



**THE** higher education of women means more for the future than all conceivable legislative reforms. Its influence does not stop with the house.

—David Jordan.

## The Step-Mother

IT was after office hours, and the two men sat surveying each other through hazy clouds of cigar smoke as they exchanged desultory remarks upon politics, the market—the future of their business. Finally Carleton spoke of his approaching marriage; it was for that purpose he had detained Aubrey Sutton after all the rest had gone.

"Aren't you a bit skittish about taking a woman of Miss Welburn's particular type to your home in Boltonville Tom?" The question was put with the freedom of a friendship he had gotten at Yale and tried through many succeeding years.

"Type?" Tom Carleton raised his eyebrows.

"Well, what I mean is, a girl who has never breathed anything but the society atmosphere—surrounded by fashion and luxury and no doubt horribly pampered by those doing old parents of hers." Sutton spoke somewhat apologetically, though there was an obvious note of anxiety in his tone.

Carleton remained silent a space, smoking as he reflected in some constraint upon the other's words. Then he looked up and met Sutton's eyes steadily, crushing down the fears that knocked at his heart; he smiled and said a little proudly. "She loves me, old fellow; that fact should level all distinctions."

"But does it?"

"It seems so to me; it ought to, surely," Carleton shifted his position and a little frown of displeasure drew his brows together.

"Oh, come now, Tom. You know what I'm driving at—of course you do. In the first flush of romance, every thing seems possible, and as long as that—let us say, period of enchantment, lasts—everything is possible. But there is the period of adjustment to be reckoned with."

Carleton nibbled the end of his cigar nervously, while a gradual flush mounted to his forehead. His hands, large and brown and muscular, unconsciously gripped the leather arms of his chair, the blue veins showing tense and prominent through the bronzed skin. But in a moment, he had regained his self-possession, and said lightly:

"Look here, Aubrey: I'm satisfied. What in the deuce do you want to stir me up like this for?"

Sutton's eyebrows went up, then down, and he shrugged his handsome shoulders. "A burned child dreads fire," he said. "I've been pretty badly singed in my day, and I took the liberty of trying to save you from a similar fate."

Tom Carleton looked at him in quick sympathy; Sutton's story was unknown to him, but the dawn of a quick assurance upon his own face was undiminished as he answered: "I

may be mistaken, but I flatter myself that I know Philippa well enough to feel confident of the reception she will accord the children and my father. If she fails me, I shall be terribly disappointed, but I shall make the best of it."

Aubrey Sutton had risen and tossed his burnt-out cigar through the window into the street below. As the other finally speaking, he turned and shot out his hand. "You're the right sort, Tom. I congratulate you and give you my best wishes. And I hope your father will be so good as to accept my well-meant suggestion, or let it bother you. Come to think about it, it would be foolish for you to keep up two establishments, and for a week out of town, but I shall certainly be back in time for the wedding."

When his friend had disappeared, Tom Carleton sat for a long time with his head resting in his hand. Had Sutton spoken the truth? Was it an unwise experiment to take a young woman of Miss Welburn's exaggerated type of cultivation to a quiet old country homestead in the Georgia Hills? He thought of his children—three little stair-steps ranging from four to seven; and his straight-faced old father! He had no recollection of ever hearing his fiancée discuss the subject of children—he did not even know whether she tolerated them. For some careless reason, he had neglected to bring up the topic of his own, having taken it for granted that she, who loved him well enough to become his wife, could not fail to give him the offspring the same devotion that he himself yielded them.

Well, there was nothing to be done now; the marriage was to take place the following week, and after a fortnight's honeymoon in California they were to come home and settle down in Fulton County.

The thought of keeping up a separate establishment in town, as Aubrey Sutton's remark had indicated, presented itself to Carleton's mind fleetingly. Above everything in the world, he wanted the girl for his wife, but equally as much, he wanted a mother for his little girls. The only woman who had ever done for them since their own mother's death was an elderly "Mamma," and they needed the refining influence and care of some sweet, cultured woman.

And so, for a long time he sat and struggled with his doubts. The conflict of emotions, the strife between hope and fear, left him fretted and unstrung. He rose from his chair at last and pulled down the top of his desk. Then he turned off the light above it, and a moment later he had closed the door behind him and was touching the elevator-bell across the hall.

Out in the open, his courage rose with every brisk step; by degrees his

old assurance came back to him, and he laughed at his apprehensions. How foolish he had been to let Aubrey Sutton's insinuations disturb him so! Aubrey was a fine fellow, but he was a cynic and a misanthrope, and he viewed all things through lenses distorted by his own perverted experiences.

At the corner of Peachtree Street, Carleton turned and walked a couple of blocks till he stood in front of one of Atlanta's most palatial homes. He paused for an instant with his hand on the gate-latch, a throbbing red in his temples; then he collected himself swiftly and went in and rang the bell.

While waiting for Philippa to make her appearance, he walked restlessly about the room, staring vacantly at the water colors and engravings. His thoughts had gone back to his *le-ta-tete* with Aubrey Sutton, and he found himself again yielding to his agonizing influence. The crisp rustle of skirts brought him to himself sharply, and he turned as Philippa entered the door, with her hands outstretched.

"There's to be a tiresome old dinner at seven, Tom, for the Treacotts, you know. I thought it would be nice if we could sneak off for a jolly ride out to one of the parks, where we could sit on a bench and talk—unmolested by the crowd."

Carleton was holding her little white hands in his big, brown paws and he stooped suddenly and kissed her. Then they went out and walked to the corner to wait for a car.

During the evening, Carleton made several vague but ineffectual attempts to introduce the subject of his family, and at last had to give up in despair. Manifestly, the motherless children and the aged father were not of sufficient interest to "stick" in Miss Philippa Welburn's hazy mind.

The bridegroom elict went home that night with a heavy heart. His old fears, and new ones, too, came thronging to his pillow in regiments, and would not crowd him out. Aubrey Sutton was right. What business had he, after all, to think he could uproot a hot-house plant like Philippa and export her to a cold, rude, mountain soil? A girl who had never had so much as a pin-head's responsibility to be abruptly burdened with the upbringing of three young children, and the whims of a cranky old man!

The week passed and the wedding morning broke, a blue of sapphire and gold—no trace the sky, so yellow the sunlight.

(Concluded next week)

## What a Farm Home Should Be

A good location for the farm house is on the south slope of a hill. But we cannot all have hills suitable for this purpose, so we must plant trees to break the force of cold winter's blasts. Maples, box elders and catalpas grow so rapidly that they are valuable for windbreaks, but evergreens should be planted for more permanent protection. Be sure that there are trees for shade in the kitchen. If the hill by the house is not high enough, the cistern can be located at the back of the house, and the water conducted by pipes to a faucet in the kitchen sink. This is a most convenient arrangement where possible. In any case the pump from cistern should be in the kitchen or upon the porch.

### THE GROUND

The farm house should have a lawn as carefully kept as that about the city home. There should be some flowers, but do not crowd them. A few well cared for are better than many neglected. Roses, peonies, lilacs, snowballs, and some of the perennial lilacs in little care and are always satisfactory.

The back yard should be as well

kept as the front, and should never be made a dumping ground for worn out furniture and leaky utensils. It may be shaded with trees, and whose branches stand rows of beehives. Farther back could be the kitchen garden, well fenced and commodious.

I would have a hall but not a large one. It is a convenient place to leave wraps, and to use as a vestibule generally.

The house should be heated by a furnace, this system having proven as practicable for the farmer as for his city brother.

So far as my experience goes, kerosene lamps furnish the best and most practical light for the farm home.

The kitchen should be well lighted, as should all the house, the windows fitted with blinds and white sash curtains. The walls should be painted and the floor covered with linoleum for the sake of cleanliness. There should be a sink and a drain-pipe, a good range, a cupboard, kitchen chairs—one chair—a very interesting pictures on the wall, a few books or papers by a sunny window, where you can sit in the morning, and a pantry fitted with shelves and hooks, and well stocked with cooking utensils. There should be a door leading from the cellar into the kitchen, as well as an outer cellar door.

### DINING ROOM

The dining room should contain, besides a good extension table, a sideboard, china closet, sewing machine, a few easy chairs and some good pictures on the walls. Personally, I like fruit, flowers, or landscapes better than game. There should be a window placed between this and the kitchen, to save carrying everything back and forth. The walls should have a pleasing paper, and the windows short, ruffled curtains of muslin or net. A large rug, a good floor covering, and probably the telephone will occupy a convenient place on the wall. This room will be so pleasant that many moments will be passed here, and the house will be more inviting. There is little need for a parlor to-day in ordinary homes, either farm or town. A large library and sitting room combined is better, for it is not too good for every day, yet is charming enough for any company. Here will be found bookcases, desk, reading table and lamps, couch and easy chairs with an abundance of cushions, piano or organ, and any other musical instruments liked. Paper, curtains, rugs and carpet should all be good, and quiet, harmonizing tones should prevail. As many pictures as taste dictates may be upon the walls, choosing only the best. Here and in the dining room the windows should contain flowering plants; and this should really be the family living room.

### UPSTAIRS

The bedrooms should not be too small. Let the floors be covered with rugs or carpeting. The walls with light, pretty paper. At the windows there should be shades, and dainty curtains that will stand laundering. Each room should have a closet, and a washstand supplied with plenty of soap, water, towels and wash-cloths, besides bed, chairs and dresser.

If there is power on the farm to send the water into the house, a bath in the kitchen sink will make it more convenient in the home. While it should be dainty, everything in it must be such that it will stand water. Tiling or oil-cloth in the bath is all right for the floor, oil-cloth or paint to match should cover the walls, and short white curtains should hang at the windows.

So much for the general fittings and furnishings of the farm house. The personality and originality of its mistress must give the finishing touches to which we may call it "home, sweet home."—Aunt Lucy.