

Could you find enough charity in your heart to forgive me and give me another chance?"

"I have nothing to forgive!" said Maud simply. Dear thing! and she meant it too, for when she loved, she found it impossible to blame, and Ned had been her hero for so many a long year. "It was quite natural that you should be fascinated by Liliias, for she is so beautiful and charming. I did not blame you, even at the time, but oh, Ned, I was very miserable! I loved you so dearly, I longed so much to help you! There is nothing in the world which could make me so happy as to be your wife!"

Ned's words of love, of gratitude, of almost tearful remorse are too sacred to be repeated. He had reached his goal at last, and, looking back upon the past, felt that all the troubles which had lain in his path were but a light price to have paid for the treasure he had won!

Upstairs at the window of the girls' bedroom Kitty Maitland peered through her spectacles at the flutter of Maud's dress behind the bushes in the garden, and knitted her brows in her anxiety to account for the presence of a dark stain around the waist. Presently the bushes parted company for a few yards, and the stain was discovered to be neither more nor less than a coat sleeve belonging to Mr. Ned Talbot! Kitty cleared her throat and chanted in a high clear tone—

"A marriage has been arranged, and will shortly take place, between Mr. Edward Mortimer Talbot and Maud, eldest daughter of—"

A stampede towards the window interrupted the conclusion of the sentence, and the sisters stared at the unconscious couple with eager scrutiny. They peered to right and left, craned their necks to one side and then the other, rushed to a second window to obtain a better view, and finally turned back and faced each other with expressions of awed conviction.

"It is—for a ducat! Oh, dear, what a nuisance!" cried Agatha pitifully. "What shall we do without our Maud? First Nan, and then Maud—the house will be lost without them!"

"Our loss is their gain. We must be resigned. It is what we must expect. One bird after another will fly away, and leave the old nest bare. It is the order of nature," sighed Elsie sadly.

"Another wedding! Another bridesmaid's dress. How s-implay lovelay!" cried Christabel rapturously, but Nan stood apart with clasped hands, and dark eyes full of tears.

"The only thing," she sighed to herself—"the only thing I had left to wish for. Oh, how thankful I am! What a dear world it is! How good God is to us all!"



A PURPOSE IN LIFE.

BY MRS. CREIGHTON.

It is probably true to say, speaking generally, that up till a few years ago the object of most girls' lives was to get married. That was what everyone considered that they existed for; they accepted the view, and did their best, with the help of parents and friends, to achieve the object, and, if they did not succeed, were apt to be considered failures by themselves and others.

Now, in a certain section of society at least, marriage seems to be out of fashion. Husband-hunting, whether on the part of mothers or daughters, is considered a vulgar pursuit, and in many cases the whole question of marriage is ignored.

What has taken its place as the object of a girl's life? I am not sure whether they could give it a more dignified name than the desire to have a good time. I wonder how far this is an improvement on the old object. Personally I am very much in favour of matrimony, and it seems to me that it is just as desirable for men as for women. It is difficult for the nature of either man or woman to develop all its possibilities alone; marriage is necessary for the completion of the human being.

It is, of course, true that there are great opportunities in the single life, and there is some work to be done in the service of mankind which only the single man or woman can do. It is fortunate that it should be so, since circum-

stances compel many to remain single. The single life is always the more difficult, and rare gifts of unselfishness are needed to prevent the character suffering from it. Men and women alike, as a rule, reach their fullest development through married life; but it does not follow from this that marriage should be the object of a woman's life, while it is only an accident in a man's life. A man is something else besides a husband, and a woman would be all the better wife if she were something else besides a wife. Hence it is a great pity to make marriage the sole object of a girl's life, though on the whole it seems to me almost a better object than the modern one of having a good time.

Is it unfair to her to say that the object of most girls is to have a good time? I hope that a good many of them feel that it is unfair, and are conscious of a thread of purpose running through their lives. It is natural and desirable that they should be reserved in talking about their ideals and aspirations, and that they should not wish to appear to be taking themselves too seriously. When they see other young people doing that, they call them prigs, and prigs are not always popular. Yet I am inclined to believe that all people who are worth anything have to go through a period of priggishness. They must take it as they would the measles; the only important thing is to

get it over quickly, for should it become chronic, the results would be very unpleasant, for others at least.

So when I say I want them to have a purpose in their lives, I do not want them to take themselves too seriously and to go about talking about that purpose. To avoid that, they should cultivate before all things a saving sense of humour, and apply it constantly to themselves. If they could only see how absurd they are, they would be saved many mistakes and spared many humiliations. The great good of a sense of humour is that it helps them to see themselves as others see them, to realise their unimportance, and to see that the world was not arranged just to let them have a good time.

For some classes of girls in England at present it is very easy to have a good time, if they are only content with a somewhat low level of aspiration; and we hear of girls to whom hockey, golf, or tennis become the chief business of life, just as hunting is to some of their wealthier sisters. The old quiet home life, with its limitations, its little duties, its monotonous occupations have been swept away, and with it the quiet demure maiden who blushed and fainted and was not supposed to have an opinion of her own. In her place has come the modern young woman on her bicycle, who looks as if she thoroughly knows how to take care of herself and means to go her own way. Some charm has gone; let us hope some capacity has been gained.

But capacity for what? What does the modern young woman wish to make of her life? She has gained liberty, but does she remember how it was won for her? There are those still living who bore the brunt of the battle, and fought to get that higher education for women which is the real cause of the freedom of the modern girl. The young people of the present day do not realise how hard that struggle was. They did not struggle to make the lives of women freer in order that they may have a good time. Girls' lives are their own now, and they have to make something worth having out of them. Why do they value liberty? Not because it enables them to do as they like—that would be mere licence—but because it enables them to become what they might be, and they can only do that by effort, by self-discipline, by self-denial. They must lose themselves before they can find themselves.

It is sad to see people living for amusement, or contented in some narrow sphere with natures half developed, because they feel that there are so many gifts lying dormant there, perishing for want of care, which might have been brought up and used for the service of humanity and the glory of God. The important thing for girls is that they should be

learning what real work, both intellectual and physical, means. To have prepared herself for a definite profession in life is not labour thrown away, even if a girl were freed by marriage from the necessity of pursuing her profession. A woman is not a better wife for being incapable, and a woman capable in other directions would soon learn that necessary amount of the mysterious art of housekeeping which is so often merely an excuse for *wasting her time on* the part of the incapable woman.

In a book I read the other day housekeeping was defined as "a calling artfully created by hopelessly lazy women as a blind." "Happiness," wrote a great thinker, "does not consist in a succession of pleasure, but in the fulfilment of itself, a bettering of itself, a realisation of its capabilities on the part of the human soul."

What I wish girls to feel in some indistinct way as the object of their lives is the desire to develop all their capacities, so that they may, in St. Paul's language, be able to buy up the opportunities. Life must grow narrower as they grow older, and doors now open to them must shut. In time, if they are to do good work, they must make their choice in some way and specialise themselves. Those who do not marry will be happier for having some definite work in life, but it would be well, if possible, to find out themselves and their powers before choosing that work, and it is always well not to be too professional, even when they have chosen it.

Girls should be careful not to forget the purpose of woman. There are things which the world wants from women, for the loss of which no excellent work, no highly-developed capacity will compensate. Just at this moment women with capacity, with definite work in life, are so pleased with their gifts that they brandish them in the face of the world. If they can do a thing well, they should keep it to themselves; people will find it out soon enough. At the present moment the great call to women is to show how they can use the privileges which they have, what they are willing and able to do in the service of mankind, to think of their duties rather than of their rights. The question for them is, how are they going to use the liberty that has been won for them? It is on the young that the heavy responsibility rests. If they use their liberty only to amuse themselves, to have a good time, if they neglect to hear the call to service, to fit themselves to bear their share of the world's burden, then women will miss the great opportunity which is now theirs of becoming fellow-workers, fellow-citizens with men, and of learning how to do that work which, in the great economy of the world, can only be done by them.

