited to and do not require this enthusiasm of work. Much of what must be done is routine, merely mechanical, demanding knowledge of certain methods, but beyond this nothing only automaton performance—no ideas, no exercise of imagination, or hardly of intelligence. Such labor is necessarily done in a dull, plodding way; it is as destitute of change and actual attraction to a quick, bright, creative mind as a treadmill, but it is a blessing to those who have hands but not heads, and also to the world at large, for it is the hewers of wood and drawers of water that make the earth habitable for those who live by their brains, or upon the profits of the labor of others.

The enthusiasm and the reaction are more apt to come, perhaps it should be said belong, to the creative order of minds, to those who, becoming inspired by a great thought, cannot rest till it is expressed. This divine desire and necessity is resistless. It stands behind all the grand works that were ever conceived, planned, and executed by mortal man. But when the object is accomplished—when the temple is built, the song is sung, the statue

made, the last touches put to the picture—then the bird which has soared so high and flown so far as, perhaps, to reach distant nations in its flight, or at least leave with them the memory of bright wings, must fold them, and gather from many sources fresh strength and inspiration for another worthy effort.

There is a medium ground, of course, where intelligence aids ability of a more or less mechanical kind to do excellent work, and it is upon this that the better class of workers stand; it is these who are the most tempted to do more or less than they are able, or waste their time and strength upon what is least profitable.

I sat beside a woman, the other day, in a street car, who had a baby in her lap. It was very puny and white-faced, with large eyes, which it turned restlessly and wonderingly upon one and another. It seemed to have been born tired, and perhaps hungry, or rather faint from exhaustion of nervous forces, for it gaped every moment in a pitiful sort of way, as with a natural acceptance of the inevitable, and as if it was quite a normal state of things, without restlessness or fretting. But it was the burden of wasted power that this poor little baby had to carry that was the saddest part of its faintly pulsating life. Upon its tiny head, too weak to carry it steadily, was a cap loaded with trimming. Upon its delicate few inches of body, besides a flannel shawl and sack, was a long, wadded cloak, with cape, both heavily embroidered. The mother was a conscientious woman, desirous of doing her duty, but very much mistaken in her idea of what that duty consisted. She was poor, and doubtless had sacrificed her sleep and strength, that she could ill spare, to the purchase of the overweighted garments which were literally killing the frail baby. Oh, what a waste of power! one could not help but think, and it seemed as if another Bergh was needed to rescue children from mistaken and burdensome and cruel kindness, as well as from cruel cruelty.

Men are obliged to put their power to such practical uses that they cannot waste it to the extent still practiced by women. The clinging to the follies of dress alone sufficiently proves woman, as some one has said, to be the weaker and inferior animal. It is in this direction that we find the most absurd and objectless waste of means and strength; for like vulgar cooks, who think that nothing really good can be made except by the adding of material, so ignorance and vulgarity endeavor to make cheap things fine by adding to them the showy, often incongruous, and always useless, in trimming.

Life is not only relieved, it is enlarged and glorified by learning not only what we can do without, but what it is best for us to do without. Individual and social interests are becoming so varied that it is of great importance to put time and strength into just what will do ourselves and others most good, and we cannot afford to waste or throw away that which can be made so precious, that can make life rich and give us wings, instead of poor and burden us with sordid cares. Power spent on what is worthless is doubly wasted, for the gain is lost to us and to the world which would have come from putting it to good use.