

Curfew Bells.

Many have heard of the "curfew bell," but not all know its origin. Its history in England runs back to the time of William the Conqueror, who ordered a bell to be rung about sundown in summer, and at eight o'clock in the evening in winter, at which time fire and lights were to be put out, and the people to remain within doors, and penalties were imposed upon those who neglected or refused to comply with the law. This was called the "curfew," a word derived from the French *couvre-feu*—cover-fire—and so the appropriateness of the name is readily seen. The old king has been generally charged with instituting this custom in order to impress upon his subjects a sense of their abject condition; but, as the "curfew bell" was rung in France long before William's time, as a safeguard against fires, it is not improbable that he brought the custom with him into England from the continent, and that he has been slandered as to his motives. At any rate, he has sins enough to answer for without this. In the sixteenth century, "bell-men" were added to the night-watch in London. They went through the streets ringing their bells and crying, "Take care of fire and candle; be kind to the poor and pray for the dead." It was the bell-man's duty also to bless the sleepers as he passed their doors. In "Il Penseroso" Milton refers to this custom:

"The bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm."

Poets have often referred to the "curfew," or cover-fire, bell. Gray begins his beautiful "Elegy" with

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day."

Longfellow, too, has a pretty little poem telling the story of this bell with charming simplicity:

"Solemnly, mournfully,
Dealing its doom,
The curfew bell
Is beginning to toll.

Cover the embers,
Put out the light;
Toil comes in the morning,
And rest with the night.

Dark grow the windows,
And quenched is the fire;
Sound fades into silence,
All footsteps retire.

No voice in the chambers,
No sound in the hall
Sleep and oblivion
Reign over all."

King William died, and the original obligations of the curfew were at last removed about the time of Henry I., in 1100; but the custom of ringing an evening bell is still kept up in England, with variations as to the hour. "The nine o'clock bell,"—familiar to most New England people—which sends so many young people home and to bed, and which in the early history of our country was almost as rigidly obeyed by all, both old and young, as the old "curfew," traces its origin directly to the cover fire-bell. In Longfellow's "Evangeline" the custom is well described:

"Anon the bell from the belfry
Rang out the hour of nine—the village curfew—and straightway
Rose the guests and departed, and silence reigned in the household."

But now the customs have changed; and though the bell still rings out on the evening air, in country village, and city street, it has lost its power, save as a tell-tale of passing time. Let the old bells ring on; we love their sound, or, in the words of Moore—

"These evening bells! these evening bells!
How many a tale their music tells
Of youth and home, and that sweet time
When last I heard their soothing chime!"

—Samuel Burnham.

A poor young man remarks that the only advice he gets from capitalists is "to live within his income," whereas the difficulty he experiences is to live without an income.

"DON'T TELL MOTHER."

BY MRS. H. W. BRECHER.

Not long since we passed two little girls, perhaps eight or nine years old. There arms were thrown around each other in simple, loving, unaffected manner that quite enchanted us. But the first words we heard them utter dispelled the charm and left a very painful impression.

"I'll tell you something that I am going to do, May, if you will promise not to tell mother a word about it."

If at that early age boys or girls begin to have secrets from their parents, especially from the mother, it does not require a prophet's skill to form a tolerably correct judgment of what the character will be, and the results springing from such tendencies when they arrive at mature age. A disposition to deceive is bad enough, but when a child arranges to conceal her actions from her mother the outlook is sad indeed.

Whatever may be taught or believed about natural depravity it would be very difficult to imagine that a little child naturally inclines to conceal its actions from the mother, who for the few earliest years at least must, almost of necessity, be with it more than any other one. In such cases it is impossible not to feel that the parents must be held, in part, accountable. Over-strictness in governing children too often proves a temptation to deceive and conceal. When a child first understands that it is under surveillance and all its acts criticised or censured it becomes uncomfortable, and soon feels frightened, and seeks to escape from the thralldom by prevarication or deceit. To deny, conceal, invent or give an excuse that to a youthful mind appears plausible, if not unanswerable, opens in their childish judgment the readiest way of escape from blame or punishment. Let any one enter on that way and concealment, deceit and excuses become easy. It will not be long before this course will be taken not merely to avoid punishment or reproof but to secure some pleasure known to have been forbidden.

Young parents often enter upon their new duties with very high ideas. They have theories which, if strictly followed out, will place their nonpareil far above all other babies and bring it into maturity a bright and shining light, only a little lower than the angels. And in its rare development it is expected that the parents' theory will be glorified. It is vain for parents who have had several experiences and many new theories to try to convince the young matrons that there never was a mode of training children that would be suitable for all dispositions, or that fully realized the bright expectations with which they first tried to bring them into daily practice.

Some begin with the idea that implicit, unquestioning, instantaneous obedience must be insisted on, and any hesitation or deviation must be met at once by severe punishment. Children brought up under such a system are the ones most likely to deceive and conceal. Those parents who are thoroughly good and act in the most conscientious manner, in their hearts believing that their theory, "though for the present not joyous but grievous," will in the end work out the possible fruits of righteousness, are the ones who in riper years, taught by that rough schoolmaster, experience, greatly modify if not entirely change their mode of bringing up their children. Indeed, finding that strict discipline and rigorous oversight have not entirely perfected their first children they are in great danger of swinging clear over to the opposite side, and do the last children as much or more harm, by being too lenient and indulgent, as their first received by needless severity.

Whatever mode of training children may be adopted, that is best which is so modified as to teach all, particularly the girls, that the mother is the sagest and wisest confidante. Children will make mistakes, but no great harm will follow if they have no secrets from their mother; and they will not be tempted to hide a blunder if they know she will not rebuke sharply but with loving kindness. A girl will not do an thing very wrong who has no secrets from her mother. Every girl stands on slippery, unsafe ground the moment she thinks or says "Don't tell mother." The fewer secrets girls or boys have the safer they are. If there should be a few which may seem important and unavoidable let the child test the real necessity of encumbering herself with them by taking the mother in partnership. No companion-