

# THE QUIET HOUR

"The Black Cat That Isn't There." Someone, in a mood of irritable reaction, after having tried in vain to understand his somewhat vague and hazy speculations, said that "a metaphysician—the man who engages in speculations concerning the relation of spirit to matter and time and space—is blind man, on a dark night, looking for a black cat that isn't there." Whether he is or not, that characterization is an only too true and tragic word-picture of a mighty multitude of folk. You and I could name some of them. They have all the earmarks.

They are "blind." They are in the "dark"—some so-called blind men can tell day from night and even not quite so badly off in the light as the darkness. So that a blind man a dark night is doubly blind.

They are waiting for a "black cat"—or its spiritual equivalent. And even the cat "isn't there."

They are concentrating their efforts upon the futile pursuit of that which has no real existence.

We need not go to darkest Africa to find them either. We have sung how "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone" mistakenly fancying there is god somewhere about that wood and stone, until we are apt to conclude that the heathen has a monopoly of this business of "catching frost birds." But he is not alone in it by any means.

There is something appalling in the thought of the millions upon millions of spiritually blind folk in the dark night of heathendom who have spent their lives for a hundred generations in looking for what isn't there." It parallels Niagara's power which has gone waste thru the centuries. In China and India, and Africa, for ages countless hordes have spent their lives' energies and hearts' affection upon gods which exist only in their own imagination.

But they are not the only deluded folk. The world of civilization and nominal Christianization is full of people whose lives are spent in chasing the "black cat that isn't there."

A man that permits himself to come under the spell of the delusion that great wealth brings great satisfaction and who devotes himself to its attainment is just as big a "fool"—and I have the highest authority for the use of that word. The cat he's after "isn't there." He may get wealth. Almost anybody with a little shrewdness; a great deal of unscrupulousness and a "strong" of luck, can do that. But after that he was after was not so much mere wealth as the satisfaction and happiness which he had come to believe were the necessary accompaniment of wealth—and he misses these ninety-nine times out of a hundred. The happiness isn't there, and he is blind to facts when he supposed it was.

There is no possibility of any real happiness in life for a shriveled soul, and the task of acquiring great wealth without moral deterioration is too great for most mortals. That is what Christ meant by his "eye of the needle" sermon. While wealth is not an evil in itself, the temptations to trample on all the noblest things of life in its acquirement is so strong, that few millionaires resist it. Pay this price for wealth is to bar oneself out from all possibility of that very happiness which was the man's real motive in seeking wealth.

In Bishop's Williams address before the Cleveland Council of Sociology recently said:

"Inordinate wealth commonly knock the soul out of a man. If you want to find the dangerous classes in our civilization, dehumanized demoralized and possessed of the devil, you will find them in two places—the slums of New York and villas of Newport. The vices of both places are identical, only the one is clothed in purple and fine linen and the other in rags and tatters. And you will find more humaneness and wholesomeness in the slums than in the villas."

What is said here is not a tirade against wealth for the evil which it often does to others; but merely an

arraignment for the good of which it so often deprives its winner. Down deep in his heart whether he himself realizes it or not, the thing that he most yearningly desires, and for the sake of securing which he piles up wealth, is the happiness which he thinks is inevitably linked with it.

And the happiness "isn't there" in most instances. And it isn't there just because, too often, he has bartered the capacity for happiness in gaining the wealth.

Sometimes it's health, though this is, comparatively a lesser thing. And just a few blocks from where this is written is one of John D. Rockefeller's numerous homes. His income this year is said to be \$80,000,000. Estimating his expenditures on an almost parsimonious scale, he could easily afford sweetbreads, at a dollar a pound, and nightingales' tongues, at fabulous quotations, cooked by radium at a thousand dollars a milligram, three times a day. Any yet his digestion has been so greatly impaired by his strenuous efforts to crowd out other oil sellers, that, it is said, he is reduced to a diet of bread and milk.

Sometimes the winning of wealth shuts a man out from the kingdom of happiness, because it has been won at the cost of culture. He has money enough to buy all the best books, pictures, statuary; to visit all the beauty spots of earth. And for him, oftentimes, they are all but as pearls cast before swine.

A steady atrophy of the finer qualities and capacities has been going on. He has fed them as fuel to the flame of his inordinate ambition to accumulate wealth. And by the time the wealth has come they are dead beyond resurrection, and the happiness he thought his wealth would bring him eludes him to the end. It "isn't there."

This is not a mere scare picture drawn by a professional moralist, it is the word for word confession of many a man who has paid the price.

Sometimes the fierce heat of modern wealth-getting so curdles the milk of human kindness in the man's heart, that by the time he is a multi-millionaire he is as much of a mummy as the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

When a pirate, in the olden days, was ready to stop sailing the main, it might have been very pleasant if he could quietly retire to some charming villa and in the bosom of a devoted family, and surrounded by admiring friends, spend life's mellow years in ease and dignity. But the trouble was he could not, for various self-evident reasons.

No more can his modern representative. In the cut-throat competition involved in piling up swollen fortunes, the wrongs perpetrated upon rivals are but shadows of the wrong done the man's self. The spring of of unselfish love and godlike sympathy dry up, and will not start to flow again in later years.

If this was a sermon, there is one more item in this count that would receive chief emphasis, for it includes most of the others.

This man who in the pursuit of happiness, is deluded into thinking that it is to be found in the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow's arch, and who sacrifices all else to it, "loses his own soul."

He has sixty or seventy years to do with as he would.

He coined them into gold.

And he forfeited heaven in the operation.

He is, above all others, the "blind man on a dark night looking for a black cat that isn't there."

## Smiles.

"Good morning, madam," began the hawker in his sunniest tones. "I have here a little article of universal utility. It is called the Marvelous Mice Exterminator, and the price"

"No use," interrupted the woman firmly. "We have no marvelous mice in this house—only the ordinary kind. Then the door was shut.—S. H. Revell.

## THINKLETS

Thoughts Gathered From The Pens Of Busy People.

Great art is born of feeling—high, intense and holy feeling. In order to do, you must feel.—H.

Keep your work well in hand but don't let it get you in hand. When you are master of your work you talk with a clear head and are ready to help others. When your work masters you, you are heavy to your associates and talk shop.

Try to pull with the other fellows. You can't pull it alone. Be with the crowd till you can steer them your way. Harmony is the surest leading string.

Think twice, count ten, then do what you were going to say the other fellow ought to do.

Work hard but take pleasure in your work. Think good thoughts and speak them openly. Help some weaker one carry his burden for a time. Wear your brightest smiles on the cloudy days. These things develop character—the kind that is felt and leaves its mark.

Today is the time. Be up and doing, tomorrow will be too late. I will wait, you say, things will come my way. No, he is worthless who trusts to Fate.

One ounce of ambition, one ounce of common sense, one ounce of determination, one ounce of grit, one ounce of endurance, one ounce of good will, there you have a prescription for character and success.

Don't be visionary, don't theorize. Have a purpose, work for it. Do your stunt. Don't wait for others to make a name on what you thought of.

The finest architect in the world is the designer and builder of character.

A man may take joy in his work, he cannot laugh at it—it is too close. Mirth is a kind of serene skepticism. It comes only with intelligence.—H.

It is only by trying to understand others that we can get our own hearts understood; and in matters of human feeling the clement judge is the most successful pleader.—Stevenson.

To marry is to domesticate the Recording Angel. Once married, there is nothing left for you, not even suicide, but to be good.—R. L. S.

A sense of right living brings contentment and serenity. Only the mind fraught with knowledge of wrong doing is harassed by doubt and fear of the world and views others with suspicion.

We live in the present and work for the future. The dreamer of the future merely hugs the bones of the past.

If I could write a poem I tell you what I'd do, I'd tell you of the present and what is here for you. No use talking has been, that's all tommy-rot; lots of good has happened, now its Johnny-on-the-spot. Taint what you want that makes you fat, it's what you get, you know; there's plenty here, don't ever fear, if you only take your throw. Opportunity may come but once, sometimes late in coming. Why wait for it, go meet it, get out and go a running.

## Calendar For 1911.

The publishers of The Youth's Companion will, as always at this season, present to every subscriber whose subscription (\$1.75) is paid for 1911 a beautiful Calendar for the new year. The picture panel reproduces a water-color painting of an old-time garden in a flood of summer sunshine, with a background of Lombardy poplars through which one catches a glimpse of distant hills. The picture being in twelve colors, the tones of the original are faithfully reproduced.

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