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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

I.

A September Morning.

'The wondrous works of God.'—Job 37¹⁴.

I ONCE visited a house that had a large garden attached to it. In that garden there was a most delightful thing that was supposed to belong to the two boys of the house. It was a tent—a regular army tent.

Those boys thought there was no season like summer. They liked autumn too; in September especially there was often glorious weather. My experience of the tent was a September one. Their mother had agreed to let them sleep in it for one night. Of course they were delighted; they did not sleep much, you may be sure. Soon after sunrise there was a call for me to 'come out and see something.' I went, and from the inside of the tent, where I obediently stood, there seemed at first nothing to be seen. There were fruit trees of course, some with rosy-cheeked apples upon them—you have seen Septembers before now. The trees were not what they wanted me to look at.

With their keen eyes they had noticed one of the great wonders of this earth of ours. That morning, everywhere, and over everything was a glistening, trembling veil, infinitely finer than the finest fabric ever made by man. Even the air seemed full of delicate threads; broken bits were quivering and flying in every direction, and there were long stretches like fairy telegraph wires.

'Spiders!' said the boys. 'Do you know how they manage to get the first long thread across in the air? They can strike the exact leaf they want.' There and then in boy's language, they gave out all the information they had learned from their master at school. It was that the spiders first spin their threads with their heads to the wind. When they are long enough for the breeze to grip them the spider lets go and is borne on wings of the wind, sometimes for a long distance. If the wind falls the spider can let itself down by its silken parachute. If the wind rises, it somehow succeeds in sinking gently to the ground.

Hundreds of spiders had been at work in the

garden that morning. Some of the threads had sunk to earth, others had got broken, and many had got entangled in the bushes and amongst the grass. There had been a regular shower of gossamer.

People will stand at a street corner, and watch a juggler take yards of tape out of his mouth. Even if it were not a trick it is a clumsy proceeding. Those little spiders had made the garden a dream of fairyland. The wonder of it is even greater than the beauty.

When we wonder at things, we stop thinking for a moment. But very soon we begin to ask questions. How did it all happen? How did the spider learn? The spider cannot think, yet its work is perfect of its kind. Back our minds go, and it is God we come to, God the Creator, not only of living creatures like the spider but of us all.

God's work is marvellous; and He means our work, however unimportant it may be, to be well done. You are nearly all at school. He expects you to do your lessons well. But lessons are not the only piece of work He has put into our hands to finish for Him. It is beautiful characters He wants from us. Long ago Jesus Christ told the people how to make them. And we know that He just wants boys and girls to let Him be their friend that He may teach them too.

You do not need to live amidst grand surroundings to grow up noble men and women. It is, I believe, easier for the poor than it is for the rich to live like Christ. The old people have nearly lived their lives out, and most of them feel that they have not made of them what they might have done.

You are beginning yours. What do you mean to make of it? God's work is perfect, and He expects a great deal from you, but He is willing to help you all the time; you have only to ask Him.

Whatsoever you find to do,

Do it, boys, with all your might!

Never be a little true,

Or a little in the right.

Trifles even

Lead to heaven,

Trifles make the life of man ;
 So in all things,
 Great or small things,
 Be as thorough as you can.

Whatsoever you find to do,
 Do it, then, with all your might ;
 Let your prayers be strong and true—
 Prayer, my lads, will keep you right.
 Prayer in all things,
 Great and small things,
 Like a Christian gentleman ;
 And for ever,
 Now or never,
 Be as thorough as you can.¹

II.

Watchmen.

'I have made thee a watchman.'—Ezk 3¹⁷.
 'Except the Lord keep the city,'
 The watchman waketh but in vain.'—Ps 127¹.

1. The words of our first text were spoken first of all to the prophet Ezekiel. God made him a watchman to warn Israel of the danger of their wicked ways.

But God is speaking these words also to you and to me. To each of us He is saying, 'I have made *thee* a watchman.'

Now a watchman is a very important person and he has great responsibilities, so let us see if we can find out some of the things he has to do.

In the Old Testament there is a great deal told us about watchmen. In those days the big cities were surrounded by strong walls, and the gates of the cities were always guarded by watchmen. Their business was to look out for enemies and to warn of any danger. In time of war the number of the watchmen was greatly increased. They were stationed at different points round the wall, and each man was obliged to keep a sharp look-out on his part of the wall and to call out to the others if any danger threatened. The safety of the city depended on the wakefulness and watchfulness of these men, and if one of them had fallen asleep on duty the city would have been in great danger.

But there were other duties which watchmen had to perform. You know that in Palestine grapes are and were grown. The vineyards lay

¹ P. Leonard in *A Garland of Verse*, p. 83.

out on the hillside and were very much exposed. Sometimes wild beasts broke in and destroyed the fruit, sometimes robbers came and stole it. So the vineyards had to be protected, and for this purpose watch-towers were built here and there upon the hillsides. In each watch-tower there was a watchman, and his business was to guard his own particular bit of the vineyard. If a wild beast or a thief approached he gave a long cry at the very top of his voice to warn the others. The work was dangerous and difficult and only the strongest and bravest young men were chosen for it.

Now God has made us all watchmen. We have each a city to guard. Can you guess the name of the city? It is the city of our heart. God has made us soldiers. We are to fight His battles, and that is very difficult and very honourable work. But He has made us sentinels too, and a sentinel's work is even more difficult and more honourable than a soldier's, for the safety of the army or the city depends on him.

Now if the enemy came with a great flourish of trumpets and beating of drums, it would be easy enough to defend our city. But he very rarely does that. He creeps in very quietly and very cunningly, so stealthily sometimes that we never notice him till he is right inside, and our city is betrayed.

Here is the name of one of our enemies. He is called General Hot Temper. He has a way of taking us suddenly by surprise. He lies in wait close to our wall and rushes on us when for the moment we are off our guard. He makes a big hole in our wall to enter by, and each time he comes he makes the hole bigger. If we don't mend the wall and keep a closer guard, some day he will take possession of our city.

And here is the name of another enemy. He is called Colonel Selfishness. He takes our wall down stone by stone, very slowly, but very surely. He creeps quietly into our city and conquers it bit by bit. So we must see that the stones are put in their places again and that the wall is carefully patrolled day and night.

And here is the name of yet another enemy. He is called Captain Meanness. He has a cunning way of attacking us. He makes a great disturbance at one gate of the city, and when we hurry to defend it he rushes in at quite another gate. So we must be very alert in order to keep him out. He is one of the most despicable of our enemies.

There are other enemies too—Major Envy, and Lieutenant Discontent, and Sergeant Ill-Humour, and Corporal Laziness, and a host of others. You each know your own. The important thing is to keep them out at the beginning. If you don't, they will bring a bigger and a bigger army with them each time, until at last they may overwhelm you altogether.

2. And that is where the second text comes in. We can never be quite sure that our city is secure unless God is watching with us:

Except the Lord keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain.

These words have been chosen as the motto of the city of Edinburgh. I wonder how many of you have visited Edinburgh. I wonder how many of you have walked along Princes Street and looked up at the Castle built high on the top of a precipitous rock. At the other side you approach the Castle by quite a gentle slope, but on this side is the sheer precipice. It looks as if it would be impossible to scale that rock, yet once upon a time the fortress was taken on this very side.

It happened thus. Six hundred years ago Robert Bruce was fighting for the freedom of Scotland. But Edinburgh Castle was in the hands of the English, and although he very much wished to take it, he did not know how it was to be done.

At last a man called Francis told Sir Thomas Randolph, one of Bruce's leaders, of a narrow path which led up the steepest part of the rock. The Castle wall was low at this side and no guard was set, as no attack was expected there. In the darkness Francis led Randolph and thirty men up the steep path. They leapt over the wall and found the garrison asleep, all except the guard at the gate. So the Castle was taken—even the strong Castle of Edinburgh which depended on its own strength.

Except the Lord keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain.

If we want to keep *our* city safe we must ask God to watch with us. He is the best of all watchmen, for He is never weary, He never slumbers nor sleeps. He will keep us if we ask Him, and when His love is all round us and over us then we are safe indeed.

III.

What Colour is your Lamp? ●

'Thou wilt light my lamp.'—Ps 138.

Have you ever heard of the wonderful game of 'lantern-bearers' played by Robert Louis Stevenson when he was a boy? He and his friends played it on the shore at North Berwick years ago, but you can read about it to-day in his essay *The Lantern-bearers*. That essay doesn't read a bit like the ordinary school essay we all know and some of us hate. It is more like a fascinating story. It tells how Louis stole out of his house in the evenings of late September, when the holidays were almost at an end, and the nights were already dark. He was buttoned up to the chin in his overcoat, but there was a mysterious bulge at his waist, and there hung about him a strong smell of toasting tin. He hurried over the links with a walk that spelt mystery, and by and by he met another figure equally bulging, and equally smelling of blistered tin. 'Have you got your lantern?' whispered Louis anxiously. 'Yes,' was the all-important reply, and together the two hastened to a spot previously agreed upon.

When four or five such figures had gathered they climbed into an empty fishing-boat on the shore, or crouched down in some sheltered hollow of the links. Then the top-coats were unbuttoned, and the mysterious bulge and the tinny smell resolved themselves into a bull's-eye lantern fastened to a cricket belt. In the flickering light of the lanterns, and with the wind sweeping over the links, the boys talked of matters both wild and exciting. But the talk was nothing compared to the joy of being a lantern-bearer. 'The essence of this bliss,' as Stevenson tells us, 'was to walk by yourself in the black night; the slide shut, the top-coat buttoned; not a ray escaping . . . a mere pillar of darkness in the dark; and all the while . . . to know you had a bull's-eye lantern at your belt, and to exult and sing over the knowledge.'

Now, we don't play at 'lantern-bearers' like Robert Louis Stevenson; nevertheless we all carry hidden lamps or lanterns. The lamps themselves are hidden, but their light shines out plainly whether we will it or no. No buttoned-up coat can conceal their flame.

Many of us have lamps that burn a fiery red

light, others have lamps that show a cold green, others again have lamps that glimmer a muddy purple. But some of us carry lamps whose flame shines steady gold. That sounds as mysterious as the bulge under the overcoat—doesn't it?

What colour of lamp have you? I can tell you; for though I don't see the actual flame I can tell by your face and your actions, the colour your lamp is burning. Is your lamp burning red? Then I'm afraid there will be angry sparks in your eyes and a black line between your brows. Your hands will be often clenched. Your feet will be given to stamping. You will flare up at trifles. And people will say, 'What a dreadful temper!'

Is your light green? Then your eyes will always be looking round the corner at some one else's belongings. 'I wish I had nice clothes like so and so.' 'It's a shame that such and such a person has so many treats.' 'I want this.' 'Give me that.' 'Me too!' will be the words that are oftenest on your lips. Hard lines will grow round your mouth, and your companions will say, 'Grabby thing!' because your lamp will be showing the green light of jealousy and greed.

Does your lamp burn darkish purple? Then your mouth will have a droop at each corner and a pout in the middle. Your eyes will seem only half-open. You will skulk about in corners and look altogether a most unpleasant person, and outsiders will remark, 'The sulks again!'

Does your lamp give a beautiful golden glow? Then your eyes will be clear and bright. Your lips will be ready to smile. You'll be jolly and happy, and willing to run an errand or lend a helping hand. You'll sing or whistle at your work, and your friends will say—well, I think I

had better not tell you what they will say. It might make you conceited.

Have you caught the idea? Our hidden lamps are our characters, our natures, our dispositions, our tempers—whichever you like to call them. They shine out unmistakably in our faces and our actions. We may try to pretend to others that we are burning a golden light when our flame is really red or green or purple, but we shall not be able to keep up the pretence long, for sooner or later the true colour will show.

Now, how shall we contrive to burn a golden flame? It depends on who lights our lamp and how we trim it. You see it is not a case of the glass being coloured. It is the case of the flame itself having a colour.

If we ourselves light our lamps we shall find that our flames will be at the best unsatisfactory. Some days they will burn one colour, some days another. We shall never be able to depend on them. The only way to make sure of the true golden light is to ask God to light them for us. Our text says, 'Thou wilt light my lamp.' And 'Thou' is just God. If we tell Him that we want to be His lamps and to shine for Him He will pour into us the oil of His Holy Spirit and set us afire with His love.

Then when He has lit the flame we must trim it carefully, for, of course, you know that a badly trimmed lamp never burns well. The trimming is our duty—not God's—and trimming our lamps means prayer. That is the best preparation for any day's work. That will keep our flame pure and bright. Then the world will see that we are trying to be God's children, for our lamps are burning steady gold.

Pioneers in the Study of Old Testament Poetry.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. A. R. GORDON, M.A., D.LITT., MONTREAL.

Ley and the Metricists.¹

As the result of continued study of the poetical texts, Lowth's principle of parallelism had become

¹ The English reader will find the most careful and complete survey of this whole field in W. H. Cobb's *Criticism of Systems of Hebrew Metre* (Oxford, 1905), a work to which the present writer is greatly indebted, though he has closely studied at first hand the various systems passed in review.

firmly established; and this being now related to the 'pulse-beat' of rhythm, it was widely assumed by Old Testament scholars about the middle of the nineteenth century that practically the last word had been said on the subject. Representative critics like De Wette, Olshausen, and Hupfeld all operate with the formula of 'rhythm of thought.'