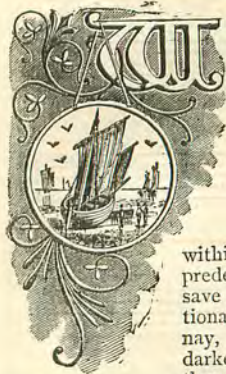


"IF I WERE YOU!"

A FURTHER CHAT WITH GIRLS WHO HAVE JUST LEFT SCHOOL.



E have agreed, then, that a young girl leaving school to enter upon the wide and beautiful possibilities of life should, above all things, make up her mind to be happy, since happiness is a thing

within the reach of our predetermined will in all, save the darker exceptional lots of humanity; nay, is possible to the darkest of even these, if these trials be met with a cheerful, resolute contentment. But it is not of such lots that we are now speaking. Not to the invalid, the recently bereaved, the exceptionally afflicted am I now chatting thus of what I would do in her place, but to the average English girl who has just finished the school portion of her education, and is looking out upon the future with eyes of eager anticipation and hopeful forecasting. The very contrast this sentence draws, the very line of demarcation it expresses between your lot and that of thousands, should make your heart spring up in happy thankfulness at remembrance of the unbroken home circle, the sufficient, if not superabundant means, the health and strength that you enjoy.

And yet it is not so only too often; and already dissenting voices seem to sound in one's ears, protesting against the assertion that they are, and they ought to be, happy. And as we have already weeded out the idlers and the grumblers from our whilom congregation, and disposed of the needless miseries caused by a gloomy temper or an occupied mind, it seems at first unaccountable that there should be any complaints of unhappiness left. Plenty to do, a mind resolved on cheerful content, and trained to look out for all the lesser pleasures that lie in life's pathway—why do I still see some very sad faces, girls? I will tell you why. You have forgotten that, in order to rule the mind, you must also care for the body.

Years ago, before you went to school, you had a wax doll—had you not?—and treated it with becoming tenderness and care. You would have been furious if anyone suggested you would set its pink and white cheeks to roast before the fire, or squeezed the bran out of its body, or left it about unclothed or exposed to dust and rain. Yet these childish sins against beloved "dolly" are the poorest, faintest shadows of the wrongs many of you are daily committing against your own delicate frames, dearer to parents and friends than was ever "dolly's" welfare to you, and with a future of possibilities for passing on those wrongs from generation to generation, which is too appalling to be discussed at length here.

Let me single out one of you, and tell her what she has been doing during the last eight-and-forty hours to harm her bodily powers, and thereby defeat all her best intentions to be happy and make others so. For the body ill-cared for becomes the most oppressive and revengeful of tyrants, and can coerce the immortal spirit with such a tremendous power as to change the whole colour of our mental attitude, and say triumphantly, "I will be master, after all, and you, poor soul, that thought to

lord it over me, shall be the victim of my relentless punishment, until even religious consolations are small with thee," and, like Job, you shall cry out, "My soul is awearry of my life!" . . . This, we will say, is a Sunday, and you, pretty one, with the pink cheeks that pale and flush again so rapidly, and the dark rims round your tired eyes, shall offer yourself as a scapegoat, and confess your sins against that tyrant, body, and its relentless retributions, for the benefit of the rest. You began Saturday with a nasty, scanty breakfast, and went straight from the table to your books, rightly anxious to give the first best hours of the day to working for that university examination which you intend passing. Quite right; but was it wise to use your brain for four hours at a stretch on difficult subjects? At school your governess would have taken you out to walk, or sent you to practise only some two hours and a half at most, and would, besides, have varied your tasks by changing from one subject to another; whereas, you toiled continuously at the one knotty lesson, until your stupefied head refused to attend any longer, and you threw down your books in despair. Then you rushed out in a hurry, and took an immense walk, tearing home, at last, out of breath, to find luncheon nearly finished. True, the kind thought for that old pensioner, to whom you carried a parcel of warm clothing for your mother, might well be its own reward for the exertion made; but your parents dislike to see you come in late for meals, and with good reason—that plate of half-cold food which you ate up so fast, already feeling exhausted and weary, could not do you half the good you would have derived from a proper meal eaten at leisure. "How tired you look!" said your mother. "Surely you are not going to play lawn-tennis at once?" But you went, nevertheless, the moment you rose from the table; and you played in thin shoes—too thin, at least, for the damp ground of a spring or autumn day, and then wondered why you felt quite ill and worn out when at last you left off, and hurried home at dusk. Neither breakfast nor lunch had been substantial meals, yet you sent away soup and meat almost untasted, then "made up for it" (so you thought) with "sweets." Chilled and tired, you nevertheless had now assumed what you call "evening dress," because of the friends who were coming in presently for music and games; that is to say, you had dropped at least one, if not two, warm, substantial layers of protection to throat and chest, and then wondered that you felt intolerably cold. Afterwards, indeed, when the rooms filled, and you grew merry and excited, you became thoroughly overheated again, and then you stood at an open window without shawl or wrap even, till mamma, fortunately discovering your whereabouts, insisted on your coming out of the stream of raw night air, and proclaimed that it was time for all sensible folks to go to bed on Saturday night. "Don't go to the early service to-morrow, I beg, my dear," she counselled: "you have caught a bad cold." But you did, and, what is more, you knelt—no hassock being at hand—on cold, bare boards, and came home feeling so faint and ill that the patient mother had to stay at home from church afterwards and nurse you.* For all that, you insisted on going to take your class at the Sunday-school; and your small classroom was crowded, yet you never thought to open a window there, though protected by hat and mantle, and your own and your pupils' attention wandering, from the drowsiness induced by the close, foul air. This curious

* The writer desires earnestly to guard against being misunderstood here: not the ordinances of religion would she speak of slightly, but the practice of making Sunday a day of hurry and bustle and religious excitement, instead of the holy day of calm and rest for which it was designed by Him who "made it for man."

"day of rest" you finished up by walking two miles to Mr. —'s crowded, fashionable church; after the two miles home again, you were glad to creep up to bed, almost too exhausted to think of any prayers, Sunday though it was. And to-day has been like Saturday, only with hours of walking about, shopping, instead of the tennis ground; and at about eight you will betake yourself to a crowded party, where the air you breathe will be even worse than it was at yesterday's Sunday-school, and where you will stay, and talk, and laugh, and perhaps sing until—pray, which of the hours after midnight?

Now, my dear girls, I appeal to your common sense. Is it any wonder you don't feel cheerful and bright after treating your body thus? Aye, and is there not worse behind in many an instance? Respiration hindered by tight lacing, feet cramped into small shoes, head exposed to sun or piercing wind, without the slightest shade from bonnet or hat; unwholesome food, neglect of a thousand needful precautions and attentions to sanitary rules. The young people of this age are not possessed of their grandparents' constitutions. They pay quickly for these thousand and one transgressions of the laws of health, and become martyrs to chronic cold, dyspepsia, and neuralgic affections. The worst of it is that it is impossible here to tell you plainly, my dear girls, the foolish things you do and neglect to do, and the risks incurred thereby, for a future stretching far beyond your own lives. But will you listen to a few cardinal rules of health, and try and refrain from violating them? Food, rest, fresh air, and clothing each admit of a few leading suggestions, which may help you to keep your body in such a state that it shall be your servant instead of your tyrant.

As to food, we don't think we need tell you of the danger of over-eating; but, surely, it is unnecessary to remind you that it is possible to eat too little of strengthening meat and bread, and too much of cakes and pastry, to the detriment of the constitution? Pray make up your minds to live principally on simple fare—wholesome joints, bread, butter, vegetables, and cocked fruit. The habit of self-denial at the table may well be exercised in this way, and especially by steadfastly avoiding anything we have once found out disagrees with us. Those who wish for quiet nerves and even temper, will do well to avoid strong tea and coffee, highly-spiced food, and, we firmly believe, the general use of wine. When prescribed by parents or physician the case is altered; but young people in average health would discover they gained immensely by substituting milk for wine as their usual beverage, and would find that when needful to use wine in illness or exhaustion, it proved doubly useful for not being taken habitually. Then, never hurry through meals, and make a point of leaving off work, or violent exercise, a few minutes before, and a good half hour after, sitting down to table.

Dress is a much larger subject, and can only be touched upon here with one or two comprehensive hints, that you must follow out more fully for yourselves. Don't make sudden changes, and guard against the inconceivably rapid changes of our variable climate, by wearing flannel, or some proper substitute, nearly, if not all, the year round. Never be so silly as to have thin walking shoes or boots; wet and damp feet lead to every imaginable bodily ill, from red noses and pale cheeks to dangerous maladies, and if you are thinly shod you are certain to suffer from cold, and often wet feet. And never let fashion persuade you into those customs of tight clothing and scanty drapery that are

sins against modesty, as well as every law of health. Don't fancy that a wasp-like waist and too visible shoulders win admiration from anyone. They make you feel ill and indecorous and miserable, and men and women alike laugh at the folly of your self-martyrdom, except, indeed, those who, realising all that you are sacrificing, experience a regret and disgust too poignant for laughter.

But we must pass on to rest; and pray don't imagine we want to make of you fine ladies or indolent, when we counsel you to take rest occasionally by lying down for a quarter of an hour. After violent exercise, long walks, or even great mental efforts, to lie down, not lounging, but nearly flat, in an even and restful position, is an admirable repose for spines that, like the majority of those we see nowadays, are none too strong. A celebrated physician, in my own girlhood, advised me to lie down for half an hour every day after dinner, as a cure for neuralgia and indigestion, and I can recommend the plan as a great preventive of headache and dyspepsia. But another sound custom that girls are too apt to forget is the making sure of the "beauty sleep"—of as much time as can be secured before midnight. It is perfectly true that sleep between 10 and 12 p.m. is worth twice the amount after midnight, as experience will speedily prove, my dear girls.

And ere we leave the subject of rest, do let me remind you of that old-fashioned but terribly-forgotten truth, that Sunday was given to be the "day of rest." If you spend it in a round of exciting services and classes, how can this be? Think not I wish to discourage your efforts to do good, or your participation in what are rightly called "means of grace;" but "let your moderation be known" in these things also, and cultivate the gift of temperance even in religious ordinances! The spirit, like the body, cannot digest too much at one time; one church service and one Sunday class thoughtfully participated in would do more good, depend upon it, than half-a-dozen hurried through with aching head and wearied mind. Make Sunday a quiet day, a restful day; a blessed, peaceful pause in the turmoil and bustle of the week, and you will "keep it holy," believe me, far more effectually than by rushing from place to place in search of religious excitement to which an exhausted body is unequal.

Lastly—but, oh! not leastly—fresh air. When will girls, or anyone else, learn the vital necessity of pure air to breathe, above all in their bedrooms? If you possibly can, you should sleep with an inch or two of your window open at the top, and the bed placed so that no draught reaches your pillow; but if that, in an English winter, is impossible, pray don't forget to have the register of your fire-grate kept open, or have a ventilator put into your door, otherwise, even in a comparatively large room, you will be breathing noxious poison instead of oxygen, as your noses will tell you if you go out of your rooms and then return before the window be opened. Pray, pray, don't let this close air accumulate in your sleeping apartment, by neglecting to open the window at the top every day of your lives; a few inches at the bottom does no good, it merely sends the foul air up to the ceiling, where it stays, to add to that which you breathe out next night, until the accumulated results become—oh! if there were but any thermometer that would show you what it is you breathe—air fouler than the dirtiest water you would refuse to wash your hands in; dirty air, in the most literal and disgusting sense of that adjective! Nothing, girls, will make you feel so utterly wretched as want of oxygen to breathe. Your heads will ache and your tempers will be threadbare, and your mental faculties seem jaded and rusted, if you fail to recognise the body's need of fresh air to

breathe. The strongest person could scarcely feel buoyantly happy in close, ill-ventilated rooms, remember.

But each one of these physical needs must be carefully and persistently attended to, and that with a detail we have not had space to consider here, if you would have the "sound mind in a sound body," which alone can make you happy and useful members of society.

Useful, yes; for we were not put into the world merely for selfish enjoyment. If I have persuaded you thus far to cultivate a contented mind in a healthful frame, you will have prepared, best of all, for practical utility in your day and generation.

LOVE'S SUNSHINE.

By the Author of "Wrapped in the Robes of Mercy,"
"Fairview Rest," etc.

CHAPTER III.

"Mixed reason with pleasure, and pleasure with mirth."—GOLDSMITH.

THE next few weeks brought every day some fresh pleasure to Nellie. It was true that Miss Beecher had not a large number of friends, and most of the few she had were soon away for their summer change; this, however, only served to bring the aunt and niece more closely together and increase more rapidly the affection that had sprung up between them



"MISS BEECHER TOLD THEM A LITTLE MORE OF HER HISTORY."