

HOME INTERESTS.

Conducted by HELENE.

THE OLD YEAR'S BLESSING.

Like Simeon of old, The new-born Babe I hold Upon my heart, According to Thy word, Let now thy servant, Lord, In peace depart. —John B. Tabb.

NEW YEAR CUSTOMS.

Whole volumes have been filled with the novelties of New Year's customs and the usages which in different parts of the world characterize the day. In Persia, colored eggs are sent as presents, as with us at Easter. In France, the New Year's day corresponds pretty closely in its social observances to our Christmas. In Russia, at every country house there is a procession and feast in honor of the day, horses, cows, sheep and hogs being gaily dressed with garlands and led to the landlord's house. An essential part of the programme is that the animals shall be taken into the dining room, but when the landlord does not care to have a nice apartment spoiled by this human and beastly procession, he fits up a large room on the ground floor, with tables and benches and through this files the rabble rout. In China, it is considered obligatory on all persons to settle every pecuniary obligation before the first day of the new year, a custom that might with profit be imitated elsewhere. The Chinese have also the singular practice of dating all births on the first day of the year on which they occur, so that as far as the records show every Chinaman has but one birthday, the first of January. The widest variance is observable in the selection of the day which should be considered the first of the year. Some nations have begun it in the spring, others in the autumn; some in mid-summer, most in midwinter; but whatever the day the usages and rejoicings which characterized it have not varied so greatly as might be supposed, but have remained for ages almost unchanged.

AN ODD ITALIAN CUSTOM.

A New Year's method employed by the Italian peasant girl to learn what Hyman has in store for her is to stand in the doorway of her home facing the road and kick off one of her slippers with sufficient force to send it backward over her head and back into the room. If the slipper falls on the sole, the toe pointing towards the door in which the girl stands, she takes it as an omen that before the new year dies she shall have walked out of her parental home and entered another house as its mistress and as a bride.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

The man who begins on January 1 to seek his own happiness is in a fair way to miss it altogether. Happiness is an elusive sprite. The more she is pursued the swifter she flies. There is doubtless for those who make pleasure their business a sort of gratification in their diversions, though it can scarcely be called happiness. Happiness is not the chief object of our existence. As Beecher once put it, "Man was not made to be everlastingly fiddled on by the fingers of joy." Character is the end of life. Happiness is incidental. Let a man look well to the ordering of life in its relation to other lives, seeking to make them happy, and he will find himself wearing the garland.—Rev. Frank G. Tyrrell.

LIVING UP TO IDEALS.

Dr. Ross, who, about thirty years ago, according to the story re-told in a Boston paper, was the head of a boys' school in a little Western town, used to assemble his pupils every Saturday morning and read

aloud to them such stirring tales of chivalry and such lofty poems or record of holy lives as would stir them to emulation.

One winter the doctor was obliged to be absent for a few weeks, and his wife, a quick-witted, rational woman, took charge of the school. "What did you read last week?" she asked, when Saturday came. "The story of Sir Philip Sidney," they answered.

"Anything more?" "The history of the Brothers of Pity, the society in Italy which spends its time and money in taking care of the poor and sick."

Mrs. Ross tried to discover how much of the subject the boys understood, but their ideas both of Sidney and of the merciful brotherhood were already very vague. She was silent a moment, and then said:

"Boys, I am going to institute a Philip Sidney Order. Every boy who joins it must give up swearing, lying and mean tricks. He must bear himself like a gentleman under all circumstances. We will have a president and other officers for the society, a badge, secret passwords and a room for meetings. The first violation of the rules, proved in full session, will be punished by rebuke; the second by suspension; the third by expulsion.

"We will have another order for the younger members of the school, called the Brothers of Pity. The boy who joins it must promise to be kind and gentle towards all living things, especially dumb animals. The same rules as those of the other order will govern it."

A month later Dr. Ross returned and took up his work again.

"What have you done to the boys?" he asked his wife. "They are softened and gentled beyond recognition. I tried to show them good examples."

"In studying a handicraft," said the shrewd woman, "you learn more by trying to do a thing yourself for a half hour than by hearing of how others did it for a month. It seemed to me this rule would apply to the soul as well as to the fingers and so I tried it."

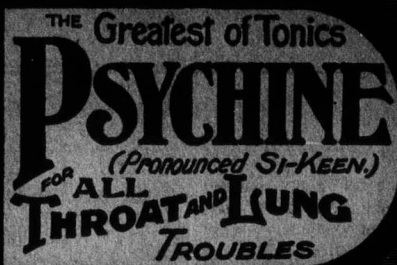
THE "NEW" MOTHER.

The dean of one of the largest of our colleges for women recently made an impassioned appeal to young mothers not to waste their time in the personal care of their babies, but to give them over to trained nurses and kindergartners, while they devoted themselves to study and such outside work as would fit them to be companions for their children when they were grown. Nothing can be more convincing than her reasoning, and there is but one objection to her plan,—that it doesn't work.

It is a most disheartening fact that none of her plans, however scientific and reasonable, which run counter to Nature ever does work. About twenty years ago, for instance, some philanthropic folks in England founded model homes for the female children of poor, depraved parents. The girls were reared, so to speak, in bulk. They dressed alike, ate the same food at the same moment, they walked, slept, rose, studied, played and prayed together at the tap of a bell. Especial care was taken, for fear of favoritism, that there should be no personal intercourse between them and their teachers out of school. The habits, knowledge and religion taught to them warranted to be of the best.

But when these girls, being grown, were sent into homes as nurses of children, they invariably were sent back as incompetent and cruel. The human element in them was withered and dead for want of the family life. The experimenters openly acknowledged that the training in unselfishness and in affection was better under even a careless mother and father than under no father and mother at all.

A few years ago Dr. Louis Starr, the eminent American specialist for children, discovered a new disease among them. The baby patients grew bloodless and weak and died



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with no apparent ailment. They were invariably the children of wealthy mothers who had refused to nurse them, but fed them on some food which science declared perfect. Science was again mistaken and Nature avenged the slight put upon her.

If the college graduate mothers follow the advice of their dean their children will lose something out of their lives which no nurse nor kindergarten can give.

Will the boy of fifteen when the devil tempts him be most likely to go for help to the brilliant companion who understands politics and civic reform, or to the little fond woman who always sang him to sleep on her breast and knelt beside him while she taught him to speak to God?

And if the college-graduate mother takes the dean's advice she will hurt him more than does the child. The fact is that her first business in the world is to be a mother. She may incidentally be an artist, a politician, or a sea-captain, if she will, but Nature made her in mind and body to be a mother. Even as a wife she is a subordinate; she fills the second place. But when she gives a child to the world and trains it, her work is nearer akin to that of God than any other done by man. If she prefers meander duties she will, by just so much, be little herself and her life.

Even the dean of a woman's college does not know so well what is good for her as God and her mother—Nature.—Post.

QUEEN A CHILD OF MARY.

Queen Victoria of Spain, recently attended a ceremony in the Chapel of the Convent of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in Madrid. Her majesty was received as a child of Mary and presented with the insignia—a gold medal bearing the royal crown in brilliant: The Bishop of Sion attended, and all the chief clergy of Madrid were present at the ceremony. Lunch followed, after which a play was performed by the children in a miniature theatre in the convent.

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THE POET'S CORNER

THE OLD YEAR.

Sadly tolls the midnight bell With a slow and rhythmic swell, As we drop a sorrowing tear For the drooping, dying Year.

It is drifting to that bourne Whence no travellers return, Bearing with it many a tear, Many a smile too,—poor old Year!

But a little time it seems Since we dreamed its bright young dreams,— Since, hope-freighted to the prow, We sailed forth with it,—and now?

Sadly tolls the last, long bell, "All is over—all is well!" And we drop a silent tear On the frost-bespangled pier.

LIFE SCULPTURE.

Chisel in hand a sculptor boy With his marble block before him, And his face lit up with joy, As the angel dream passed o'er him.

He carved that dream in the shapeless stone With many a sharp incision, With heaven's own light the sculptor stood— He had caught that angel vision.

Sculptors of life are we, as we stand With our uncarved souls before us, Waiting the hour when at God's command Our life dream passes o'er us. If we carve it then on the yielding stone With many a sharp incision, Its heavenly beauty shall be our own. Our lives that angel vision.

HAVE YOU FELT THAT WAY?

Haven't you often worn goggles of blue, And seeing Life's sham and its shame, Felt it was all a big scramble, and you Might as well get into the game? That nothing much mattered but a big bunch of cash, And the man who was good was a jay, And the whole blooming country was going to smash; Haven't you, haven't you felt that way?

Haven't you felt it was hardly worth while To try to live up to your best? And haven't you smiled a cynical smile— And something way down in your breast Whispered Life had a prize that was higher than gold

DEVOTES HER LIFE TO THE POOR.

The dowager Duchess of Newcastle is one of the greatest Roman Catholic ladies of England who are devoting their lives to the poor. The duchess was told that of all the London districts Whitechapel was in greatest disrepute owing to the exploits of Jack the Ripper. "Very well," she replied, "then I will go to Whitechapel." Since that time she has labored almost unceasingly among the poor in the east end, making her home for the most part of the year at St. Anthony's House in Great Prescott street, in the heart of Whitechapel.

LOVE IS NEVER LOST.

When two people are very dear friends be sure that one of them has always a greater love; so I believe. Thus it is with God and His poor creatures. But the greater love is ever teaching the less and making it increase, when it is true, until sometimes with men the less becomes the greater and goes on drawing the other to it again. No love is ever lost nor are its pains unfruitful where sin is not.

FUNNY SAYING.

HER DIAGNOSIS. He—I understand you have been attending an ambulance class. Can you tell me what is the best thing to do for a broken heart? She—Oh, yes. Bind up the broken portion with a gold band, bathe in orange blossom water, and apply plenty of raw rice. Guaranteed to be well in a month.—London Tid-Bits.

TIMELY HINTS.

If white goods have become stained with vaseline, dip the spots in kerosene before washing in water. Water in which rice has been boiled may be used for starching old lace, choice handkerchiefs, etc. It gives a soft and dainty stiffness which adds a charm to their appearance. When washing black or colored silk stockings do not use soap. Warm bran water should be used, and the stockings should be squeezed or run through the wringer and dried in the shade. In place of the usual hamper for the laundry a better device is three large bags of plain white duck, one

And sweeter than fame and display? And the faith that had slipped took a brand-new hold; Haven't you, haven't you felt that way?

And didn't a peace come near that was far And urge you to strive toward it still? And didn't you turn your face to a star, And didn't you say: "I will!" And weren't you stronger, and didn't you find The world was better, and didn't it pay

To be brave and patient and cheery and kind; Haven't you, haven't you felt that way! —Maurice Smiley, in Collier's Weekly.

REDEEMING THE TIME.

The time is short— If thou wouldst work for God it must be now; If thou wouldst win the garlands for thy brow; Redeem the time.

I sometimes feel the thread of life is slender, And soon with me the labor will be wrought; Then grows my heart to other hearts more tender: The time is short! —Horatius Bonar.

NO MORE.

Hung with grey clouds, the sky is drooping o'er me, And so I turn my weary eyes away, To read again the old delicious story, And breathe the fragrance of a vanished May. O sunny hours, long has your sunlight faded; Oh, roses red, your blossoming is o'er; I struggle up the thorny hill unaided, For, loving once, my heart can love no more!

Time with his touch once tender hearts will harden, But yours was fond and trusting as my own, When roamed we in that sunny, rose rich garden, And life and love seemed made for us alone.

First love was mine, and though your manhood's blessing Upon another's pathway now must shine, I do not envy her your calm carressing— The wild, sweet worship of your youth was mine!

Mrs. Jones had acquired the art of planting a sting. "How delighted I am to see you again, Mrs. Jones!" said an elderly acquaintance, meeting her when out shopping. "Why, it must be at least ten years since we met, and it's so nice to think that you remembered me after all this time. You knew me at once. I can't have changed so very much."

"Oh," said Mrs. Jones, with a sweet smile and an acid tone, "I recognized your bonnet."

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