

made your audience laugh, you know, as a rule, that you have that audience with you. You are free to go ahead for quite a long time after, without risks of an atmosphere of boredom. You have planted through laughter, in the minds of your audience, a sense of freedom, a greater capacity in them to leave the affairs that usually engage their attention, a capacity to come right into the subject in hand.

The men who laugh through life are usually those who have never allowed their minds to become entangled in unworthy things; there are many great lives to remind us that laughter is by no means incompatible with goodness. We hear much of the buoyancy of St. Francis of Assisi, of the gaiety of the young Joan of Arc, while the oldest and one of the greatest of our hospitals, St. Bartholomew's, was founded by Rahere, a monk who, for some time, was the King's Jester. Very different this from the austerity that prevailed in regard to religious affairs in our own country not so many years ago, a time probably responsible for the story of how a visitor in one of our smaller Scottish towns was accosted and warned by a policeman and, when he asked what particular offence he had committed, was told "Ye're smilin' an' it's the Sawbath day."

We have all known and admired people who, suffering perhaps from some terrible disease, have had little use for sympathy but have been ready to enjoy any story, any incident, provocative of laughter, people who meet their nurses when they come on duty with perhaps a mock scolding, a laughing enquiry as to what rules they have broken, or a jest on their occupation during off duty time. Thus would they rob sickness, pain and coming loss of their triumphs, their victories over us, would, so to speak, set us free from these. But more still may lie behind the laughter of such heroic souls. In preparing this talk for you to-day I came to realise that their laughter, in the face of death, might be just an interpretation, an outer expression, of their own inner freedom.

That laughter does mean freedom, is borne out by the fact that people will often laugh in the face of danger or trouble. This gives to them a certain courage, a feeling of getting outside of and above these troubles and dangers. By laughing at life's perplexities they are the more able to conquer them, because they place themselves in a right relationship to these perplexities and gain fresh assurance for themselves in meeting them; by moping all day you can easily convince yourself, and others too, that your defeat is a foregone conclusion.

A point, in relation to my theory that a study of the psychology of laughter, indicates that it gives a way of escape for the mind from restrictions and anxieties is that you so often find that those, who have to face the darkest and saddest conditions of life, are the most laughter loving. This should never be taken as showing that they are callous or indifferent to the sufferings of others. Quite the reverse—the ability to find freedom in laughter, from the perplexities and the terrible realities among which they live, will give to them new strength and refreshment to help others; without it they become mere machines and worn out machines at that.

If you ask me to arrive at some psychological analysis of this disembodied part of our human nature—laughter—the problem becomes a very difficult and elusive one. Laughter lives, as I have said, not in the intellect, not in the reason, but in the incongruities of life. It lies rather in the imagination than in the intellect, and that it is akin to the artistic faculty is borne out by the fact that no two individuals, no two nationalities may be said to have quite the same sense of humour. The very relationship of laughter to a sense of freedom, which I have referred to, connects it with the artistic.

The hygiene of laughter is, therefore, a matter no more to be ignored than the hygiene of food, of deep breathing,

of proper clothing, exercise and the like. Its indirect effects upon the physical body are by no means unimportant, but greater still are the benefits to the mind of giving laughter its own place in life. Its reaction on other minds is shown in the oft-repeated expression that "Laughter is infectious," but its infection should be such as will carry no injury to the feelings of others, no injury that will place others in a wrong position in the eyes of the community. Such laughter is of a wrong kind, and often has behind it, not humour, but evil; it is the laughter of a Mephistopheles, not the laughter of a saint or of a healthy mind. The laughter that brings freedom is outside and above that which jeers at the infirmities, misfortunes and shortcomings of others, and the false freedom, the false feeling of self-assurance, gained thereby, will only lead to pitfalls in the future. But laughter of the right kind and in the right place will help us in all the great works of life, by leading us into a wider vision of things as they are, to a faculty to put the little things and the big right into their true perspective in our field of vision.

I. M.

THE "AT HOME" AT THE SETTLEMENT.

Ladies on the Council of the Corporation, with Miss Isabel Macdonald, its sympathetic and indefatigable Secretary, greatly enjoyed the hospitality of the members in residence at the Settlement Home, 20, Clapton Square, E., on September 24th.

After a long drive through some of the busiest parts of London, we were very glad to find ourselves in the old Square with its central garden, at one time a notable residential neighbourhood—witness some fine eighteenth century houses.

No. 20 stands with its fine pillared doorway overlooking the Square, well out of reach of the sound of the tram cars, the chief noise apparently emanating at night from the Church tower where "the hooting owl doth to the moon complain," for a whole colony of these birds have made it their abode.

We had a very warm welcome, and enjoyed a delicious tea, in the charming sitting-room of the Sister-in-Charge, Miss Coates. Then we wandered round the garden and admired its well-kept walks, its flower plots and rockeries gay with crimson geraniums, dahlias, the last of the roses, a wealth of Michaelmas daisies and such like flowers. We next went into the office, or little reception room, and then explored the house; each resident had very kindly set her door open so that we might feel welcome and enter into her domain. We admired the rooms looking so bright with their large windows, most harmoniously furnished according to individual taste. The house plants seemed to appreciate the light just as much as did the nurses, but they could not have appeared so healthy had they not been tended by those nurses who understood how to care for plants, just as they know how to care for sick people. We liked the framed certificates hung here and there, evidences of honourable, useful lives and hard won qualifications; keeping company with these were many treasures, valuable old china, bits of needlework, and cherished books, each with its memories of some period or another of the owner's life.

One resident took the opportunity of securing in her birthday book the autographs of the visitors. We are all interested to note how aptly the quotation for the day appears to fit the person whose name is inscribed, and opposite the name of Ethel Gordon Fenwick we read the following quotation from Owen Meredith:

"Noble withal, and free from fear
As heart of eagle, and high and near to heaven."

One noticed a busy pencil jotting this down, so the juxtaposition evidently pleased the writer.

I cannot close without expressing very particularly

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