

## Family Circle.

**"WANTED, A PRIVATE TUTOR."**

MY name is Mellow. I am not a young man. I used to think, a long while ago, that I had arrived at years of discretion; but recent events have led me to entertain some doubts upon that subject. I am a widower. Mrs. Mellow was undoubtedly my better half in every way; or, say three-quarters; I always felt that; and I am now more convinced of it than ever. When I lost her I thought I could not do better than receive her sister Miss Grittie, into my house, to take the management of my home and family. Miss Grittie thought so too. Indeed, now I consider about it, she settled the question herself by giving up her preparatory establishment for young gentlemen, and sending a van-load of personal property, including a pair of globes, a cat, and a vase of gold fish, to my house almost before I knew where I was, or, rather, where she was. Miss Grittie is an excellent woman; but singular in her opinions, and angular, all corners (speaking metaphorically, of course), and fond of having her own way, which I am bound to admit is a very straightforward one. I have reason to be grateful to her, on the whole, for the kind interest she takes in my affairs generally, and especially for her care of my three children—George, aged twelve; Tom, aged eleven; and the baby, as everybody calls him still, aged four.

I don't think Miss Grittie acted with her usual prudence and foresight in the matter which I am about to relate, and I am sure I did not; so I cannot find fault with her; and she agrees with me that a statement of the facts, if given to the public, may be the means of preserving some other heads of families situated as I was from such inconveniences as we suffered. The two elder boys above named had been for about two years at a boarding-school; a pretty good one I always thought it; but Miss Grittie was of a different opinion. She would have it that they were too young to profit by the system, or, rather, want of system, which prevails, according to her judgment, in all large schools. She had always held that every young gentleman ought to be thoroughly grounded in a preparatory school under feminine auspices before being admitted to a larger establishment; and she regarded it as grasping and unprincipled on the part of the directors and headmasters of our public schools that they did not insist on such a preparatory course, instead of "taking children of all ages just as they come." It had always been a grievance with Miss Grittie that this first and most important step in the education of her nephews—they are nice boys, and she is very fond of them—had been passed over. Whenever they came home for their holidays, she made it her business to examine them; and each time the report she gave of their "progress backwards" was most unsatisfactory—to me, at all events. "But what can you expect?" she would say. "The poor boys have never been properly grounded; they have been set to run before they knew how to walk; they must begin again, and be grounded; they will never do any good till they are grounded."

The two boys returned home last Christmas for their holidays as usual, and the very next day Miss Grittie began with me, after dinner, upon her usual theme.

"Really, my dear John," she said—I always anticipate something unpleasant when she calls me "John," instead of Mr. Mellow; and "My dear John" is even more portentous—really, my dear John," she said, "it is time something was done about those poor dear boys. I have been examining them this morning, and find they know nothing—absolutely nothing."

"Examining them already?" I exclaimed. "Why, the poor lads only came home yesterday. I would have given them a few days' holiday first, I think."

"They know nothing," she continued, without heeding my remonstrance. "I did not expect a great deal, but I confess I was astonished. Their progress backwards is more marked than I could have supposed possible after the pains I took with them last holidays. They have forgotten all I taught them, and learnt nothing at school. Now don't be impatient. I'll just give you an example or two, and then you will be satisfied. I was questioning Tom in the rudiments of history—only the rudiments. I asked him what he knew about King Richard III. All he could say was that he was a hunchback, and very fond of horses; he had seen a picture of him offering to 'swap' his kingdom (such an expression!) with anybody for a horse. When I urged him for some further particulars of his history, he added, with a great deal of hesitation and shyness, that he was killed by a fish-bone sticking in his throat, and brought back to life again by a barber who extracted it; 'pulled it out,' he said."

"Very good," I exclaimed, laughing. "I suppose he thought one hunchback was as good as another."

"My dear John," said Miss Grittie, sternly, "it's not a laughing matter. I wish you could see things as I do. And George is not a bit better. He went so far as to deny that Richard III. was a hunchback at all; it was a vulgar error, he said, to suppose so. On the contrary, he was rather a good-looking man, of a kind and forgiving disposition, and had made some excellent laws for the country. He displayed total ignorance about the history of Rome; he absolutely denied that Romulus and Remus were suckled by a wolf! 'Vulgar errors,' indeed! Truths which I have been inculcating for years past, until I gave up my preparatory establishment for young

gentlemen to come and take charge of your house. How you can smile at such a state of things I can't conceive. The boys require grounding, and it is quite time some measures were adopted for their education, which, as I have often told you, has yet to be begun."

"We must see about it," I replied. "That's what you always say; and then nothing is done."

"What do you propose, then?" I asked. "Keep the boys at home a year or two, and have them thoroughly grounded."

"I could not remove them from school without a quarter's notice, you know."

"There need be no difficulty about that. I wrote to Mrs. Mill three months ago, and told her I should most likely have the boys at home to ground after Christmas, and begged her to mention it to Mr. Mill in the way of notice."

"You did?" I exclaimed, very much annoyed, as I dare say she could see.

"Why, yes; the fact is, that when I gave up my own establishment to come here it was with a view to being of service to my poor sister's children. I do not think I could have been induced to sacrifice my own professional engagements and—usefulness, by any other motive. They have always wanted grounding, those dear children; it was not fair to send them to a large school without previous grounding; and I should have had a better opinion of that Mr. Mill if he had told you so when you first applied to him."

I could not help wishing that Miss Grittie would not say quite so much about the sacrifices she had made on my account. I could see, however, that she would give me no peace until she had her own way about the boys; and perhaps, after all, I thought, it might be as well for them, as they are still so young.

"Who is to teach them at home?" I asked, after a pause.

"Why not have a governess?"

"A governess! No, that won't do; neither for them nor for me!"

"Well, perhaps not," said Miss Grittie, reflectively. "A tutor, then."

"You could not get a tutor out here, we are too far from town; unless you mean him to live in the house."

"Yes, of course, a resident tutor; some young man of good abilities, who has been at the university, and who would teach them under my direction, as Mr. Meek, the curate, used to do in my establishment."

"I could not agree to that. I am a business man, and my boys will go into business. I don't want them to learn nothing but Latin and Greek."

"Well, then," said Miss Grittie, "let them have a foreigner. Modern languages will be useful in business. Some of those foreigners are very clever, and can teach almost anything. The dear boys will pick up continental languages almost without knowing it, and I will take charge of the English myself. I have, as you know, instructed boys of fifteen or sixteen years of age, and with the help of a tutor could conduct my nephews' education to a finish."

I had often seen and pitied Miss Grittie's senior pupils taking a walk hand-in-hand, with comforters round their necks, and a string of little children following them; reedy, pale-faced youths they were, of weak health apparently, and not very strong minds; that would account for their having uniformly failed to justify Miss Grittie's expectations when they left her fostering care for the rougher climate of a public school. I consented, however, for the sake of peace, to put an advertisement in the "Times" for a tutor, hoping that there would be no reply to it, or none that would be worth noticing. I drew one up as follows:

"Tutor wanted to teach two boys. A German preferred. Fair stipend, with board and lodging. Apply, etc., etc."

Miss Grittie made a fair copy of it in the following terms:

A private tutor is required to instruct two young gentlemen in continental languages and other branches. A foreigner, with some knowledge of English, would be preferred. An adequate stipend is offered, with board and residence. Address, etc., etc."

On the evening of that same day which "gave our advertisement to the world through the medium of the 'Times,'" as Miss Grittie expressed it, the postman, after knocking at the door, "rang also," having more letters to deliver than he could by any means thrust into the letter-box. Some of them were very large, containing pamphlets or books; others were stuffed with testimonials, *cartes-de-visite*, etc., which it was requested might be returned as quickly as possible, the applicants hoping, I suppose, by that means to secure an answer of some sort or other to their letters. I saw at once that there was an evening's work before me, and my sister-in-law began at once to open the letters and to "peruse" them with much apparent gusto; but my heart failed me as I thought of what to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow would bring forth; these twenty-three letters spread out upon the sideboard were probably but as the first drops of a thunder-shower; and I foresaw that there was a bad time coming, and that my Christmas holiday was likely to be spoilt.

"Be very careful," I said to Miss Grittie, "not to get the letters mixed together; keep all the testimonials separate, and in their proper envelopes."

"Of course," she replied; and when, after a short absence from the room, I returned, I found that she had literally followed my directions, which, alas! she had not been sufficiently precise for the occasion. The testimonials in their envelopes were laid in one row, the letters and pamphlets in a second, and the *cartes-de-visite* in a third. How these last were ever to be identified and returned to their originals was

to me a puzzle; but Miss Grittie maintained that she knew where they belonged, and I could only leave it to her to manage. Meantime we set to work upon the letters.

The first taken in hand was from a native of Ireland, probably a Home Ruler; he "considered himself a foreigner," he said; "and perceiving from our advertisement that some knowledge of English was required, he begged, etc." We sorted his testimonials at once. The second was from a Frenchman. He "had spent some time lately in Germany, and could speak the language, he could also teach drilling." Peace had lately been signed at Paris, and the writer of this letter had no doubt spent his time in Germany under a painful necessity, and not in intellectual pursuits. The third gave no direct information on the question of nationality, and was mysteriously signed E. G. Taking his letter as a specimen of his qualifications, as the initials seemed to suggest, we could only conclude that he knew very little of English, though that was evidently his vernacular. He was partial to the letter "e," and wrote "tewter," and "pewpels," etc.

To make a long story short, there were only three applications that called for any serious consideration; and in reply to the likeliest of these I wrote a letter the same evening, addressing it to Dr. Krauss, care of N. Bibb, Esq., Mile End Road. Dr. Krauss's testimonials were looked over several times, and appeared to be very satisfactory; they were rather old, to be sure, and smelt strongly of tobacco; but all foreigners smoke; and six out of the seven were all foreigners smoke; and we could not quite make them out in German, and we could not quite make them out; but they appeared to be signed by certain professors and doctors of the University of Giessen, which was satisfactory so far; and such a thorough foreigner, Miss Grittie said, must teach the dear boys continental languages; they would become complete polyglots. Then, again, reference was permitted to N. Bibb, Esq., if we should think it worth while to trouble him; and Dr. Krauss's photograph (Miss Grittie said it was his) was decidedly prepossessing. A man of about thirty years of age he seemed to be, with a fine broad forehead and a handsome bushy beard. We placed it on the chimney-piece, and forgot to remove it next day when Dr. Krauss himself entered the room at the appointed hour.

We did not know that it was the doctor, however, until he announced himself a second time, for he was not at all like the portrait. He had no beard, and not much forehead; his cheeks also were quite smooth, and even the eyebrows were imperfectly developed; his hair was long, limp and yellow, and in that respect matched his complexion; he appeared to be about eighteen years of age, but assured us that he was much older; and his spectacles, which he never removed, gave him a certain appearance of earnestness, if not of wisdom; he was a Doctor of Philosophy, he told us; his dialect was pure, the "hochest Deutsch;" he knew French "a great," and could speak it like a foreigner, "but did not 'price it very.' English he had studied 'a tall while;' he knew also "Hebrew, Greek, Latin, military tactics—what not?" He could teach them all, and would come "for a week or a moon to prove how we liked."

Miss Grittie asked him a great many questions, which he answered with extreme politeness, and as he was accommodating as to times and terms, it was agreed that he should come on trial at all events, and enter upon his duties at once.

"You must be particular to ground your pupils thoroughly," Miss Grittie said, when all this was settled.

"So!" he answered, looking a little perplexed. "I shall grind them? How?"

My sister-in-law explained.

"You are not at all like your portrait," she remarked in the next place.

"You not like it? Not like my portrait? I am sorry," he answered, drawing himself up.

"I mean that there is not much resemblance," she said, showing him the photograph.

"But, madam, how you mean? That is not of mine;" and taking out his pocket-book, he produced a fac-simile of himself, spectacles and all. It was evident that we had sent his carte to the wrong person, who would, no doubt, be disgusted at receiving it in exchange for his own grave and bearded physiognomy.

I need not speak at length of the troubles, vexations and expense to which we were subjected for many days and weeks as a result of our advertisement. Testimonials as well as photographs had been mislaid, and I was threatened with legal proceedings and received many unpleasant visits in consequence. Wild-looking men from all parts of Europe forced their way into my study and insisted on being provided with a situation "or an equivalent." One of them, a Pole, had a sword-stick, and wanted to fight me in the back garden; another sent me a copy of a paragraph which he threatened to insert in the daily papers, warning every one to avoid me as an impostor. I was obliged to fee the policemen to keep an eye upon my premises and to protect me from annoyance.

In the meantime Dr. Krauss arrived and entered upon his duties. He seemed to be an amiable but not very strong-minded young man. He had learnt his English without a master, and afforded us some amusement by his misconceptions and misconstruction of our language, but we were obliged to be very careful, as he was sensitive and touchy, and always ready to fancy that we were laughing at him. Miss Grittie had said a great deal to the two boys about politeness, warning them never to indulge in ridicule, etc., which I am sure was quite unnecessary, as their own good feeling would have taught them that; but their aunt never failed to look at them and frown whenever anything absurd was said, and that was almost sufficient to upset their gravity. The following may serve as a specimen of