Spinning and Weaving

By NELLIE M. SICKLES.

Far back in the dim distance of time, while yet the dark pall of God's first displeasure rested heavily upon the world, man wandered over the earth in search of food, his only dwelling the caves of the wilderness, his only raiment the skins of the wild beasts of the forest.

Ages passed, and as the course of civilization progressed, he abandoned the wandering life of the wilderness, he built for himself houses of wood and stone, and clothed himself with fabrics of his own hands' making.

We are ignorant as to the time in which spinning and weaving were invented, but as every supply indicates a corresponding demand, for which it was created, who may judge that their origin lay in necessity?

History informs us that they were carried to a high degree of perfection by the ancient Egyptians, and by them made known to the surrounding nations.

In the earlier days of the world's story, spinning was accounted to women of wisdom, and we are told in the Scriptures that "all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands," and again, in the description of a wise woman, we are told "she layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff."

While the husbandman rejoiced in his broad and fruitful fields, the students delighted in the search of knowledge, and the man of business sought happiness in heaping high his piles of silver and gold, the pride of women was in the product of her own skillful hands, her goodly stores of fine spun linen.

But affrighted by the shriek of the engine and the whirring of machinery, the spinning wheel no longer buzzes cheerily before the open cottage door. With the loom it has taken its place in the attic among other old fashioned relics of bygone days, and the only spinner who now works at the old wheel is the spider, whose art never grows old, and whose threads are more finely spun than any of man's device. And the loom is hung with the webs of the same patient, little workman.

But there are other spinners than women and spiders; there are other threads than those of flax; there are other webs than those woven in the loom.

Some weave for an admiring world fair webs of poetry and song. Others weave a pleasant tale and charm us with the glowing colors wrought into their fabric.

At times we all weave bright webs from the fine spun threads of fancy. And these webs are to us more beautiful than all others, they are rainbow tinted, and perfect in finish, but the material is so frail they are destroyed by the first breath of reality.

Spinners of life are we all, and no longer, as in days of myths and fables, do we hold true the story of the three sister spinners. No longer do we believe that a Clotho holds the distaff of our lives, that each one's portion of the thread is held by a Lachesis, and that a relentless Atropos stands ever ready to sever the thread of existence.

The night of superstition has vanished from the earth, and the clear light of Christianity reveals to us a truth more wonderful than any hidden in the fabulous myths of the ancients. We see ourselves as the workers out of our own destinies, spinning for ourselves the threads of our own lives. God gives to each the flax, and each must spin his thread. Time is our taskmaster, and keeps us at our work.

Sometimes the threads become rough and tangled where we meant to spin them fine and smooth, and we long to drop the thread and rest our wearied hands and brains, wondering what is the purpose and meaning of our work, and why He, who sent the flax, does not make the threads run more evenly.

Surely, were our hearts ready and
our hearts willing, He who placed us here is able to make the rough places smooth and the tangled ends straight and beautiful.

Life is a great fabric, woven from the threads we spin, and into it the work of every hand must enter. It is, indeed, a fabric, checkered with light and shade, in some places bright and beautiful, in others dark and unsightly; here a thread, black as night, seems to darken everything it touches; there, another, like a ray of spun gold, makes brighter all about it.

But every thread is needed to make the texture perfect and complete, and each of us can say, in the words of the sweet pet-spinner:

"I am sure
That tint and place,
In some great fabric to endure
Past time and race
My thread shall have."

Shall we not then spin our thread, as it slips from our fingers day by day, so fine and fair that it may be worthy of its place in the great life fabric?

The weaver, as he sits at the loom, has before his eyes a pattern which he strives to imitate in the fabric which he weaves.

We also have a pattern after which we should model our lives. It is the most perfect that has ever been wrought, and in it is reflected all the brightness and beauty the world can ever know, and it is the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May it never be said of us careless weavers that—

"We wove the tissue wrong, and stained
The woof with bitter tears:
We wove a tissue of doubt and fear
And not of hope and love.
Because we looked at our work, and not
At our pattern up above."

When at last the thread of life has run its appointed course to the end, and the spinning and weaving are all finished, then shall we

"Hear their tread
Who bear the finished web away,
And cut the thread,
And bring God's message in the sun

'Thou poor, blind spinner, work is done.'"

THE SUNSET.

A pleasant smile and a light caress—I ask not more and I want not less;
I do not plead for an ardent love,
That mantles the heavens or spans the sea;
I only ask that time shall prove
That you will be gentle and kind to me.

While memories flicker as sunsets fade,
And every ghost of the past is laid;
With love a truant and passion dead,
There still comes a glimmer of sweet sunshine,
As I think of the night when you bowed your head—
Bowed it and mingled your tears with mine.

Song and laughter that come and go,
Love and passion that ebb and flow,
The past seems a dim and receding shore—
The past with its vanishing, shattered years;
But the face that looks longest through memory's door
Is pallid with sorrow and wet with tears.

And so I ask, as the twilights fade,
That you walk beside me still unafraid;
As we watch the flow of the ebbing tide,
And near the shores of the unknown sea,
That you nestle closer by my side,
And share your sorrows with none but me.

—Sam P. Davis.

"I do not care where the work is, the man or woman who does work worth doing is the man or woman who lives, breathes, and sleeps that work; with whom it is ever present in his or her soul; whose ambition is to do it well and feel rewarded by the thought of having done it well."—Ruskin.

"The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. Know what thou canst work at, and work at it like a Hercules."—Carlyle.