

Woman and the Home

A Matter of Creed

Jean McQueen

(Written from life).

I had been carefully taught and well brought up in a good Catholic home, and never once had imagined myself anything but a Roman Catholic. I graduated from high school and training school with numerous flirtations and love spasms with both Protestants and Catholics, but no harm or lasting impressions resulted. Then after a brief term in country schools there came an especially good appointment in a large and thriving lakeside town. I was delighted, because of the advance in position and the pleasant time in store for me.

Fate led to the home of a good Methodist lady, who always had one or more teachers with her. Everything went well in this household of three boys and myself for at least two years, when almost unconsciously one of the sons, from meeting me so often, and accompanying me home as a matter of course, began to take more than a passing interest in me. His mother, ever watchful, discovered it long before I did, and while her kindness doubled her watchfulness increased tenfold.

By every conceivable plan she seemed to thwart our every effort to be together, though for some time I was unsuspecting. One evening, returning alone, I saw a light disappear from my room as I reached the front steps. I became suspicious, and to assure myself on arriving in my room I searched my school coat for a note of his, which I had folded away in my pocket. It was still there, but crumpled where it had been hastily thrust on my footsteps being heard.

It dawned on me then that I was in love with Jack, and no amount of interfering or intriguing on his mother's part would separate us was my inward resolve. But at that time I thought only of my love for him and not where it might end.

I left the house shortly, but it did not improve matters. Mrs. Hunt, her sons and even her married daughters were determined that we should be nothing to each other. At every attempt of meeting we were frustrated until typhoid fever confined him to the house for weeks, which lengthened into months. In all that time I heard nothing from him, except from a good old family doctor, who knew our case and occasionally carried a note to him from me. Before he was able to be around again I had had ample time to review the past and frame something of what the future might be if I married him. Almost cruelly it struck me that in marrying him I sacrificed my birthright. Both of us, determined to live in a different creed! Then came the thought of children—part of our belief—what I could hope to make them? What right had I to make them anything? Now I began to see the full significance of our union when my doubts were not quieted by his assurance of our fitness for each other regardless of religion. Though in spite of the unimportant part he claimed for religion, I could plainly see he had no intention of changing his. The more I thought of it the more convinced I became that we must separate. I was vindictive enough to wish his mother could know that for no other reason than religion could she ever hope to separate us.

Firmly set in my resolutions I went home for my holidays, and wrote him I had decided to go West to teach, consequently would not be able to see him again. I told him of my fears, telling him I was going to try and forget, and for him to do likewise. He was passionate in his appeals for me not to go, even coming to my home to plead, but in face of all I would leave.

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"Jessie, I can't do it!"

The girl at the mirror turned deliberately, still engaged with her hair dressing and faced the new comer.

"Why, may I ask, this emphatic reiteration? You know, you have said that before on more than one occasion."

"Well, just look here!"

Jessie ceased her operations long enough to glance at a box her friend had apparently just received.

"Here is a birthday gift from Jack at this late date, in spite of all I've said and written"—adding tenderly, "He is so thoughtful."

"Yes, he is I'm sure," replied Jessie in a sarcastic tone. "He has made up his mind to ignore your actions just as he has your letters." "I'd send it back flying."

"Oh! no, he meant well, and it would be useless to him."

"Very well, but remember it is only a sign of weakness on your part." What is the use of going West instead of home when you are bent on showing him in every other way you still care.

"Well, I've finished, so I guess I'll go. Now brace up and face the matter square in the face."

The door banged and a sound of retreating footsteps told me I was alone. I sat still gazing at the token of his regard, and wondering what would be best even though my heart dictated one course clearly.

This is the situation which a year of absence had placed me in.

Throughout it had been one long letter of homesickness and yearning for him, while he hoped during my vacation to convince me to stay in the East. But lately a new factor entered the case in the form of a member of my own Church in every way as desirable as my former lover, and who already showed his preference for me. To free myself of both I accepted a long standing invitation from a friend further West, to spend the summer with her, hoping that time and new faces would settle everything for me.

It was a glorious summer with its long motor rides, its driving and its sea bathing, but all too soon over. Lately my lover was trying a new scheme in coming to visit me on my return to my school. While I wondered what the outcome would be I was glad, for I knew that once seeing him again I could decide, but resolved also to be true to my mother's faithful teachings.

September came, and found me at work awaiting the arrival of my one-time devoted loved one (!) Now I could see that that love had been greatly fostered by the strenuous opposition it had met, and it was merely looking forward to the meeting of a good friend. Fortunately I had not realized how hard it might be. Despite all I could say to the contrary he insisted our love remained the same, and he would be anything in religion for me if I would marry him. I had known of such promises before, and told him it simply meant his being nothing, as he could not turn his religious views so easily. As for me I was over my infatuation, for so it seemed now, and were he even a Catholic I did not care for him.

After a visit of four days or so spent in pleading and promising he left me. Nor was I sorry. The longer he stayed the less I cared for him. He passed completely out of my life, except as a memory when we parted at the train as he left for home having lost, he claimed, his taste for life.

I cannot blame myself, but am thankful I passed through the one great trial of my life guided so carefully. I am happy, very happy, in my married home, for I married my Catholic friend, and whatever there has been of disagreements, disappointments or even poverty, we have had one close tie in that we are of A COMMON FAITH.

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My Piano

One day while standing near my piano, a girl friend said to me, "Why don't you sell this piano, and buy a new one?"

To this I answered, "Why should I?" "Well, in the first place," she exclaimed, "you have had this one over ten years, and since that accident not long ago it looks rather used up."

(I must explain to the reader that shortly before this conversation took place my piano had the misfortune to catch fire, very little damage was done except to the veneering and some of the carving, though it still holds a ruined look.)

"It may look used up as you say, but that has nothing to do with the tone, which is as sweet and clear as the day I bought it, and I wouldn't think of disposing of it for the simple reason of its outward appearance. No more than—I would think of disowning a kind and loving mother, whose care and sorrow in this world had left its trace in lines across her forehead, and down her withered cheek. For is not the soul as pure as if it were hidden by beautiful features; the outward appearance does not worry me if I find that the soul and heart are pure and true, no more than the appearance of my piano, when I know that its tone is sweet and clear."

"You have taught me a lesson," answered my friend, "henceforth I shall look beyond the handsome face, and see if the soul is there with all its beauty."

A Product of Endurance

Dr. Keate, the terrible headmaster of Eaton, encountered one winter morning a small boy crying miserably, and asked him what was the matter. The child replied that he was cold. "Cold!" roared Keate, "You must put up with the cold, sir! You are not at a girls' school."

It is a horrid anecdote, and I am kind-hearted enough to wish that Dr. Keate, who was not without his genial moods, had taken the lad to some generous fire (presuming such a thing was to be found) and had warmed his frozen hands and feet. But it so chanced that in that little snivelling boy there lurked a spark of pride and a spark of fun, and both ignited at the rough touch of the master. He probably stopped crying, and he certainly remembered the sharp appeal to manhood; for, fifteen years later, with the 3rd Dragoons, he charged at the strongly entrenched Sikhs (thirty thousand of the best fighting men of the Khalsa) on the curving banks of the Sutlej. And as the word was given, he turned to his superior officer, a fellow Eatonian, who was scanning the stout walls and the belching guns. "As old Keate would say, this is no girls' school," he chuckled, and rode to his death on the battlefield of Sobraon, which gave Lahore to England.—Agnes Repplier, in "The Atlantic."

About Manners

By Margaret Blaine

The child made her adieux and pretty speeches with a glibness that was truly startling. The lovely lady who had been entertaining the little ones looked her astonishment and almost forgot to respond in kind. Yet there was something displeasing in it all, though her deportment was so absolutely correct. We all liked freckled-faced Jimmy's "manners" much better. He bolted up to the hostess and mumbled "Had a nice time." We all knew that his mother had impressively charged him not to forget that, and he was doing it in obedience to her commands, and not at all because he wanted to. Indeed he evidently thought it an inexplicable bit of nonsense.

"Now," said the reflective one, "why did we object to the little girl's pretty manners, and adore Jimmy's awkwardness?"

"The little girl had an artificial air," said the lovely hostess, "and anything artificial about a child is very disagreeable. While Jimmy was—well—natural, you know. Grown-up 'manners' do not fit a child. We always instinctively object to them there, while we forgive anything in the child that is sweet and

natural. I once had a very tiny guest say, 'I like to play with your dollies, and I'll come again, but your cake doesn't have as many raisins as mother's.' I was delighted, and seriously promised to amend the cake before the next visit."

There is undoubtedly something essentially artificial about established conventions. They are gradually adopted as their need is found to make smooth the running gear of social life, but the need for these does not come in child life. The sweetest children are those kept far from the atmosphere of artificial life. Courteous speech and manner—the kind that come from a gentle heart—come naturally to the child surrounded with good influences. "Please" and "Thank you" and other gentle expressions fall from baby lips, if the baby bears them from father and mother. Quiet unobtrusive table manners are better than a knowledge of forks and spoons. Consideration for others in the home can be made a matter of love instead of politeness. And the child who is really considerate in the home will not fail outside.

Yet there are mothers who will give the child a party, and then carefully drill the little one in all the requirements of a grown-up hostess. This makes the promised pleasure a laborious affair to the child, but the mother thinks she is doing her duty in training the child to social usages.

Think for a moment of the most charming people you know. Are they not the considerate, rather than the conventional people? And which would you rather have your child resemble?

A Foolish Way

Of course, that may be so. But it is a very foolish way, all the same.

For no one can be really happy unless they gain a certain amount of love as they go through life. Nobody can afford to be friendless. Everybody wants friendship, affection and confidence.

But the critical cynical type of woman is only admired at a distance. She never knows the sweets of friendship, its trust and confidence and faith.

People know too well her way of holding others up to derision and of seeing their weak points to run any risks by letting her into their hearts. They have heard her sum up other characters, and feel sure their turn will come as soon as they are out of hearing. When such a woman makes friendly overtures we shrink from her a little. We may like her, but we have no wish to be "butchered to make a Roman holiday" directly our backs are turned.

Rightly or wrongly, most of us get judged by our words and manners rather than by our thoughts and actions, and particularly are we judged by our manner of speaking.

Amusing But Dangerous

Of course, a kind heart and a fine character may be disguised under a cloak of sarcasm and criticism, but few will discover them in such a case.

"Every word has its own spirit,

True or false that never dies;

Every word man's lips have uttered

Echoes in God's skies."

So, if we have got into the habit of "picking holes," and criticising other folks, do let us beware. We may amuse with our ill-natured witty talk, but the chances are that by indulging in it we are slowly, yet surely, unfastening the cords of our friendships.

Depend upon it, if we talk unkindly about our neighbours, they will not care to have much to do with us.

"Very amusing, but awfully dangerous, you know. I always wonder what she says about me when I am out of hearing."

That is probably the verdict on us. And the result, as we have seen, is the lack of friendship, which is one of the treasures of earth.

Just choke back that ill-natured remark, refrain from laughter that would have no kindly ring, keep silent when you have no kind words to speak—these little actions bring very "solid returns," as business people say.

First, they bring trust, and then love. Most of us want to be popular, and there is no royal road to popularity unless it be by the way of kindness.