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The Spirit of Conservation in the Home

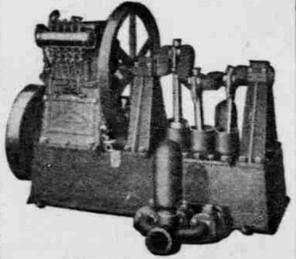
By Mary Dillingham Frear.

The opening lines of Bryant's Thanatopsis became familiar to us as children: "To him who in the love of nature holds communion with her visible forms, she speaks a various language"; but it is not until we reach mature years that we realize how subtly the variousness of her language depends upon individual interpretation. To the superstitious, and to the scientific mind, nature's voice in the thunder storm brings an entirely different message. To the one, the tones of an angry god, heard in terror, must be answered by the ringing of bells to propitiate the spirit of punishment; to the other, this evidence of an electric storm has, in nine times out of ten, been looked for and the time of its coming-measured with nice calculation. So, too, any appreciation of nature's economy is dependent upon the understanding mind. We speak of the ruthlessness of nature, of the destructiveness of nature, and often fail to see law and order in what seems elemental chaos. But coming into a knowledge of nature's method of housekeeping, observing the fact that nothing is wasted, that the prodigality of the oak as it strews the hillside, or the lake it overhangs, with seemingly wasted pollen thus furnishes nourishment to a horde of insects, or adds to the forest loam or the silt of the lake; that the rivers flow into the sea whence rise the clouds that let fall the rain; that denuded forest and rain-ravaged hill ultimately become star-dust of which new worlds are made—coming into such a knowledge we may well cry out "it is too wonderful for me, I can not attain unto it." Let nature alone and man's existence on this little planet seems of slight import in the building of worlds upon worlds.

he was gone!" but too many women suffer and let suffering come from overstrain. In the effort to conserve the well being of the family health in every particular they beggar their own vitality and through actual nervousness with the phrase, "what we think we breakdown or through over-anxiety, expressed perhaps in nagging, foreboding, irritableness or other forms of worry, rob the home of the peaceful atmosphere most conducive to growth and health. The new-thought movement with its positive assertions of good, and its calm optimism is helping many a household to a rhythmic harmony of living conditions which is most essential to the development of the best vitality.

After all, our greatest means of assisting in the world's conservation is not in the doing of tasks, in the actual practise of domestic and therapeutic economy but rather in the educative value of holding for ourselves and creating in those about us the right attitude of mind. We are too familiar with the phrase "what we think we are," fully to realize its best significance. Acts are the expressions of ideas. Too often our acts, well intended, it may be, are ineffective because the desultory expression of desultory ideas. To think deeply and clearly, to begin to see into the great scheme of things, to try to "think God's thoughts after Him" is to gain cohesion—cohesion with the law and order of the universe. The humdrum task, the oft repeated detail of household duty becomes fraught with meaning and relieved of pettiness when viewed in the cosmic light. Moving in a sense of essential values our unconscious educative influence may be greater than the "line upon line" we consciously try to teach. Children growing up in an atmosphere pure, large and free, mentally and spiritually as well as physically, will go into the world equipped with right ideas of conserving earth's products and reinforcing human power. Acts for inspection of foods, filtration systems for drinking water, fresh air farms, pure milk depots for infants, regulation of hours and working conditions in factories, building regulations for tenements, parks and playgrounds, advancement in surgery, war to the death against cholera, yellow fever, plague and tuberculosis and temperance reform are what but the fruits of the spirit—in other words, the result of public opinion!

Let us live and work to greater ends yet, doing the little necessary tasks in the large sense that they are necessary, and in our largeness of spirit seeing that no least duty is undone.



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