

HOME CIRCLE.

THE WISH-RING.

A young farmer who was very unlucky sat on his plough a moment to rest, and just then an old woman crept past and cried: "Why do you go on drudging day and night without reward? Walk two days until you come to a great fir-tree that stands all alone in the forest and overtops all other trees. If you can hew it down you will make your fortune."

Not waiting to have the advice repeated the farmer shouldered his axe and started on his journey. Sure enough after tramping two days he came to the fir-tree, which he instantly prepared to cut down. Just as the tree swayed, and before it fell with a crash, there dropped out of its branches a nest containing two eggs. The eggs rolled to the ground and broke, and there darted out of one a young eagle and out of the other rolled a gold ring. The eagle grew larger as if by enchantment, and when it reached the size of a man it spread its wings as if to try their strength, then, soaring upward, it cried: "You have rescued me; take as a reward the ring that lay in the other egg; it is a wish-ring. Turn it on your finger twice, and whatever your wish is it shall be fulfilled. But remember there is but a single wish in the ring. No sooner is that granted than it loses its power and is only an ordinary ring. Therefore, consider well what you desire, so that you may never have reason to repent your choice." So speaking the eagle soared high in the air, circled over the farmer's head a few times, then darted like an arrow toward the east.

The farmer took the ring, placed it on his finger, and turned on his way homeward. Toward evening he reached a town where a jeweller sat in his shop behind a counter, on which lay many costly rings for sale. The farmer showed his own, and asked the merchant its value.

"It isn't worth a straw," the jeweller answered.

Upon that, the farmer laughed very heartily, and told the man that it was a wish-ring, and of greater value than all the rings in the shop together.

The jeweller was a wicked, designing man, and so he invited the farmer to remain as his guest over night. "For," he explained, "only to shelter a man who wears a wish-ring must bring luck."

So he treated his guest to wine and fair words; and that night, as the farmer lay sound asleep, the wicked man stole the magic ring from his finger and slipped on, in its place, a common one which he had made to resemble the wish-ring.

The next morning the jeweller was all impatience to have the farmer begone. He awakened him at cock-crow, and said: "You had better go, for you have still a long journey before you."

As soon as the farmer had departed the jeweller, closed his shop, put up the shutters, so that no one could peep in, bolted the door behind him, and standing in the middle of the room, he turned the ring and cried: "I wish instantly to possess a million gold pieces!"

No sooner said than the great, shining gold pieces came pouring down upon him in a golden torrent over his head, shoulders and arms. Piti-fully he cried for mercy, and tried to reach and unbar the door; but before he succeeded, he stumbled and fell bleeding to the ground. As for the golden rain, it never stopped till the weight of the metal crushed the floor, and the jeweller and his money sank through to the cellar. The gold still poured down till the million was complete, and the jeweller lay dead in the cellar beneath his treasure.

The noise, however, alarmed the neighbours, who came rushing over to see what the matter

was; when they saw the man dead under his gold, they exclaimed: "Doubly unfortunate he whom blessings kill. Afterward, the heirs came and divided the property."

In the meantime, the farmer reached home in high spirits, and showed the ring to his wife.

"Henceforth, we shall never more be in want, dear wife," he said. "Our fortune is made. Only we must be very careful to consider well just what we ought to wish."

The farmer's wife, of course, proffered advice. "Suppose," said she, "that we wish for that bit of land that lies between our two fields."

"That isn't worth while," her husband replied. "If we work hard for a year, we'll earn enough money to buy it."

So the two worked very hard, and at harvest time they had never raised such a crop before. They had earned money enough to buy the coveted strip of land and still had some to spare. "See," said the man, "we have the land and the wish as well."

The farmer's wife then suggested that they had better wish for a cow and a horse. But the man replied: "Wife, why waste our wish on such trifles? The horse and cow we'll get anyway."

Sure enough, in a year's time the money for the horse and cow had been earned. Joyfully the man rubbed his hands. "The wish is again saved this year, and yet we have what we desire. How lucky we are!"

But now his wife seriously adjured him to wish for something at last. "Now that you have a wish to be granted," she said, "you slave and toil, and are content with everything. You might be king, emperor, baron, even a gentleman farmer, with chests overflowing with gold; but you don't know what you want."

"We are young and life is long," he answered. "There is only one wish in the ring, and that is easily said. Who knows but sometime we may sorely need this wish? Are we in want of anything. Have we not prospered, to all peoples astonishment, since we possessed this ring? Be reasonable and patient for a while. In the meantime, consider what we really ought to wish for."

And that was the end of the matter.

It really seemed as if the ring had brought a blessing into the house. Graneries and barns were full to overflowing, and in the course of a few years the poor farmer became a rich and portly person, who worked with his men a-field during the day, as if he, too, had to earn his daily bread; but after supper he liked to sit in his porch, contented and comfortable, and return the kindly greeting of the folk who passed and who wished him a respectful good evening.

So the years went by. Sometimes when they were alone the farmer's wife would remind her husband of the magic ring, and suggest many plans. But as he always answered that they had plenty of time, and that the best thoughts come last, she more and more rarely mentioned the ring, and at last the good woman ceased speaking of it altogether.

To be sure, the farmer looked at the ring, and twirled it about as many as twenty times a day; but he was very careful never to wish.

After thirty or forty years had passed away, and the farmer and his wife had grown old and white-haired, and their wish was still unasked, then was God very good to them, and on the same night they both died peacefully and happily.

Weeping children and grandchildren surrounded the two coffins; and as one wished to remove the ring from the still hand as a remembrance, the oldest son said: "Let our father take his ring into the grave. There was always a mystery about it; perhaps it was some dear remembrance. Our mother, too, so often looked at the ring—she may have given it to him when they were young."

So the old farmer was buried with the ring, which had been supposed to be a wish ring, and was not, yet it brought as much good fortune into the house as heart could desire.—*St. Nicholas*.

A MEDICAL VIEW.

Dr. James Edmunds, of London, England, has this to say of the habit of beer and liquor drinking:

Beer drinkers imagine that abstainers from alcohol "drink a lot of cold water;" but, in point of fact, it is the beer drinkers who drink the "lot of cold water."

Any beer drinker who goes to the food department of the South Kensington Museum will there see the constituents of beer all separated in a visible form in their proper proportions; and he will learn that out of twenty pints of beer that he buys, nineteen are water! Nearly one pint is alcohol, and the rest is treacherous residue, with salt and other unimportant constituents. The treacherous matter represents the food material or residual barley left in the beer. The alcohol may be practically oxidized in the system, but its effects are chiefly felt in taking the edge off those sensibilities by means of which the system is conscious of fatigue; and a large part of the alcohol is exhaled by the lungs and skin, as is shown by the smell which emanates from the drinker. The salt gives a certain piquancy to the flavour of the beer by irritating the nerves of the tongue, and it serves also to set the kidneys going, and bring the customer back to the public house. Beer, when taken at meal times by those whose stomachs have been trained to look for it, provokes a secretion of gastric juice, and its alcohol is rapidly washed out of the stomach, in order that the solution of the food may not be hindered.

If stronger alcoholic beverages are taken, such as wine or spirit, digestion is more completely arrested, pending their removal; and, as well known, if the glass of wine be repeated too often, digestion is altogether prevented, and a few hours afterward the food has to be returned by the way it entered. In this case it is generally said that "the salmon" has disagreed with the unfortunate diner-out; but I have generally observed that the capacity for walking straight is as much impaired as the capacity for digesting food, and unless when wine has been taken largely, I never saw "the salmon" make a man ill. Against tea or coffee not very much is to be said, and I never knew of a police court case in which the defendant ascribed his violence to having taken too much tea or too much coffee. But for the quenching of thirst tea and coffee are bad. The habit of drinking strong tea or black coffee directly after dinner is especially bad, and certainly interferes with digestion. At breakfast time a healthy man has all his sleep in him, and surely it is then unscientific for him to inflict upon his system strong tea or coffee.—*Lancet*.

COURTESY OF MANNER.

I am often sorry that the invaluable training in sitting still and maintaining the attitude of decorum toward elders and superiors, once a part of every child's education, is now missed by many. Manners do not come wholly by chance, nor are they entirely to be trusted to refined associations, though these greatly aid in their acquirement. Sooner or later most of us need the discipline of enforced rules, and conventionalities have their uses in the ease and grace they confer, the smoothness with which they oil the intercourse of society, and the friction from which they save.

Toward the aged and feeble, and toward little children and servants, the courteous person is kind and deferential. True courtesy implies re-