

Happy Home Life.

THE FIRST NECESSITY.

They met in the village grocery store and as usual began to exchange opinions on all topics great and small. "I'll tell you what this country needs," said the first speaker. "It needs free trade within the Empire." "No!" said a second. "It needs better farmers." Said a third speaker: "It is better schools we need," and a fourth said that "we need cleaner politics."

Yet they all missed the great thing. And it is for that greater thing the Western Home Monthly would plead. A country's greatness depends ultimately upon the character of its people, and the character of a people is determined in the first place, not by trade relations nor by schools nor by churches, but by the quality of the home life.

One by one the great nations of the world may come before us to give their testimony and one by one they will agree in this, that when home life was pure and honorable the nation was great and prosperous, but that when infidelity and disobedience and discord reigned in the family circle, national disintegration began. When was Rome great? Not in the time of the Caesars, when every man mistrusted his wife and every wife had reason to mistrust her husband, but in the time when social purity was the chief characteristic of Roman life—the time when the Gracchi lived, and when Cornelia led forth her two sons in the hour of her country's need, saying: "These are my jewels." Is there in all literature a finer picture than that of the old Scottish home given to us in the Cotter's Saturday Night? Truly, Burns knew that Scotland's wealth was not in her fields and her industries, but in the sweetness and devotion shown in the home life.

And if we as Canadians go back in our history a few years and begin to ask why it is that so many of the sons and daughters of the Dominion have grown up strong, stalwart and efficient, why so many of them have become distinguished at home and abroad, we can find and answer in the home life of the early days.

THE HOMES OF OUR CHILDHOOD.

The home life of those days was not like that of to-day, and though its spirit may and should be retained amongst us, the activities that bound the members together can never be repeated. For in those early days the home was the centre of all industries. The great factory did not exist. There was scarcely an article of food or clothing, and scarcely a toy or weapon that was not made in the home.

Beef, pork and mutton—who cannot remember the smoked beef, the pickled pork, and the mutton all prepared for the time of the fall threshing? Wheat, oats, peas, beans, barley, corn and rye—everyone was used in some form for diet, and as for roots and vegetables, why, there was nothing worth growing that did not find a place in the farm garden. Small fruits of every kind were grown, and apples, pears and peaches were found in most gardens. Yes, and the goodwife had time to make her butter and cheese, to dry the apples and the pumpkins, to lay by preserves of a dozen varieties, and then when the evening came she had time for knitting and spinning and sewing, while her daughter who had been to boarding-school used her spare time in making farmer's wreaths, and hair wreaths, spatter work decorations, and Berlin wool mottoes, or perhaps she even had the temerity to hang up a few pictures drawn in charcoal or with lead pencil. And the children played games, using toys of their own making—dolls made from pillows or with potato heads, and tops made from ends of spools. And as for Sundays—it was a time for reading, or perhaps the neighbors dropped in for a song, and the old Vocalist was produced and the time-honored melodies sung with a vigor and power that would make modern trills and trillers seem tame by comparison.

But it is not necessary to recall it all. That old life was supremely simple, yet altogether beautiful. Father, mother and children were drawn together in the many activities of work and play. There was a real communion born of interdependence. Then were implanted the seeds of loyalty and self-sacrifice, and these two virtues have never been developed nor can be developed any other time nor in any other way.

THE HOME LIFE OF TO-DAY.

This old life has gone and given way to another. No longer is manufacture carried on in the rural

home, no longer are the things for wear and use made by the parents and children. The factory and the departmental store have ushered in a new order of things. Under this new order of things it is not easy for old relations to be maintained, it is not easy for those cardinal virtues which are necessary to all social, civic, and institutional advancement to be cultivated. Yet, if our country is to retain an envied place among the nations of history, we must see to it that the old home virtues are exalted. It is our one hope, for the greatness of a people depends not upon what the people have but what they are.

THE MARRIAGE BOND.

The very first condition of secure and happy home life is that the sacredness of the marriage tie be observed. There is nothing makes for laxity and infidelity so much as marriage for money and social position. The union of King Cophetua and the beggar maid is more to be commended than the life-long separation of Maud Muller and the enamored judge. Whatever financial and personal difficulties may arise in any home, there is always hope of successful settlement if the parents are loyal in heart the one to the other, and there is always danger of friction if the bond of union is anything less than personal attachment. In a home where love reigns it is not difficult to find the spirit of contentment, and if happiness is to be permanent this spirit of contentment must be felt by each member of the family.

HAPPY MOTHERHOOD.

Sometimes it comes about that the mother is not content. It may be that her life is too strenuous. As a young girl, she had some natural longings for the beautiful and the artistic, she had thought of a home possessing refinement, taste and a few of those comforts that tend to lift life above a purely animal existence. Yet she has been compelled by her partner or perhaps she has been unconsciously educated to join in the quest of material wealth until all the finer feelings and noble resolves have been subdued, and now she drudges from year's end to year's end, with no higher thought than that of keeping up with the work, so that the acres may be free of debt, or the herd of cattle and bushel of grain increased. It is said that of those who are found in the asylums for the insane the wives of farmers form an unduly high percentage. The monotonous wear and tear, the absence of social and aesthetic joys, has brought about a mental condition that has in time produced insanity. It is for men in this land, in their mad rush for gain, to see to it that into the lives of their wives there shall enter that variety, and especially that touch of the aesthetic and the social, which are the only sure preventive of eunui, lonesomeness and ceaseless brooding.

HAPPY CHILDHOOD.

But although father and mother may grow unhappy and discontented because of the long, dreary grind, the great danger is that owing to their complete devotion to the affairs of the farm and their failure to consider the mental effect upon the children, the birthright they have been acquiring may be despised by their offspring. To the young ones the farm may become a hateful place, because the associations are so devoid of that which it is natural for young people to seek. In every young soul there is implanted the appetite for play for companionship, for knowledge, and, in short, for varied experience. Monotonous repetition in a small field is unendurable.

LEAVING THE FARM.

It is often asked why boys wish to leave the farms. The answer is that the experiences are not sufficiently attractive. To make them so is the first duty of the parents. It is idle to attempt to meet the difficulty by coercion and restraint. At a certain age there will be a rebellion. So through the work of home and school the hungers of the young soul must be met. Every child is educated away from the farm whose soul is starved. Why cannot one acre a year be saved for children's

use? Let the proceeds purchase suitable books, toys, and materials for home games. Let there be a little time sacred to social enjoyment, when there is relief from the endless strain and worry, when parent and children need not as workers but as glad companions.

The only reason why there has been a migration to towns and cities during these last forty years is not because farming has become unattractive. It is probably much more attractive than ever. On the whole, it is much easier work than formerly, and the farmer has a standing in the community he did not occupy a generation ago. But on the farm a man now does as much as twelve men long ago; and as has been indicated rural home manufacture is no longer a common activity. Therefore, there is a natural shifting of population to the great centres of industry. There are proportionately three times as many in these centres as there were fifty years ago. Where there are numbers there are social advantages, and to really ambitious souls hopes of distinction. Hence the cities will always call to the country. Fortunately, however, there is a counter-call, and young men and women of the towns are now beginning to respond to the call of the land. The call to be effective must be the call to a larger, freer, fuller life, and not supply a call to monotonous existence. Those who have lived both in city and in country know well that life in the fields can be much more attractive than life in the crowded thoroughfare. Unfortunately, however, care is not always taken to make it attractive.

A TYPICAL CASE.

The other day, I visited a farm. The owner was a city man, and the management of the farm was committed to his son—a young fellow of eighteen. How did it come about that the young fellow willingly gave up his city associations, his luxurious home, and devoted himself so gladly to work in the fields and the stables? Simply this, that the father had some wisdom. He begun by erecting a comfortable dwelling. He did not spend everything in stables, leaving the poor humans to fare as best they might until the mortgage was all paid. His first care was to get a small, but thoroughly attractive home. Then he got a fine outfit of tools and rigged out a carpenter's shop, complete even to the lathe and the tools for working on brass and iron. There on rainy days the young fellow spent his time, not idly, but in making the repairs which are always necessary where implements and conveyances are in daily use. Then he was given responsibility for investment and for sale. True, he consulted with his father very frequently at first, but more and more he took burdens upon himself. And so in his life was fulfilled the very common experience that where one finds his interests provided for he is as happy as the day is long.

THE SIMPLE WAY.

The making of homes pure and sweet depends much upon the example and the conversations of the parents. They can make life rise to what level they please. The making of the home attractive requires only a little outlay and a little time during which matters are considered from the view-point of the children.

To make the bedrooms as attractive as those in town is quite possible if people were not so mercenary; to add a few books to the library for the use of the children is not impossible to any parent who thinks of his children; to get materials for playing a few indoor and outdoor games is always possible to those who believe play is a natural and necessary impulse. Above all, to add a little of the beautiful—to use wild flowers and the grasses to adorn the rooms, to arrange the table as tastefully as in any city home, to attend to the flower garden—all these are but illustrations of what is meant by satisfying the natural craving of the adolescent. And he will attend to these things, making the farm and its home a real paradise will realize what happiness and contentment mean. Under such conditions the problem of government will not be serious, for it is life misdirected or activity unprovided for that lies behind all badness and rebellion. He who will recognize the inherent needs of the human organism as they manifest themselves and who will make provision for them will have no difficulties in management, and there will be no estrangement in later life to fill it with bitterness and vain regrets.