The Home

The Test of Earnestness

James Russell Lowell, in a letter to a friend referring to the "Standard," an Abolition paper managed by an executive committee, writes:

"I feared that an uncoalescing partnership of several minds might deprive the paper of that unity of conception and purpose in which the main strength of every undertaking lies."

That sentence shows the insight of the writer, the conclusions of the close student of men and affairs.

It is imperative to the success of any work that it should be controlled, not merely by those who have congenial tastes, social affiliations, sympathetic aims, but by those who have an intellectual unity of comprehension of the object and the methods of attaining it.

In the Church and philanthropic world of effort this is being constantly proved. Men and women get together to advance a common cause, to begin a certain work, to build up a work of years, to discover "many men of many minds." The first difficulty revealed is the lack of unity of conception; this diversity of opinion is not confined to methods, but the very purpose is subjected to a diversity of opinion that must be overcome before the work can receive attention.

The highest, intellectually, are those who can detach themselves from personal opinions, ideas, or ideals, and can consider altruistic effort impersonally.

The first essential to success is unity of conception; when that is attained, there is hope of unity of effort.

Exclusiveness, social or spiritual, hopelessly limits success. The catholicity of spirit that expresses itself in the workers gauges the vitality and is the soul of every work undertaken either for the general good, the good of a class, or the good of a limited number in a class.

It follows, because workers are human, that mistakes must be made, that friction will disturb the machinery. Just in proportion as the workers see only the importance of the work, and its success, the friction will be reduced.

The test of intellectual and spiritual life in every one comes at the point when every consideration must be submerged in the larger one of the work to which he is pledged, when every feeling is controlled by his conception of the necessity of unity of mind and effort for the good of the work.

Mrs. Cheerly's Innovation

By Glin Burton

Mrs. Cheerly has instituted a novel entertainment for her little son and daughter to take the place of a large party which they have heretofore given in midwinter. Invitations have been issued to forty friends between the ages of eight and twelve to come promptly at nine o'clock each Saturday morning for six weeks and sing for one hour. An experienced kindergartner who excels in her musical department has been engaged to lead and train the merry chorus and to select the songs that shall be used, having them clearly printed upon neat sheets. A good pianist will accompany the happy little singers as they sit or sometimes stand in a semicircle before the grand piano, and mothers, if they choose to come, may listen in the hall. The songs are not too many, but greatly varied in their character—a kindergarten morning song, a sweet arrangement of "Our Father," some gay little melodies about the seasons, several charming motion songs, one patriotic air, and a couple of nonsense ditties in the form of jolly rounds.

No attempt will be made at teaching a scientific use of the young voices, no command will be given to "contract the diaphragm and close the epiglottis"—to which direction by her teacher one of my little girl friends exclaimed: "Why, I haven't got any of those things!" Mrs. Cheerly says: "Just tell the children to breathe freely and then open their rosy lips and let the melody come out, and not too loudly, either, but as it easily can."

The result is most delightful to the listeners, and undeniably so to every member of the happy circle, if dancing eyes and smiling lips are any evidence. And the pleasure will continue long after the six sessions end, in sweet remembrance of their gatherings and in continued singing within all the homes of the pretty melodies they learn together.

A Kitchen

By Margaret Sutton Briscoe

Ye mind me o' departed days.

Bang! bang! bang!

Mammy is making biscuits for supper. Nobody before or since has ever made such biscuits; but then no one else has Mammy's aggressive wrist-bone, nor need one desire it even with such results at stake.

The white, ropy dough is being dragged about on the board mercilessly, now molded into a round roll, now beaten flat with powerful strokes from the end of Mammy's flat-iron, until the skin of the mass blisters and breaks. Then Mammy throws aside her flat-iron to tear the dough into little lumps, which she kneads again into balls.

Now for Mammy's *chef-d'œuvre*, her trade-mark. With doubled-up fist and nice calculation she strikes each dough-lump square in the middle with aggressive wrist-bone, leaving a deep dent, which, in the baked biscuit, says plainly as with words—"Mammy *fecit*." There are still six small dents to be made in the dough by two vigorous fork-thrusts—but every kitchen turns out biscuits thus impressed; the deep middle dent, Mammy's dent, belongs to our home kitchen alone, and, alas! to that no longer. Mammy's wrist-bone, along with the rest of her faithful body, has long since returned to dust.

It is difficult to place Mammy.

She was not the family cook, though all special dishes were of her making; nor was she the nurse, though the family childhood had no more faithful watcher.

I think Mammy herself would have been puzzled to name her exact position in the household. The only white domestic under the roof, she was at once the kitchen tyrant and the faithful servant, the tried friend and helpful adviser, of her mistress.

The younger generation have smiled to see Grandmother mix a "toddy" with her own hands and send it down to the kitchen when, once in an age, the waffles or another such dainty failed, for some unaccountable reason, and came up to the table soggy and tough.

"Poor Mammy! I know she is ill with mortification. Take this to her, Ben, and tell her to drink it all herself."

The bond between kitchen and dining-room was very close then, closer than we can understand.

When Mammy made ginger-cakes, which was once a week, there was always on either side of her a high chair with a child in it, and each child had a bit of dough, a toy rolling-pin, and a thimble cake-cutter. The little cakes were baked in the spaces between the larger ones which Mammy cut, and surely none ever tasted so good.

But these privileges were all reserved for the latter part of the week. During the first of the week—known as the "cross days" by the children—the kitchen was a spot to be avoided. If it did happen during these busy early week days that a small figure was seen creeping near the forbidden door, Mammy's keen eyes pounced upon the intruder, and—

"In all the twenty-nine rooms in this house, can't you

children find any place to play but this one kitchen!"—and so on and so on, until retreat was secured.

Monday was wash-day; Tuesday, ironing-day; Wednesday, a kind of finishing-up day. After that the kitchen emerged from gloom and smiled once more. However clear a Monday broke, there was always, to childish minds, a sense of a heavy storm in the air. Tubs clattered, steam filled the room, suds flew, and wet linen swished about. The Monday-night work was to sprinkle down the piles of dried, fluffy clothes, and lay them in neat tight rolls on the back of the kitchen table.

Of their own election the dusky fair ones below stairs forbade the presence of admirers on Monday nights. When stately July, the waitress, walked down to the kitchen one black Monday evening to find her repeatedly warned "Jeames" there awaiting her, she set the tray of supper dishes she carried upon the table to stand before him with one short sentence:

"Sir, I beg your absence." And out sneaked Jeames.

July would narrate and re-narrate this history of Jeames's discomfiture to the children, for whom the tale had a curious fascination. In the end, however, Jeames was not discomfited.

Though Monday's washing demoralized all below stairs, it was not accomplished in the kitchen proper save on cold days. Outside the kitchen door was a great paved and covered space where the pump was and where the wash-tubs set ready ranged on wash-benches about the wall. The walls of this outside room were of brick, and broken by great brick arches that it was a joy to dart in and out of.

Here all the rougher work of the kitchen was accomplished, the chickens picked, and the heavy pots washed. The kitchen itself was—even on black Monday—neatness itself. Sometimes the children thought vaguely that a little less neatness might have been better than many of the black—very black—Mondays; and some of us, since childish days, still hold the same conclusion; but then this is the decadence of neatness. Fortunately, Mammy did not live to mourn the decline. Till her death the blue china stood immaculate on the upper shelves of the kitchen dresser, above the lower shelves filled with gleaming tins. The boards of the dresser and kitchen floor shone with cleanliness, the stove was as black and shiny as handsome July's face, and it was not necessary to rinse out any kettle before using it, though Mammy always did so as part of the general scheme.

Her kitchen pantry then was a daily pride, not a place to be hastily tossed into order before the weekly inspection.

In those days what mouth-watering dainties came out from that door! Plum cakes rich with age, all plums and citron and what not, with only flour enough about them to bind them together.

That lost kitchen pantry will not bear lingering over.

Nor will any of those who served the house, even the humblest, ever forget the packed Christmas baskets that came from the pantry shelves. There was a separate hamper for every butcher and baker that rang at the door for orders. But what the children of the old home probably remember better than anything else in that old kitchen pantry is, not the food it held or its neatness, but a private possession of Mammy's which she kept there.

To be caught needlessly whimpering by Mammy meant to be taken firmly by the hand and led to her cupboard, there to be silently shown two little china images, equally hideous, one with what was meant for a cherubic smile painted upon its inane face, the other with its features twisted into a fretful snarl. The obvious moral acted as a kind of irresistible tear drier. No child wanted to look like that ugly image; and Mammy never weakened the effect by allowing us to play with these charmed fetishes.

So soon as tears ceased to flow, the pantry door was closed.

What has become of the images? Who knows?

More than the pantry door is closed. Faithful Mammy, the garret, the cellar, and the clean kitchen, are all gone, and, weep as fretfully as we may, no one now takes us firmly by the hand, or shows us any charmed fetishes whatsoever.

A Plea for the Kindergarten

The kindergarten system is threatened with many dangers, and, unfortunately, it is most threatened through the ignorance and indiscretion of its friends. The kindergarten system first and always is educational, not charitable. Unfortunately, a large percentage of people have the impression that the kindergarten system of training for little children is designed to take ragged and uncared-for children out of the streets and amuse and entertain them for two or three hours, and, if need be, furnish them with clothes that they may attend the kindergarten. The kindergarten system of education in this country has suffered, as only its truest friends can realize, through this mistaken apprehension on the part of many who think themselves qualified to establish and maintain kindergartens. The kindergarten system is designed to educate and develop little children—to train the whole child. Its first value to the neglected children in our community, or the children of the ignorant poor, is that it trains these children to be members of a little community working together to accomplish definite purposes. The punishment for infringement of rules, or of naughtiness, inflicted by a wise teacher, fits the crime. The child is not protected from the effect of his own ill-doing. That is the best kindergarten in which the public sentiment is educated to standards of morality and good manners that manifest themselves by disapproval of wrong-doing. The next value is in the training that it gives a child's senses. Sight, hearing, touch, are all trained in the kindergarten. It is an important matter, especially with Americans, to teach a child accurate habits of seeing and hearing. The imagination is quickened through games that train the child to realize interdependence. Physical as well as mental accuracy is the ideal.

Whoever imagines that sentimentality is the basis of kindergarten training knows nothing about it. She who establishes a kindergarten for poor children for the purpose of taking the children out of the street is doing the unkindest thing that she can do, both to the children and to the system which she imagines herself indorsing.

This ignorance of what the kindergarten is, this accepting it as a place to gather in the children of the poor for a few hours, has resulted in the employment of young girls, who have not had thorough kindergarten training, whose elementary education even is defective, and who have no ideals for the kindergarten, and confused ideas of its positive philosophy. The second evil, no less harmful, is that in these kindergartens the projectors are very apt to think that numbers mean success. They will look at you calmly and say that they have so many more children than they have chairs for; not long since one of these ignorant projectors announced with pride that "her" (?) kindergartner had charge of thirty-two children!

It is a physical impossibility for one woman to take charge of thirty-two children at any one time. In a kindergarten where so much of the work must be personally directed, it is entirely impossible for any woman, no matter what her abilities, to do anything for the children beyond keeping them comparatively quiet. The result is misconception of the system by all concerned, habits of inattention and carelessness formed at the most impressionable age, and nervous breakdown for the teacher. It is criminal to call such an organization a kindergarten. It is anything else but a kindergarten.

Another mistake too commonly made is permitting girls who have a desire to know something about the kindergarten, or who wish to use their time, to become assistants in poorly equipped kindergartens under still more poorly equipped kindergartners. A girl who can read might be able to go into a primary class-room and teach a number of children the alphabet and how to make figures; she might manage to maintain a certain kind of order; but it is impossible for an untrained girl to go into a kindergarten and, without direct oversight and professional training, to do anything but harm to the child. She may learn lessons of patience; she may learn lessons of self-control; she may even manage to teach a few kindergarten songs if she has a good voice; but no girl has any place in a kindergarten