

THE HOME CIRCLE

AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN

The curtain's falling and the lights burn low, So, with God's help, I'm ready now to go. I've seen life's melodrama, paid the price, Have known its loves and losses, hopes and fears, The laughter and the tears, And, now, God knows, I would not see it twice.

I've crossed life's ocean, faced its blinding foam, But now heaven whispers I'm nearing home; And though a storm-tossed hull I reach the shore, A thing of tattered sheets and broken spars, Naked against the stars, I shall soon be at peace forevermore.

USELESS WOMEN.

Writing on this subject, Mr. Silas K. Hooking says: "We hear in all directions that the matrimonial market is in a very depressed condition. The chances are that it will remain depressed. There is no dearth of brilliant and attractive young women—bright of eye and glad of tongue. They can wait and sing and write fiction, but while they boast—as I have heard many of them do—that they never by any chance go into the kitchen; while they turn up their little pug noses with scorn at the bare mention of any domestic duty; while they pride themselves on their knowledge of things they would be better without knowing, and their ignorance of things they ought to know, the chances are that the confidence and respect they win will be in inverse ratio to the amount of flattery they receive. They may shine in drawing-rooms, but self-respecting men will think twice before inviting them to preside over the destinies of a home.

What we need to-day more than anything else are wives and mothers; and too many of the young women who can chatter and sparkle in company are fit for neither. No one desires these women, who are more home-birds; but it is less desirable that they should be only society moths. All this talk about women being the slaves of the kitchen and nursery is the utterest cant and nonsense. Why not talk of the men being the slaves of office, shop or factory? It is no harder for a woman to superintend her kitchen and nursery than for a man to superintend his business.

AS THE HUSBAND, SO THE WIFE.

A wife should be her husband's dearest and nearest friend, therefore his equal in the qualities of heart and mind; as capable of advising as of consoing him; a true woman, to be his helpmate and companion, not a goddess to be set on a pedestal and adorned with prostrate homage, or a doll to be trinketed out with the guile of ostentations and degrading partiality. In the close intercourse of domestic life the wife and husband must necessarily act and react upon each other, says W. H. Davenport Adams in Women's Worth and Work. Dennyson, in a well-known poem, refers to the shameless when a callous and a sensual husband will inflame on the woman of higher nature to whom he has been united:—"Thou shalt lower to his level day by day."

What is pure within thee growing coarse to sympathize with clay. As the husband is, the wife is; thou art reared with a clown. And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag the down." George Eliot has shown us this work of moral declension in her tale of Janel's Repentance, where Janet, through association with the drunken Dempster, learns to sin as he sins. But is not less certain that as the wife is so is the husband, that she will bring him down to her depth with a fatal facility, that in too many cases her desires will become his desires, and her objects his objects also. It must be always difficult for the higher existence to escape contagion from the inferior, when the two are in daily, hourly contact, and the former enthralled, perhaps, by the force of habit or the lingering fragrance of past affection. The danger is not likely to arise when the inferiority is very marked, for the superior will when he is on his guard, not where the inferiority is purely educational, for an unintellectual wife cannot rob her scholar-husband of his erudition. But a woman of mean ambitions, of low desires, of a frivolous or sensual disposition, can hardly fail to exercise a deteriorating influence upon her husband. In the old Persian apologue the clay smells like the rose because the clay has been lying beside it; but we know that the rose thereby must have lost some thing of its sweetness. When a high stream mingles with a crystal brook, the united waters thereafter flow with a discolored current. It is not essential to happy wedlock that a man of genius should marry a woman of equal genius, but it is essential that a man of pure mind and cultivated taste should find the same qualities in the woman whom he takes to his bosom, who is to live with him in most intimate companionship and receive the deepest confidences of his soul. He cannot love the woman who does not comprehend him. Orlando must marry Desdemona and not Audrey. We know the transfiguring power of love; bow, like the moonlight, it can spread a silver

CHILDREN'S CORNER

glory over the rugged rocks as well as over the verdant law; how it isolates the one beloved from all of her sex—a woman among women and raises her to a height to which it seems impossible that any other should aspire; how it invests the plain features with comeliness, and the awkward with a Juno-like dignity; how it sets to sweetest music the commonplace utterances of ununsuited lips, how it exalts the most ordinary virtues into celestial graces. But not even love's transforming magic can convert the mean and vulgar into the generous and noble, can change pinch-back into pure gold, can change plaster into a marble statue, and even love can long that its eyes to the speak within the fruit, the narrowness and selfishness of a low nature.

"What does man want or expect in a wife? Sufficient mental power and firmness of disposition to govern her household aright and maintain a wise economy? Is that all? May we not add, intellectual and sensibilities to make her companionship a source of light and life and of elevated pleasure; such high thoughts and aspirations as will encourage her imagination to maintain a heavenward flight, and help to lift both of them, by a free interchange of ideas, above the gross atmosphere of this worldly world? He should look, says Sir Henry Taylor, for a clear understanding, cheerfulness, and alacrity of mind, rather than glibness and brilliancy, and for a gentle tenderness of disposition in preference to an impassioned temperament. What men want most in their wives is rest, rest and peace—the sweet calm of an untroubled life, to which, weary with the strains of public life, or the excitement of competition, or the arduous pressure of prolonged study, they may turn with eager, happy eyes. Who would desire to plant his household gods on a volcano? Or who would seek relief from the cares of the world amid a coruscation of fireworks? The true wife's love should be, as Sir Henry Taylor puts it:—"A love that clings not, nor is exigent, remembers not the active purposes, nor drains their source; and that proffers with free grace Pleasure, at pleasure touched, at pleasure waived, A soothing of the weary traveler's feet, A quenching of his thirst, a sweet repose. Alternate and preparative; in groves and fields, loving much the flower that loves the shade, And loving much the shade that the flower loves, He yet is unbewildered, unenslaved, Thence starting light, and pleasantly let go. When serious service calls."

"We would go further than the poet, however, and say that the wife's love should accompany her husband into this 'serious service'; and she should still be "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" after he has crossed the threshold of the house; that she should participate in his hopes, his ambitions and his projects. Her place is great, is not in the counting-house or "exchange." It is not necessary or desirable that she should be cumbered with the details of business. But she must have a general knowledge of what her husband is aiming at, is striving to accomplish; of what are his anxieties or expectations, or his successes or his failures. We believe that the influence of her pure spirit is a simple, straightforwardness of purpose would often hold back her husband from many a hazardous speculation, and read aside the thin veil with which many a questionable action is disguised.

Laid up 'n Heaven. After all, the best satisfaction in life arises from what you are able to do for the happiness and welfare of other people. That is the great advantage of wealth. It is not that it gives you the opportunity of leading a more luxurious and self-indulgent life; it is not that you can have a fine house and garden, books and pictures, travel and society, but it is that you have it in your power to help others, to lift them over hard places and to give them the substantial encouragements that are so useful. But this power does not reside merely in the possession of money; it also goes with good health, a cheerful disposition, knowledge, skill or any advantage that you have over those less favored. All these things are assets, and we make the noblest and most satisfying use of them when we use them as trusts, not for ourselves but to promote the welfare of others. What a significant thing it is that our Saviour should use His miraculous power to change a stone into bread as a temptation of Satan, a few days later should have wrought His first miracle by turning water into wine, to promote the pleasure and comfort of others. The more we see of life the firmer is our persuasion that we get the best of any power or advantage we may happen to have by using it for the welfare of others. By that use we transmute it into a permanent spiritual value. The riches that we can possess in that way are truly laid up in heaven.—The Watchman.

EACH HEART A HOME.

O Mother Mary, would that I might deck this heart of mine With lovely, fragrant flowers of spring, To be for thee a shrine. Then would I ever think of thee And of thy tender love; And thou wouldst see my every thought, And life would seem a prayer. Dear Mother, did I hear thy voice? What were those words of thine? "My child, each grace-decked heart Is Jesus' home and shrine."

FISH LINES.

A fish sat him down with a blink to think, And dipped his fin thoughtfully into the ink. Then fished this short note, "Dear Tommy," he wrote, "In response to your line of the other day. I hasten to thank you without delay. But, had not that squirming, delicious young worm Shown a set in his curves too suspiciously firm, I might not be here. To write you, my dear, (Alas! you may not believe, 't is so monstrously queer), That the wriggler you sent With most kindly intent Had swallowed a pen that was frigidly bent!

"You see—if I'd greedily taken a bite, The pain and the shock would have finished me quite; So, the next time you send, My juvenile friend, Just a line of the worm has a natural bend. Ere you dangle him temptingly down here to be The death of some innocent young thing like me." And he grinned as he used some dry sand for a blotter (Ink dries rather slowly, you know, under water). Then signed it with haste And sealed it with paste.

It was growing quite dark and he'd no time to waste, So he posted it shyly, without wasting more, On the crest of a gull that ran toward the shore; Then, snatching his scales in a satisfied glow, All shining and shimmering, sank down below. Where he soon fell asleep In an oyster-bed deep, With the green sheets of water his slumber to keep.—Jessie H. Lowell, in June St. Nicholas.

THE CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

When my parents made a mistake and built their nest in a chimney that was in use part of the time, the barn swallow, who is a cousin of ours, said in its knowing way:—"That comes from building nests in chimneys. It always was a dirty habit. Now I hope you will do as we do and build your nest under the eaves of the barn, where nothing can hurt you and you can smell the sweet, new-mown hay all day long."

"Nay, nay; come and follow our example," said the cliff swallow, who is another cousin of ours and always given to boasting. "When you dig a deep hole in the side of the cliff, you are safe from all harm. No boy or cat can climb up the side of the cliff, and all day long you can watch and listen to the moaning sea."

In response to these remarks my mother shook her head and said slowly and thoughtfully:—"I cannot do it. It was always brought up to have my nests in chimneys, and I must always do it. I must make a mistake if I built it under the eaves of the barn, and the continual moaning of the sea would make me homesick."

"Then build it in your chimney's end some day and let burnt up or smothered to death," exclaimed the barn swallow and the cliff swallow in unison, and away they flew. We had been routed out of our snug little home at an early hour of the morning by the sudden belching of puff smoke, and father and mother just had time to rescue my three brothers, when the heat and noise became unbearable. It had been a sad experience, and my parents could not account for the sudden noise in the chimney. Of course the noise we made and all other swallows to the place while we watched the smoke rolling up from the chimney. Old as they were, my parents had never chosen a chimney for a nest before that had been in use for years, and they could not account for the mistake. Suddenly, however, father started up into the air and a moment later returned with the startling announcement:—"I see the reason now. We did not make a mistake in choosing the chimney. It was not our fault. The house is on fire."

This big world and to introduce him to its dangers. But I suppose it was good for me for ever after that the smell of smoke always prepared me for a fire, and in that way I was once able to save my own little swallow from certain death years after. Of course they built the house again, and father and mother selected one of the best chimneys for their home, and when they were old enough to mate I took another. The people on the house were always kind to us, and once, when they were watching us fly round catching insects, I heard the man say to his wife:—"They are graceful birds, and useful, too. I believe to this day, dear, that we would have been burnt up that night if the swallow hadn't awakened us. It seemed almost as if Providence had sent the bird."

"That's what I have always thought," replied the wife, "and I have always liked to see them building their nests in the chimneys. I was almost afraid they wouldn't come back to the new house."

"That comes from building in holes," we did not think at the time that another tragedy was to follow so quickly, but the very next day a cat stole along the edge of the barn and destroyed the nest of our other cousins, and they, trying to defend their young, were caught by another cat and devoured. It was a mournful day when we heard it all, and thereafter we never boasted of what we could or would do, but felt satisfied for being alive and left undisturbed from day to day.

You can see by this that a swallow's life is not all happiness, although it might appear so when flying round in the dusk in the early evening catching insects on the wing. I have heard many lovers whisper to each other and say in their thoughtless way:—"We'll be as happy and free as these swallows."

But of course I do not complain. There is plenty of happiness in our lives, even if there is some sadness, and I am not sure that it would exchange the life of a chimney sweep for that of any other bird. Up in our chimney home we do not fear boys or cats. Not one dare come down the straight precipice of the chimney to where our nest is securely fastened. Indeed, few enemies ever dare climb to the top ridge of the house and even look down the chimney. So, you see, we are safe from any fear in that quarter.

Then we have few enemies in the air that we need be afraid of. What bird can fly as swiftly as we, or what creature can lodge and circle about so on the wing? The night owl sometimes ventures near our chimney home, but we fear him not, for we can out-climb him and escape down the sooty chimney, where he dare not follow. Then the hawk's fly after us, but we laugh at their vain efforts to catch us, and impudently flit about them and snap our wings in their faces. There is

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