

THE VALUE OF CHEERFULNESS

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The Value of Cheerfulness by Mary M. Barrows & Ella Wheller Wilcox

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MARY M. BARROWS & ELLA WHELLER WILCOX

THE VALUE OF CHEERFULNESS

Alice E. Colter
February 14, 1907

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Edited by
Mary M. Barrows

Introduction by
Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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INTRODUCTION

Those enlightened Intelligences who watch over the struggling human race must hold in higher regard the man who makes his brothers smile with hope than the one who merely arouses admiration for personal achievements.

It is a nobler act to give a fellow mortal food for courage to pursue his journey than by some literary acrobatic feat to arrest his startled attention.

I would rather compile a book of optimism than to create a masterpiece of pessimism. One day I read a little story, written by a great literary artist of France, — a man who has since died of melancholia, pursued by the demons of his own creation. It was a wonderfully constructed piece of work — the work of a master-hand ; yet so depressing, so despairing was its tone, that now, after the passage of

INTRODUCTION

years, I cannot think of it without a falling of the spiritual mercury and a sense of discouragement, as subtle as it is uncontrollable.

It is a prostitution of talent to send forth such "Works of art."

No man, however skilled with sword or gun, has a right to stand upon a public highway flourishing firearms and swords, and calling out to his fellow travellers that danger, destruction, and death await them if they proceed.

No man, however skilled with the pen or tongue, has a right to preach despondency, and gloom, and discouragement, and failure to a toiling, striving world. There is much in life to cause depression and discouragement if we do not bring to bear upon circumstances all the hidden powers of the soul.

He who helps mankind to develop those powers and to use them is a benefactor to humanity; he is worthy of being called great, though he creates nothing but hope in other souls. The greatness which is merely the power to destroy ideals is not the enduring greatness.

The bird that constructs its beautiful nest with nature's materials is greater than the

INTRODUCTION

wanton hand that destroys it, though less powerful.

He who compiles a book of helpful philosophy out of the material provided by other minds does the world a greater service than he who creates an epic of despair.

The old gloomy creeds, full of vengeance and cruelty, are being relegated to the back attic of the past. New wholesome creeds of love and kindness are taking their places.

With the old creeds, the old, despondent literature must go, — the books which leave their readers with broken ideals, lower estimates of humanity, and lessened courage for the battles of life.

In their places we must have the books which arouse ambition, stimulate hope, and renew courage.

"The Value of Cheerfulness" is such a book.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

