

THE CRUTCH.

Charles N. Burnham, Publisher.

U. S. A. GEN'L HOSPITAL, DIV. 1, SATURDAY, FEB. 27, 1864.

The Path before Us.

It is a matter of vital importance to every one to stop sometime, or often in his career in life, and examine his surroundings, and endeavor to compass the paths that lie before him. Supposing we all start out in life simultaneously, or under circumstances in every way similar, yet we nearly all take different routes, as our tastes or inclinations lead us. Many of us thoughtlessly move on, sometimes in one direction or path, sometimes in another, pursuing sometimes one object and then another, until after wasting much precious time, and getting far into the meridian of our existence, we find we have achieved nothing, our efforts have been vain, and we are so far worse than when we commenced the journey, that our compass bearings, and exact position are difficult, if not almost impossible to be obtained. The duty of examining, and knowing the pathway before us is incumbent upon all of us. Every one owes it to himself, owes it to the community in which he lives, owes it to posterity, and no one is excused from it simply on account of any circumstances of birth or education, or any other circumstance into which he may be thrown. We do not pretend to say that every man has the power innate, to choose the very path that is most desirable, or profitable, or that would be, throughout its whole course only happiness and ease; yet we do say that every man has the power to choose that path, which will be truly elevating in every point of view, and not in any way debasing. Nor do we say that every man can pierce the future with equally prophetic eye, or discernment; yet as there is every grade of genius, as of intelligence, no man should say because he has not ten talents he will not use those he has, because another one has the ten talents, and appears superior to him. In choosing the path before us we should do so according to the best teachings of our nature, or to those natural inspirations within us, which scarcely fail in pointing in the right direction.

We do not agree, as an excuse, to the incapacity of any one on account of any circumstances of birth, or education, either high or low, to accomplish great ends, or discover a brilliant or honorable pathway. We have too many negations, or illustrative proofs against such an idea. The very highest ends are not impossible to any man. To him who is surrounded by worldly distinctions, wealth, affluence, position, it may not be easier, than to the humblest, the poorest, the most forgotten. Genius is no respecter of persons, localities or positions. It often becomes the progeny of parents little suspected of having the least spark, the fruitful children, of less fruitful originals. While high conditions may not supply all, yet they may give greater advantages to genius. And while low conditions may not incapacitate for high ends, or favor genius, they may obdurate its sharpness, obscure its brilliancy; they may misdirect it, they may make it as if it were not. But while genius is no respecter of persons, positions or localities, it comes not to every man. Very few are above the average of intelligence. And yet we should not on this account, simply sit idly waiting to find whether we are the fortunate ones or not. If it is so we will know it, if not we have our work to do, if it is not directed by the light of genius.

A recent writer has said that, "Matter is the dry rind of this succulent, nutritious universe; prick it on any side and you draw the same juice. Varieties of endowments are only so many pitchers dipped in one stream." Nature and Providence supply fountains of knowledge, and mines of the jewels of wisdom. They are not always plainly pointed out to us. We are not always taken to the spot and told to dig here, to "prick" there, but we have to look for them, search them out, discover them by our own labor, and industry, and when we have found these fountains, and these mines, and we tap them, we find the "juice" to flow; prick them on any side and the "juice" is the same. Nor are we always told the pathway that leads to them; we find no guide often to direct us, but we will find sometimes a

silent index, saying go this way, or go that, and when we have found the place, over which, rubbish and unsightly objects may perhaps be thrown, and when we have tapped the fountain, or struck the vein, we will find other "endowments" there, which will be "only so many pitchers dipped in the same stream," only so many talents come on the same errand, and looking for the same pathway. This juicy universe supplies nutrition for every one, and this nutrition is but to be sought, and it is to be sought in the right path, and the right path is the path before us, and the path before us is the one which offers the greatest amount of good to ourselves and to the greatest number around us. This path we ought to find, we must find. Are we prevented by our condition; do we sit pining, saying it is not for me because of my parentage or the many depressing influences around me. Because HAYDN, the great musical composer was the son of a wheelwright who filled also the humble occupation of a sexton, while his mother was at the same time a servant of the establishment of a neighboring nobleman, was that any reason he should not excel in the science of music; because LUTHER was the son of a poor miner, ZUNGLIUS of a shepherd, and CALVIN's father was not distinguished either for "influence or learning," was that any reason they should not be the champions they were? Because BOCCACCIO was the son of a merchant, COLUMBUS, of a weaver, and was himself a weaver, BUNYAN the son of a travelling tinker, BLOOMFIELD, GIFFORD, LINNAEUS, LACKINGTON, Dr. CARY, ROGER SHERMAN, and WHITTIER, were shoemakers; because SHAKESPEARE was the son of a wool stapler and butcher, COWLEY of a grocer, MILTON of a scrivener, BEN JOHNSON of a mason, FLETCHER of a chandler, POPE of a linen draper, COLLINS of a hatter, GRAY of a notary, WHITEHEAD of a baker, HENRY KIRK WHITE of a butcher, THOMAS MOORE of a grocer; because Sir EDWARD SUGDEN, Lord TENTERDEN, and JEREMY TAYLOR were sons of barbers, was that any reason they should be less than what they were? was that any reason they should not strike as deeply into the dry rind of this succulent, nutritious universe, as other men? We think not. They saw the pathway before them, and though the "rind" seemed "dry," though the way might have been uninviting at first, and seemed to offer no inducements, yet they were determined to try, to probe the dry rind, to prick it deeply, and they found the juice to flow, the recompense to come, and also that the varieties of their talents were but so many pitchers dipped in one stream. The path before us is one of duty, it may be of honor, renown, fame, glory, it may be one of trial, labor, pain, privation. Let us be sure we get in the right one.

The State Fair.

The State Fair, to be held in Baltimore, April 18th, by the loyal women of Maryland, for the benefit of the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, calls for the aid of every loyal person of the State. The ladies are laboring diligently, and it is the duty of the men, also, to work or to supply them with means whereby they can labor successfully. The Baltimore American in a recent article urges this upon the men of our State, and as a demonstration of the interest it takes in the sentiments it utters, heads a list with \$100 for the purpose of raising a fund for the use of the ladies. How many will follow? Once in Boston a poor man lost his horse and cart, which, from some unforeseen accident, fell overboard. A number of persons were looking on, careless of the result, or of the loss to the poor man, a few saying, only: "I pity him." But one man, tender hearted, took a bank note from his pocket book and swinging it over his head, sung out in a clear voice—"I pity him ten dollars, how much do you pity him." The crowd of course saw the matter in a more real light than the mere expression of pity, and soon made up a substantial "pity" sufficient to establish the poor man in business again. And now if you have any patriotism, if you really have any regard for the interest and welfare of the poor soldiers who are so bravely fighting the battles of our loved country, rate it substantially, exhibit how much patriotism, how much love for the soldier you have, by a bank bill or its equivalent. The Baltimore American rates its at a hundred dollars, how much do you rate yours? *Nous verrons.*

The War in Europe Commenced.

The late news from Europe are of a highly important character, and cannot fail to excite the interest of all nations. The conflict has actually commenced, blood has been spilled, and great events will no doubt follow in their wake. On the 2d inst the Prussians attacked the Danes near Messunde, on the Schley, and after six hours hard fighting were repulsed with a loss of from 250 to 300 men, the Danes losing from 150 to 200. On the 3d the Austrians surrounded Bistore, a mile south of Schlewig, but made no impression. The amount of loss is not stated. A general attack on the Danish line was to take place on the following day. Of course we at a distance can only look on, and watch the movements of those great armies. It is not policy for us, nor are we disposed to meddle in any way with such broils. We had supposed that England and France would have taken a part in the contest after what has been so freely written and spoken in those countries. But the Queen's speech to Parliament, delivered after the war had commenced, makes no allusion to it, and the French Emperor, it is now said, intends to remain a quiet spectator, leaving to England "all the difficulty and all the glory of intervention." By this we suppose it will be a fair fight between those mostly interested, who will have the privilege of working out the problem alone, unaided, and without interference. We look anxiously for further news.

The Enrollment.

From the indications which we have received from various sources we can hardly think that the opening spring campaign will lag because of a want of a sufficient number of troops. Every where we find men enlisting, or volunteering for the first time, and we believe before the 1st of March enough will have been enrolled, to do away in many of the States with the draft. In a recent visit to some portions of the west, we found that volunteering was going on even in a spirit of enthusiasm, and thousands were as eager and anxious to take "the gun upon their shoulder and the bayonet by their side;" to put on the armor of the Union; and to fight under the banner of freedom, as at the beginning of the war. It is really a gala day almost all through the west, and the State capitals are thronged with inquirers, strong athletic men, the yeomenry, the bone and sinew of the country, who are glad to know that their services are needed.

A great stimulus has been given to volunteering, by recent provisions made by Congress and the different States, and probably the army that will appear in the field this spring will be superior to any we have ever mustered. Every man enlisted will be eager for the fray, eager to make one desperate terminal effort, give one determined, telling blow, that shall utterly overwhelm our foes, and scatter to the winds the smallest remnant of the Rebellion.

A Letter from a Soldier.

U. S. GENERAL HOSPITAL, MADISON, IND.,
February 16th, 1864.

EDITOR OF THE CRUTCH:—A few lines from an Ex-patient of your Hospital may be of interest to some of your readers, particularly those in Ward D, Sec. 5.—We left Annapolis Station about 6 o'clock A. M., made connection at the Junction and arrived at Belleaire next morning at 6 o'clock, (February 9th,) and at Cincinnati at 6 o'clock P. M. We were obliged to stay there till next morning. The Soldier's Home was full, but Surgeon RADCLIFFE soon found quarters for us in the famous building erected for the Sanitary Fair, where we soon had supper. Next morning we had coffee early, and the Dr. had ordered ambulances which were in readiness to convey us to the Ohio and Mississippi Depot, a distance of two miles. We arrived at this place in the evening of the 10th, and have not been permitted to go out of the yard since, on account of small pox. We are living on the products of Indiana—potatoes, cabbage, beans and onions, with plenty of pork, beef, bread and fruit. But if I had known that furloughs here, too, were in greater demand than the supply, I should have rather stayed at the Naval School Yard—there is so much difference in natural scenery. One of our boys took sick on the way here, the Surgeon says it is small pox. There are a number of cases in Madison. My respects to the Naval School Hospital faculty, and the CRUTCH.

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