

For the Children's Sake.

Mr. and Mrs. Pettis loved their children. That was only natural. But it was against their principles to show any affection. Yet they toiled and saved, and dollar by dollar the pile in the bank grew. Luxuries were unthought of, and only the most urgent necessities were afforded. Of course, it was all for the children that everything was sacrificed. Mr. and Mrs. Pettis were provident people, and they thought fondly of the future farms those dollars would buy for their children. What if the house did look shabby, the walls dingy, the lawn unkept and the windows gloomy? The comforts would come in the future years, when the brown, toll-hardened hands of father and mother had been folded upon still hearts.

But the children did not know of the love in those hearts. As soon as they became old enough to be of use on the farm they were taken out of school. Money meant more than education. When they wished to mingle with the neighboring young people in social affairs, they were told that late hours and hard work did not agree. Then, too, they were not dressed so well as most of the young people, and did not feel at ease with them. Neither was their home attractive enough to invite friends to it. Yet Mr. Pettis had a larger bank account and bigger granaries and store-houses than did any of his neighbors. But what was their dismay when the eldest son disappeared from home, leaving only a scrawled, misspelled note telling his parents that he was tired of all drudgery and no pleasure, and could stand it no longer. In a few years a daughter left to find work in the city, and then another son followed. Only the two youngest were left, and they, daily, were showing open rebellion and expressing a desire to follow their brothers and sister into the untried world.

A friend of her youth came at this time to spend a day with Mrs. Pettis. Her eastern friend had advanced far beyond Mrs. Pettis in her views of life, and when Mrs. Pettis bewailed to her the fact that children were thankless creatures, and that the youngest boy and girl were as anxious to get away from the farm as the older children had been, Mrs. White did not try to varnish over self-evident facts, but said, very simply:

"And why shouldn't they wish to leave, Eva? What have they here to enjoy?"

"Why, Maggie, here Will and I have slaved our lives away for the sake of the children, and were getting richer every year. There's nobody for miles around thinks more of their family or has worked harder for them than we have for ours. But it's little they appreciate it. Of course, we care more for our children than we do for anything else, and if we could only keep our last two with us we'd do anything to make them feel satisfied."

"Really? Anything, Eva?"

"Yes, for they're really all we have left now, but I know they won't stay under any consideration, and if we don't say they can go they'll run away. That's the way the rest of the children did."

"Eva, I am going to talk very plainly to you, because I am sure you want help, and I believe you have grown blind to some things during the last few years. You have been so anxious to save the dollars for your children that you have deprived them of all the pleasures which young people should enjoy. Let me tell you of some things which I have noticed. Your house is the most neglected one for several miles around. It is sadly in need of a coat of paint and a few repairs. Instead of the beautiful lawn and flowers which you might have, you are raising a flourishing crop of potatoes in your front yard. Your shades are dark and give the room a gloomy appearance, and you have no white curtains at any of the windows, except the parlor, and they are so very coarse and cheap."

"Good land, Maggie, do you suppose for a minute that I've got time to do up white curtains for every room in this big house?"

"Then you serve your meals in the kitchen, with only a dark oilcloth on the table and the coarsest of chinaware. I know that you have dainty white linen and delicate china, but you consider that too fine for your own family. Your house is dark and gloomy. The best is used only when company comes. Fred and Alice like to read, yet I have not seen a new book in the house, and you do not subscribe for any periodical. The only reading matter I have seen in your home is the local paper. If you love Alice and Fred more than you do your big bank account, draw some of your savings, and make home such a pleasant place for them that there will be no desire for another life. Brighten up your home, and use the best things for every day. Your children are far dearer than any passing company that may drop in for a few moments. Make them feel that they are."

"But the money, Maggie! It will take such an awful lot, and we've got along all our lives like this. It would seem wicked to break into what we've denied ourselves for for years and just spend it recklessly. I've counted the pennies ever since we were married."

"Very well. If the pennies are dearer to you than the comfort of your boy and girl, keep on laying them up, and let your children go out into the world, home and love hungry, in search of better times."

"No, no, Maggie, they must stay. I'll do anything to keep them."

Two years later, Mrs. White again stopped at the Pettis home for a short visit. She was met at the station by Alice in a pretty little phaeton, drawn by her own pet pony. But Mrs. White could scarcely be-

lieve it was the Alice she had known two years ago. The habitual expression of discontent was gone, leaving the face almost pretty. Her curls were tied with a broad white ribbon, and a dainty gown of dimity took the place of the dark frock. She talked freely and easily, giving the guest a very entertaining drive. The home had indeed been changed. It was an attractive place to look upon, and when Mrs. Pettis, with an air of pride, showed her friend through the home, Mrs. White gave one glad cry of surprise after another. The merry sunshine brightened up dark corners, white curtains gave a homelike appearance, cushions, couches and easy chairs were placed about invitingly, new books filled the case, and periodicals were freely distributed through the rooms. The house was thrown open, and everything was in use.

"It takes more thoughtfulness than actual money," said Mrs. Pettis.

"Do the children ever speak of leaving home now?" asked Mrs. White.

"Well, I should say not. Their so proud of their new home and so happy in it that if they go away for even one night, they're anxious to get back. Alice has her piano, now, that she's always wanted, and she's taking music lessons, and Fred's been studying and reading out of his new books. He's going to college to learn more about farming, and then father'll finally leave the place in his hands. Fred says now that he'd never be contented with any other work. I've got a girl to help me the year around, and husband keeps an extra hand, too, so we and the children have considerable time to ourselves. We're a happy family now. It hurt a little at first to begin to break into our savings, but we wouldn't go back to the old way of living for anything. I only wish, Maggie, that you'd told me years ago, when the older children were so anxious to get away what the trouble was with our home."

A Word of Cheer.

There are weary feet
That we often meet,
In paths we frequent here,
Whose steps would lighten
Would we but brighten
Their way with a word of cheer.

There are loads of care
That full many bear
As they wend their toilsome way;
But forms would strengthen
And lives would lengthen
If a kindly word we'd say.

There are woes untold
Which the heart may hold,
And bear with a secret grief;
But, oh, how often
Might trials soften
By sympathy's sweet relief!

If a sunny smile
Would beam the while
That the frowns of life must chill,
How much of sadness
Might yield to gladness
As the soul of love would thrill!

Do not count it lost,
'Tis of little cost
When some heart may yearn to hear,
That precious token
Of kindness spoken
That comes with the word of cheer.

The House of Too Much Trouble.

In the House of Too Much Trouble
Lived a lonely little boy;
He was eager for a playmate,
He was hungry for a toy.
But 'twas always too much bother;
Too much dirt, and too much noise,
For the House of Too Much Trouble
Wasn't meant for little boys.

And sometimes the little fellow
Left a book upon the floor,
Or forgot and laughed too loudly,
Or he failed to close the door.
In a House of Too Much Trouble
Things must be precise and trim—
In a House of Too Much Trouble
There was little room for him.

He must never scatter playthings,
He must never romp and play;
Ev'ry room must be in order
And kept quiet all the day.
He had never had companions,
He had never owned a pet—
In the House of Too Much Trouble
It is trim and quiet yet.

Ev'ry room is set in order—
Ev'ry book is in its place,
And the lonely little fellow
Wears a smile upon his face.
In the House of Too Much Trouble
He is silent and at rest—
In the House of Too Much Trouble,
With a lily on his breast.

—Albert Bigelow Paine.

The Spoiler.

(After the manner of Rudyard Kipling.)

A woman there was and she wrote for the press
(As you or I might do),
She told how to cut and fit a dress,
And how to stew many a savory mess,
But she never had done it herself, I guess
(Which none of her readers knew).

Oh, the hour we spent, and the flour we spent,
And the sugar we wasted like sand,
At the best of a woman who never had cooked
(And now we know that she never could cook),
And did not understand.

A woman there was and she wrote right fair
(As you or I might do),
How out of a barrel to make a chair,
To be covered with chintz and stuffed with hair,
'Twould adorn any parlor and give it an air!
(And we thought the tale was true).

Oh, the days we worked and the ways we worked
To hammer and saw the hack,
In making a chair in which no one would sit,
A chair in which no one could possibly sit
Without a creak in his back.

A woman there was and she had her fun
(Better than you and I);
She wrote out recipes, and she never tried one,
She wrote about children—of course she had none—
She told us to do what she never had done
(And never intended to try).

And it isn't to toll and it isn't to spoil
That brims the cup of disgrace—
It's to follow a woman who didn't know beans
(A woman who never had cooked any beans),
But wrote and was paid to fill space.

—The Congregationalist.

His Mother Made Him.

A wealthy business man, not long ago, made a short visit to his native town, a thriving little place, and while there, was asked to address a Sunday school on the general subject of success in life.

"But I don't know that I have anything to say, except that industry and honesty win the race," he answered.

"Your very example would be inspiring, if you would tell the story of your life," said the superintendent. "Are you not a self-made man?"

"I don't know about that."

"Why, I've heard all about your early struggles. You went into Mr. Wheelwright's office when you were only ten—"

"So I did! So I did! But my mother got me the place, and while I was there she did all my washing and mending, saw that I had something to eat, and when I got discouraged told me to cheer up and remember that tears were for babies."

"While there you studied by yourself—"

"Oh no, bless you, no! Not by myself! Mother heard my lessons every night, and made me spell long words while she beat up her cakes for breakfast. I remember one night I got so discouraged I dashed my writing book, ugly with pot-hooks and trammels, into the fire, and she burnt her hands in pulling it out."

"Well, it was certainly true, wasn't it, that as soon as you saved a little money, you invested in fruit, and began to peddle it out on the evening train?"

The rich man's eyes twinkled and then grew moist over the fun and pathos of some old recollection.

"Yes," he said, "and I should like to tell you a story connected with that time. Perhaps that might do the Sunday school good. The second lot of apples I bought for peddling were speckled and wormy. I had been cheated by the man of whom I bought them, and I could not afford the loss. The night after I discovered they were unfit to eat, I crept down and filled my basket as usual."

"They look very well on the outside," I thought, "and perhaps none of the people who buy them will ever come this way again. I'll sell them, and just as soon as they are gone I'll get some sound ones."

"Mother was singing about the kitchen as I came up the cellar stairs. I hoped to get out of the house without discussing the subject of unsound fruit, but in the twinkling of an eye she was upon me."

"Ned," said she, in her clear voice, "what are you going to do with those speckled apples?"

"Se—sell them," stammered I, ashamed in advance.

"Then you'll be a cheat, and I will be ashamed to call you my son," she said, promptly. "Oh, to think you could dream of such a sneaking thing as that! Then she cried, and I cried, and I've never been tempted to cheat since. No, sir, I haven't anything to say in public about my early struggles, but I wish you'd remind your boys and girls every Sunday that their mothers are doing far more for them than they do for themselves. Tell them, too, to pray that those dear women may live long enough to enjoy some of the prosperity they have won for their children—for mine didn't."—[Youth's Companion.