

regard as my real friends, but you will always be one of those."

They walked on in silence until they reached the lake, and there had some indifferent conversation about the boat-house and the scenery, and Ethel was turning homeward when the count said hesitatingly :

"Should you mind sitting down for a moment? I have something to ask you, and think how rare this opportunity is!"

Ethel sank upon a low bench near the water's edge, and when Count Varène had taken his seat beside her, he said,

"Have you settled when you will leave?"

"I think about Thursday," Ethel said.

"Have you any wish about when I shall go?"

"That must, of course, depend solely upon your own convenience."

"It cannot depend solely upon that until I learn that you have no wish in the matter," said the count. "Pray tell me if you have."

"No; I have no right to influence you at all," said Ethel. "You have already been carried so far in your consideration of me as to be seriously irksome to you perhaps. I have only to thank you for that with all my heart, as I do, and try to spare you future trouble."

"I have been thinking of going up to London with the Lynnes. Would it make things at all the easier for you?"

Ethel knew it would, but she would not say so; she answered simply.

"My way has been infinitely smoother and less painful than it could possibly have been but for you. Only accept my gratitude for that, and don't speak of increasing the obligation."

"Unless you would deeply pain me, don't speak of obligation again," said Varène. "There cannot exist such a thing from you to me, and don't let the thought occur to you when I leave with the Lynnes to-morrow."

"You mean to do that?"

"I am determined to do it," he said.

Ethel was silent, and her eyes filled with tears. Presently she said :

"I have done as little good in my life to deserve such kindness, as I sometimes think I have done little evil to deserve the pain I feel. But I would not care to have the lessening of my trouble this will give, if it were fraught with pain to you. It would not be a kindness if you left me in ignorance as to that."

"Madame, there is no pain but that of parting with you, and it will be only getting that wrench over," said Varène with great quietness. "I cannot help thinking what a parting this will be—we two may be thrown together no more forever. For I shall never seek you."

"Oh, how sad you make me by those dreary words," said Ethel, "but I can only face them as the probable truth. Remember this, dear friend: at some quiet times, sacred to memory and sad sweet thoughts, I shall often hold you in my heart and think of you. The joys and griefs of my life alike shall bring you back to me. I shall know that there is one who would have rejoiced in the joys, if there be any, and who would have spared me the griefs, which are certain and many. I feel this parting, too, and it must come now." She rose as she spoke, and as he stood up too she went on, standing still and sad before him :

"We need not go through the form of wishing each other happiness, but I would be more wretched yet, unless I thought it would be found by you. 'Whoever lives true life will love true love,'—that was my theory long ago, and if I have grown to disbelieve all the old axioms of my long ago, I still trust that, in your case. For myself, I will not grieve you with my thoughts about my own future, but resolve—and the memory of you shall give me strength in this—not to believe of myself that happiness is dead for me. It may not be—darkness often passes away. Some joy may come to me yet."

"If the last drop of my heart's blood could purchase it, it should be yours," said the count with more passion in his look and tone than he had yet shown, but he quickly curbed and banished this, and there was only sadness in his eyes as she said :

"We will go back now," and began to move. He stepped in front of her and stood still until she raised her eyes to his.

"Madame, may I kiss your hand?" he said gently.

Ethel gave him her left hand, and he carried it to his lips, and kissed and slightly pressed it once, and then she softly drew it back, and they walked away in silence. There was no one on the piazza when they came up, and Ethel had to overcome her desire to be alone, and enter the drawing-room gay with careless people. Count Varène did not follow her immediately, but when he did, he went at once to Miss Lynne and said a few words to her in a quiet way, and Ethel saw her flush with pleasure and show all her dimples in a merry smile, and the sight caused a quick pang of uneasy dread to come to her. Later, when they were irregularly dispersing for the night, she saw Miss Lynne go to her mother and say something with such a radiant, triumphant face that both she and Varène divined its meaning. As the latter handed her her candle in the hall, she perceived that, for the moment, they were unobserved.

"Do not let her be hurt, the poor young child," she said, looking at him with sad appealingness. "That would give me pain."

"It shall never be, if I can help it," Count Varène replied, with hurried ardor. "You are wrong in what you suspect. I do not think that danger threatens her."

As she took the lighted candle from his hand, and met his earnest, thoughtful eyes, there was a look of gentle grace and heavenly benediction in her own that Count Varène remembered through many long, long days.

In another week the gay party was all scattered. Ethel was back at Coldstream, settled down into a useless, unenjoyed life, while her husband was off shooting and fishing all day, and absent, she knew not where, half the night, while she sat sad and pale at home, waiting for the slow hours to go by, and feeling utterly sorrowful and alone.

She had not forgotten her good resolutions, and she had adhered to them in the main; but such a change as the one she had determined to make in her life is almost bound to be fitful in its first evidences.

(To be continued.)

## The Bells of Christmas Eve.

BY HARRIET B. MCKEEVER.

**A**P in the tower ring the bells,  
O'er hill and dale their music swells;  
We ask if angels come again  
Down to the homes of sinful men,  
On blessed Christmas Eve.

**S**O near to heaven they seem to be,  
It seems as if their melody  
Were mingling in the starry sky  
With angel anthems, sweet and high,  
On blessed Christmas Eve.

**A**ND yet they sing with plaintive notes;  
Round human homes their music floats,  
As voices hushed so long ago  
Are whispering now so soft and low,  
On blessed Christmas Eve.

**C**AN we see the gifts around us spread,  
Hear whispers from the blessed dead:  
"Think of us, in our home above,  
Waiting the clasp of those we love,"  
On blessed Christmas Eve.

**T**HE matin song we seem to hear,  
Filling the air so loud, so clear,  
When the long sleep is o'er at last,  
Chanting of griefs that all are past,  
On blessed Christmas Eve.

**C**AN we listen thus to Christmas bells,  
Our human heart with sorrow swells,  
Missing the clasp of a dear hand  
From loved ones in the spirit land,  
On blessed Christmas Eve.

## Talks with Girls.

BY JENNIE JUNE.

### STICKING TO IT.



**T**HE most difficult part of anything that needs to be done in this world is not the doing it once or even twice, but the sticking to it, and doing it always again and again and again with each recurring day, week, or month for the active years of one's life.

Time, and the inspiration of a strong enough motive may render it comparatively easy to do anything once; the hard part of it is to keep on doing it when the momentary inspiration has departed, when the novelty is gone, when the little excitement and *éclat* attending a new departure have passed away, and only the hard work and the monotony remain.

There is a certain strain upon the nervous energy in the constant doing of the simplest work, in the accomplishment of the easiest tasks at regularly recurring periods. But the strain of course differs in degree, and becomes greater in proportion to the complexity, importance, originality, and amount of the work.

Still, as a general rule, the less important the work the more frequently it recurs, the more constantly it has to be done, and this of itself renders the pressure, if less at certain times, more continuous, and therefore in the course of a lengthened experience fully as hard to bear.

All wives, mothers, and housekeepers will understand this. They know what it means to wash faces and dishes, peel potatoes and apples, make beds and sweep floors, mend stockings and patch jackets, turn out perpetual supplies of bread, cake, and pie and other comestibles which as perpetually want renewing. The treadmill round is incessant; there is not and cannot be any cessation, in the majority of cases, for the laws of growth, of acceptance of obligation, and performance of duty are inexorable.

Neither are the wives and mothers alone in the steadfastness with which they must follow routine. All the world is kept moving in precisely the same way; all the work of the world is done by some one eternally doing the same thing over and over again, and all our associations, all our values come from this aggregation of what, had it only happened once, would have been of no consequence, possessed no significance for us or any one.

The world owes all it has, all it is, all it ever was or will be to those who have the faculty of sticking to it; to those who have begun and kept on until the work or their part of it was completed. How wearisome they have found it no tongue can ever tell; how often they were tempted to relinquish it, to throw it aside, to go anywhere away from it, so that voice or sound should never more convey to them its resistless demands, could hardly be put into words. Yet they did not yield. Something within them kept them in the place or at the work; made them go on and finish, or die in the attempt, leaving the inspiration of the courage and perseverance with which they pursued their object to those who came after them.

Women are less accustomed than men to apply themselves to a single pursuit, or make it the occupation of their lives. Domestic and social cares usually forbid, and thus they are credited with inability to concentrate strength in a given direction. But this is not so; they are in reality less restless, more constant, perhaps less determined, but certainly more tenacious than men, and therefore well adapted to succeed in whatever can be gained by patient, persevering effort.

A little more enterprise, a little less patience and acceptance of what is, would indeed be an advantage to the majority of women, for their lives are a treadmill with hardly more of object than that monotonous mode of punishment afforded. Still, even these have their reward in the love of home, the comfort, the sweetness, the habits which grow up about them. All that we get from age, all that life itself means to us comes from association and identity. If we were ourselves to-day and something or somebody else to-morrow, we should have no interest for ourselves or anybody else; we should be all the time fighting to have our personality changed to that of the most fortunate, or the most beautiful, or the

most accomplished person of our acquaintance. But we are fortunately, or unfortunately, obliged to stick to ourselves; make the best or the worst of ourselves, and so in time we not only get to have an affection for ourselves, but the very worst and most disagreeable of people find some one who has an interest in and for them.

This example in nature is not at all a bad one for us to follow, or at least remember at times when it may be useful. We are not permitted to get rid of our own personality because it is subject to disease or misfortune of any kind; we must stay in our skin no matter what its color; we must look with our eyes, hear with our ears, and talk with our tongues, no matter what their shortcomings or disadvantages may be, and by judicious treatment we are frequently able to improve, not only the organs themselves, but their performance of their special functions so as to produce an average result at least. It is true that the work of our lives seems to be much less restricted than the instrumentalities by which we perform this work, but is it so in reality? We talk about our freedom to choose this or that; we imagine sometimes that "the world is all before us where to choose," but is it indeed a simple "oyster" that we can open at pleasure? No. We are all bound in a hundred different ways by the circumstances of birth, hereditary inclination, transmission of qualities, and never more strongly than when we pride ourselves upon our freedom, and though other forces may come into our lives changing or modifying them, yet we shall still, inevitably and unconsciously, work toward our own goal. What is better is to do it consciously, and with a purpose. Where we start from, the road we take, even the vehicle we travel by, is not of so much consequence (except that the more rapid it is the less we learn in the transit) as the perseverance with which we pursue the journey in order to arrive at the goal, and that goal is or should be excellence in whatever we have undertaken.

It is one of the most delightful facts in nature that age brings honor and rest and sweetness when the life lived has been a true and faithful one, no matter how poor or commonplace.

The beauty and sacredness of the old homes was in their attribute of permanency. If they had been shifting and changing, had they consisted sometimes of a second floor front, sometimes of a third floor back, had they been under the dominion of the one incompetent and slatternly "domestic," whose ministrations oblige a general system of reconstruction, reorganization, and replacement every six months, they would have left no memories or associations that would serve any purpose, but to point a sad moral, or adorn a pitiful tale.

But the old homes were very different from this, whether cottage or mansion mattered nothing. They and their occupants seemed to be always the same. The carpets may have looked worn, but they never seemed to wear out, the ornaments on the mantelpiece never got broken; the tea-set, and especially the little cream-jug, had occupied the same places in the cupboard and on the table for forty

years, and were there still. The stiff chairs stood against the wall, the old clock ticked away, and at the back door was the broad, flat stone which had served as a stepping-stone for half a dozen generations, and was quite capable of serving its purpose for half a dozen more.

Even the spring where the water-cresses grew had its special interest as part of the old place, but over and above all was the atmosphere created by the years that had gone by filled with the pure, wholesome life of the occupants. The brown hair, and the dark hair change to silver; the voices of childhood are lost in the fuller growth of manhood and womanhood, and finally pass away altogether, but the "old" home is the old home still, while the father and mother remain to keep up its traditions, and preserve the lifelong associations. The beginning of these two may have been uninteresting enough. Ignorant and narrow, perhaps, both, with this simple faculty of stick-to-it-iveness as their strongest characteristic. But it made them faithful to all their obligations, it kept them in one place until the beauty grew little by little out of the patience and loyalty with which daily duties were performed, just as the trees grew out of the soil, and vines flourished over the windows, which had received but little thought in the planting. Wet seasons and dry seasons, sickness and health, struggle and care, regrets and anxieties make up the record, commonplace enough in the living, covering many weary nights and tedious days, but marked also by the growth and development of family ties, the acquirement of cherished habits, the increasing charm of life-long association, until every stick and stone has its story, every object its meaning and character, one with which some circumstance has invested it, that has little interest for a stranger, but renders it dear beyond words to those most nearly interested.

There is hardly a place or an object on the face of the earth so unpromising or unattractive that it cannot be made interesting or important enough for some human being to attach himself or herself to it; or that the moment it is thus placed under steadfast, persevering influence, does not begin to grow, to improve, to become a sort of magic mirror in the conscientious life, the latent tastes, the inclinations usually held in check by circumstances, are seen.

The wisest and most successful business men always advise "hanging on," as the phrase goes, even when loss is impending, provided the thing is good in itself, because, in the course of time, it must recover its value. People who jump from one thing to another, who potter with this and that, who plant a seed here, and if it does not grow up like Jonah's gourd in one night, go away disgusted and try something else, can never be successful, or worth anything to themselves, or anybody else.

What the young dread in sticking to it is a life of monotony, a life in which there is no change, no relief, no variety, in which one day will be the counterpart of another, and stagnation of body and mind follow. And there is this danger, but it is experienced by

those who cultivate the shifting and changeable aspects of life quite as much as by those who rest in its shaded nooks. The world is made up of the same elements everywhere, and the regularly trodden paths lead to very much the same terminus, and we consider ourselves fortunate, if it is one where we can obtain a good supper and a bed.

There is, however, a monotony that is slavish and dreadful—a monotony which becomes sickening, so that one feels one must run away from it, or have one's reason destroyed by it; the use of our reason and intelligence should save us from such monotony as this, should give to us the variety necessary to "spice" our lives and save them from insipidity. But variety should be the spice, not the principal element in our lives, that should consist of more permanent material.

If every one spent their lives in roaming from place to place, we should not have got beyond the condition of the nomadic tribes, or wanderers, who lived in tents, and had no abiding place. It is not those who spend their lives in travel, or those who flit from place to place, who are of most use in the world, no matter how rich or learned they may be; it is those who form neighborhoods and communities; who are law-abiding, and assist to make others so; who create houses and schools, and support them; who lay the foundation of the honor and respectability which makes that county, that township, that neighborhood good for others to come to and build homes in.

The essential things in our lives, then, are the permanent things, and it is these we should stick to,—home, friends, work, and whatever helps to render these more useful, more enduring, more attractive to us, or more in sympathy with what is best and truest in us. Constant growth, constant effort toward what is best, gives variety, and will teach us how to vary both our work and our play without sacrificing any of the essential elements in life or character, and teach us also that lesson of charity and toleration which the majority find it so difficult to learn, viz., that something quite as good as anything they are able to take cognizance of may exist outside as well as inside their experience. Working out what is best in ourselves is not enough; let us see if there is not something better existing somewhere that we can aspire to; above all things let us do it, not theorize about it, for if a certain place is paved with good intentions, it is certainly papered with theories; a little stick-to-it-iveness is worth all the theoretical wind in the world, which is only another way of repeating the old saw in regard to precept and practice. Thus, while we stick to the essentials, we can afford latitude in regard to the non-essentials. We can let people do as they please in minor matters, without criticism or fault-finding, so long as they do their work and fulfill their obligations. If they fail in these, they injure the whole community and deserve censure; but if they perform these to the best of their ability, then they deserve well of those among whom they live, and their minor rights should be respected, not abused by them.

It is too much the habit in communities, and

especially in small neighborhoods, to insist not only that men and women shall do certain things, but that they shall do them in a certain way, and this insistence spreads till it covers all the minor, as well as all the principal affairs of life, stifles individuality, and renders living as cut and dried a thing as a string of sliced apples.

Many a man and many a woman would have "stuck to" all that was necessary for the strength and development, the healthfulness and beauty of life and character, had they met encouragement, toleration, charity, instead of hard, bitter prejudice, and blind, obstinate, unreasoning opposition in matters of minor as well as graver importance.

We cannot live the lives of others, nor control them beyond a certain limit, but we can influence them immeasurably by wise guidance, and a faithful example; in short, by always "sticking to it," if it is a good and right thing—ourselves.

### "Detected."

(See Steel Engraving.)



THIS beautiful engraving, so life-like and expressive, carries us back to those days of "merrie England" when Christmas was a period of rare hospitality and unfettered mirth.

Those were the days when the yule log burned brightly on the hearth; when the peacock, amid the sound of music, was brought into the dining-room on a "lordly dish;" when the boar's head smoked on the bounteous table; and the evening ended with the "country dance" and Sir Roger de Coverley.

Those were the days when the mummers, in fantastic garb, went from house to house; when "shoe the wild mare," and "snap-dragon," and "kissing through the poker" were the favorite games, and when children and youth filled the frosty air with their sweet Christmas carols. From the oaken ceiling and walls hung the mistletoe wreaths with their gleaming white berries, under which the gay maidens were wont to stand to receive the desired kiss. For did they not know that the maid who was not kissed under the mistletoe at Christmas would not be married that year?

In the engraving "Detected," which is taken from a painting by J. C. Horsely, of the Royal Academy, we have a glimpse of this once popular custom. But the young cavalier, for such his dress indicates that he is, who, in his eagerness to bestow a kiss upon the lady of his love, makes an effort to anticipate the agreeable occasion when this gift is allowable, is destined to meet with a disappointment. With plumed hat in hand, and an innocent expression of face not at all in harmony with his intentions, he enters the room where the ladies are preparing Christmas garlands of the mistletoe. The mother, not suspecting his intention, courteously rises to receive him, while the younger daughter turns her sweet

face laughingly toward him, and raises her scissors as if to playfully ward off the intended gift, many of which she has, perhaps, received before. The elder sister, by her decisive gesture, shows that she has detected the piece of mistletoe which the young cavalier holds behind him, and which he intends to raise above the youngest lady's head as an excuse for giving the kiss. Standing in the door, with a face full of expectation, the servant waits to see the result.

This picture, so wonderfully expressive, is replete with that original humor for which the painter is justly celebrated. The drawing of the figures is remarkably fine, the expression of the faces highly suggestive, and the accessories given with great fidelity and careful elaboration.

It is true that those joyous Christmas days, with their quaint customs, have passed away; no morris-dancers, decked in gay ribbons, are seen; the yule log and the wassail bowl have gone, and kissing under the mistletoe no longer calls forth the blushes and laughter of England's merry girls, keeping Christmas in their ancestral homes.

But the painter's "wondrous art, infused with the power of life," brings back the customs of the past, and again we see the yule log burning on the hearth, the merry dancers in Sir Roger de Coverley, and the happy young people kissing under the mistletoe bough at the joyous Christmas season, when the world rings with the angel's anthem, "Peace on earth and good will toward men."

### Between the Ebb and Flow.

THE evening breeze is singing low  
A lullaby to-day;  
I have a question I would ask,  
Before it dies away.  
The pebbles on the beach are dry,  
The tide has sunken low;  
A little form is standing there  
Between the ebb and flow.

TANGLED mass of soft brown hair,  
Two eyes cast meekly down;  
A little face the sun has kissed,  
Two cheeks a little brown.  
Two little lips that pout and say,  
"I do not think I know."  
Two little lips that tell a fib  
Between the ebb and flow.

LITTLE heart that longing waits  
To know what next 'twill hear;  
A little face that shyly looks  
To see if still I'm near.  
Ah! little heart that whispered "Yes,"  
Though pouting lips said "No;"  
You thought that you'd be asked again  
Between the ebb and flow.

LITTLE face half frightened, when  
I turn to go away;  
Two little hands that shyly reach,  
As if to bid me stay.  
A little voice that softly says,  
"I did not mean that 'No:'"  
A little pride that well was lost  
Between the ebb and flow.