

Our Women and Children

Conducted by Lucille Skaggs Edwards.

Service.

In speaking of the cooking class conducted each week at St. Philip's, a mother said: "No, I'm not going to send my girl; her music lessons cost me enough and I can teach her how to cook."

"But," I replied, "can you teach it scientifically as will fit her to render efficient service in her home or in the homes of others?"

"Indeed," she replied, "I am not raising my girl to work for others. I think the day has passed when our girls and boys should have to go into service."

Seeing that I had struck the wrong key, I hurriedly changed the subject. This mother works in service to pay for these music lessons and the girl seems to possess no special gift for music.

Because a girl studies cooking and laundering does not destitute her forever to the kitchen and laundry of the rich; but if she can cook and wash better than she can do anything else, better far that she do a humble thing well than fail at something higher. Vocational training is now a recognized necessity for the masses.

Now, we all protest against making servants of a whole race—a condition called caste—if children in the humbler spheres of life are gifted with genius, no restrictions of society should confine them to lowly occupations. It is the spirit of democracy that all men have the right to rise to any position for which their talent and energy fit them. Yet the humble spheres of labor must be recognized. These fields, too, will always abide and we, as a people, are to participate in them just as do the people of all nationalities.

That the vocation of domestic service has disadvantages, we admit. It indisposes for severe toil; it produces luxurious tastes; it tends to fastidiousness, yet sensible people are seldom thus affected and the generous advantages of service far outweigh the disadvantages. Service cultivates neatness, for this is a demand of the rich; it teaches economy, for the rich are more economical than the poor; it teaches obedience; it gives an opportunity for acquiring manners of culture and refinement; and it trains to regular, systematic mode of living.

To look upon servant life with contempt is the grossest vulgarity! This idea among young people has resulted in many a good barber, mechanic or laundress being turned into a booby doctor, a half-shod lawyer or preacher, or a poor teacher. How much better if the years spent on books of law, medicine and theology, and time lost in poring over the classics had been used in farming, successful catering or in the occupation of some trade. We have clever, efficient men and women in the professions, yet we all know of instances where men and women would have done better by laboring with their hands than by attempting to follow the learned professions.

All labor is honorable. Serving others has been the vocation of all the world's heroes and martyrs. Christ, our Saviour, came to serve; He suffered in serving; and in serving He died!

Do you possess the gift of service, the gentle hand, the soft voice, the

willing mind, the tender, unselfish heart?

Despise not your gift, for it is a blessing indeed. What an opportunity to serve the aged, little children, the strong and the feeble! Honor your calling, dignify your labor by your own fine qualities. Put energy and brains into the humblest work, and progress and success are certain to those who are patient, vigilant and aspiring.

OPPORTUNITY.

(By Berton Braley.)

With doubt and dismay you are smitten

You think there's no chance for you, son?

Why, the best books haven't been written

The best race hasn't been run,

The best score hasn't been made yet,

The best song hasn't been sung,

The best tune hasn't been played yet,

Cheer up, for the world is young.

No chance? Why the world is just eager

For things that you ought to create

Its store of true wealth is still meager

Its needs are incessant and great,

It yearns for more power and beauty

More laughter and love and romance,

More loyalty, labor and duty,

No chance—why there's nothing but chance!

For the best verse hasn't been rhymed yet

The best house hasn't been planned,

The highest peak hasn't been climbed yet

The mightiest rivers aren't spanned,

Don't worry and fret, faint hearted,

The chances have just begun,

For the Best jobs haven't been started

The Best work hasn't been done.

"OLD FIFTEEN CENTS."

(By Louise Mayers Meredith.)

Mary and her visitor were chatting all day, discussing the boll weevil, on the porch. A squeak from the rickety buggy in front of the gate attracted their attention and they turned to see the colored laundress climb in beside a bundle of soiled clothes, slapping the reins as she clucked to her rawboned but energetic steed.

"Did you ever hear about that horse?" the hostess inquired, in answer to her friend's comment on the washerwoman's rig.

"Well, they have here in town what they call 'hoss swappin' alley.' It's an alley down in the colored settlement—down there back of the courthouse—where the 'po' white trash' and their old run-down stock assemble when they come in town every first Monday. They loll around on their wagon beds cussing this dry town, unraveling the political tangle, solving domestic problems; and then, toward the shank of the afternoon, they get up and stretch and 'take a chaw terbaccer' and turn around and swap horses. They all get 'stung,' as the saying goes, so nobody 'has anything' on anybody else—and the next first Monday they shuffle in and have a new deal.

Well, late one afternoon last summer, when these unthrifty farmers were hitching up and driving off behind their newly acquired possessions, and the Negroes were standing around

finishing their watermelons, this laundress of mine happened to pass by the alley. Seeing a poor old horse lying down with his tongue hanging out she hunted up the owner and asked if it were for sale. Receiving an affirmative answer she declined a proffered and juicy slice of melon, and knelt to examine the animal. He had two good, seeable eyes, a weak but willing heart, and, though his 'marst'r' disremembered his age, and though the beast remained speechless, his molars loudly proclaimed his youth.

"His prospective purchaser, returning a mental verdict of starvation plus neglect, shook her head in sympathetic silence; while she considered the therapeutic value of the grass and oats on her own diminutive and unpretentious farm. Introspectively she pictured this ill-treated quadruped as he would be in a few months—eating sugar from her swarthy hand and drawing her, with her laundry, in state to the doors of her patrons. But the joy of anticipation broke not upon the solemnity of her countenance, as she observed to the owner that she supposed the 'po' thing 'u'd be plum' tuck'r'd out by mornin'." Obviously her prediction would come true and he agreed as much between despondent nods—reflecting aloud that he had sunk one hundred and fifty dollars there.

"She seemed to feel sorry for the horse—seemed to hate for the 'po' thing' to be left to die thus amid publicity—so she offered the owner fifteen cents for the horse, adding that if he were her own and it did die, she wouldn't mind taking it home and giving it a decent burial. He thereupon gave her a deed to the property and drove off considering himself fifteen cents to the good.

"She waited until her feasting friends had gone and left her and their watermelon rinds, alone in the alley with 'Old Fifteen Cents'—then she tried to help him up. No, he was too weak. So she rubbed him all over, covered him with her shawl, and came down here and begged me for a bottle of liniment and some milk. The horse was too far gone to drink the milk, so she just poured it in him till he got strength enough to swallow. Then she massaged him with the liniment and flexed the muscles in his legs, so that after a while he was able to stand and shift his lack of weight from one foot to another. Leaving him 'taking notice,' she slipped off to a near-by feed store and exchanged a portion of her day's wages for some bran mash—for which barter the horse was extremely thankful.

"Slowly and with great care, that night, she led her noble charger over the solitary country road to her pump, where he had a cooling drink and sank into a peaceful slumber—so restful and dreamless, in fact, that he was able next morning to arise and look about of his own accord.

"That was more than a year ago, and now think what he is. She has been offered fifty dollars, but says sh'd refuse seventy-five. I wish you might hear her talk about him. She said the funniest thing the other day. 'My dear,' she said, 'tooby sho' 'twa'n't so mighty long 'fo' I tuck 'n' fassen him ter de plow en make him break up all de new groun'—but, Mis' Ma'y, de's one thing w'at sho' do make me prutty near sick everytime I thinks 'bout dat hoss—hit makes me fell des lak a-gwine ter bed—yer know, Mis' Ma'y, I believes I s'u'd er got dat hoss fer er dime.'—Mothers' Magazine.

The very highest products of man's life in this world are his ideas and ideals.—Hamilton Wright Mabie.

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