

these are extremely pleasant when you meet people at the clique whom you like; but it often happens that as these teas are rather hap-hazard gatherings, you find yourself in close proximity to some inveterate talker of "small talk," or if you escape this one, you are obliged to converse with some blue-stocking or doctrinaire. Sometimes you may have to hand a little Sèvres tea-cup containing a thimbleful of tea, and reposing on a saucer the size of a fifty-cent piece, and you are in a quandary as to how you are to hand it, and I leave you there. To speak of the cliques in which precludes the members of our French families from entering into English society—this is not as it should be, and there can be no doubt that the grace of French manners would have a beneficial effect. It is true that there is a certain polish—no, that does not express my meaning—but a certain *politesse* in French society which is lacking in English society in Montreal, and this can be said without being criticised as an attack, as it is characteristic of the French—of course, I refer to the educated French. But there are a few members of French families who have essayed to enter English society and have not succeeded—all these cannot be rejected for reasons, but many must be solely on account of their being French. This prejudice perhaps exists because people think that they are in some peculiar way turn-coats for preferring English society to French, and I have been told that an opinion exists that the French here are inclined to be parsimonious. But this I can hardly hold to be the case, as in London many French and other Europeans move in the best circles, and nearly all members of society speak French—though the Englishman is usually held to be one of the worst conversationalists in the world, and to give the most barbarous accent to any foreign tongue.

MOTHERS' DUTIES.

What an age of reform this is! Not a week passes but we hear of something new—something done for the benefiting of mankind generally. Abuses of influence or position are held up to view, through the medium of an enlightened press, and the people made to see or hear how these are to be met and overthrown. As a rule the race seems to have awakened to the need of every individual enlisting in this army of reform, though one has sadly to confess the loud cry with not a few is not from any intention to overcome any habit or appetite to which they may be wedded; the marriage state in this particular is too stringent to admit of any divorce, but what man allows in self does not prevent him denouncing in another, so the cry runs along all ranks, and there is a co-mingling of feelings that never has mankind been blessed with so much of good to help on a struggling humanity. Through the many grades of reform some as yet have scarcely been touched. If there is felt and acknowledged to be a need for one, especially one for the present generation to know more about the construction of the digestive organs and the abuses these parts of our frame are continually undergoing through a lack of knowledge in the cooking department, and of the requirements needed in this at the hands of the female portion, so facilities are springing up with wondrous aptitude to meet these emergencies; and instead of a stupid smattering of Latin that has never got beyond a thorough understanding of its dryness, with a few more like studies equally as well understood, there comes a knowledge that cooking is no longer to be a despised occupation, but one that is to supersede proficiency in Berlin-wool work, and to be a rival to accomplishments of every sort; for the future husband is being trained to keep an eye upon the culinary abilities of the future wife, and ever so brilliant a fantasia in the drawing-room will fail to make much amends for any shortcomings in the kitchen requirements, and sensible girls are going to make sure they are equally proficient in both. But has the greatest of all needs had the attention it requires,—the need of a knowledge of the requirements pertaining to motherhood? The little mounds in our churchyards answer sadly, and on many a headstone could be inscribed "Mother sent," not called of God, and loving hearts will go on aching, loving hands lie folded in the empty lap; homes bright with the presence of these dear cries darkened, saddened from their loss too often through these frail lives being in the keeping of incompetent mothers, and how can it be otherwise?

How many of the shy, blushing brides who walk so proudly up to the altar with a sure certainty of the fitting and cost of their costly or simpler robes, every detail of which has been under inspection, fashion-books overturned to get all the information needed to make the copying of this perfect and complete—no mistakes on this point—and yet what do such brides know as they turn from the altar of the duties and requirements devolving upon them. Is it a want of delicacy to ask such? Let the little graves answer the question. These brides in becoming mothers enter upon duties that tax their physical strength too much to make them apt scholars in the school of infantile needs, so the new precious treasure lies in the trembling loving arms of one who knows nothing beyond its being "baby." The cries of a nursery need no unfolding—unhappy distracted young fathers shun it, or worry over the safety of its occupant according to their temperament, whilst the poor feeble ignorant young mother helplessly asks and takes the advice of every one who comes to see the new citizen or citizeness from the nurse with her array of recipes,

to the humble washerwoman with hers, so the poor crying little bundle is nothing more than a new subject for trying experiments upon; if it be a good tough specimen it manages to struggle through it all, if as is too often the reverse the many experiments put an end to what, if judicious management were known, would in nine cases out of ten save. But how is this judicious management to be known until taught by experience, naturally rises in thought at the suggestion. For answer, by the appalling want of it making itself felt through every household. Let the wise mothers who have had the experience do by the future mothers, as nearly all women are in the future wives, who in making creature comforts a study of necessity are not leaving these to be learned by experiments on the husband impairing his health, and trying his temper, whilst the despairing tortured wife is shortening her days in her frantic efforts to make a simple meal palatable as well as digestible. Another difficulty presents itself to the inquirer—in the cooking schools lookers-on see experiments turned into facts, a bill of fare not only constructed, but cooked whilst looking on, and mothers cannot bring their subjects to such a test, so how are the young to gain their experience, and for answer only by not shunning the question, for it has a deeper holier, significance than many give themselves time to think about.

There must be some mothers whose hands are often times at leisure who in every place could gather the young for wise counsel, thus saving many a feeble life, sparing how many heartaches. The young life claims all a mother has to give, but when from indifference, or because of the trouble or the necessity of putting aside former recreations and indulgences, what ought never to be withheld, is not given, so whilst the chance of other food is persisted in, combined with experiments for real or too often imaginary ailments, mothers must weep for the loss of these little ones. Do not these tiny graves ask why the mouldering forms within perished before the allotted space of time for man was run? Is not disease too often brought on through interfering with nature's laws, not sent by nature's God, and lives escaping the perils of infancy are too often sapped of their vigour and robust health made weakly and delicate through these mistaken experiments of getting knowledge. Could we trace the causes of one year's death-rate how few would have had the summons to appear at His bar of judgment. Imprudence, neglect, recklessness, appetite, sin, would have to answer for the cutting short of lives given to grow in the knowledge of what the Saviour died to secure; the judgment cannot but be severe when one of these has to appear before his or her Ransom, and seeing, know why the sad reproachful eyes bring with agonising remembrance the oft-heard entreaty on earth, "Ye will not come to Me to find rest."

NEW READINGS OF OLD PARABLES.

BY THE REV. CHARLES ANDERSON, M.A.

THE GIFT OF TALENTS.

The story of the talents, in its simplest interpretation, is so self-evident that further exposition would seem needless. But there is another reading, not less true, and very needful at the present time, which will demand setting forth in detail. It is this that we shall now attempt.

The story is plainly constructed on a broad scale, and hence it suggests a broad interpretation. The lord of his servants "travels into a far country;" he does not return until "after a long time;" the "talent" is a large sum.

There is strict justice in the dealing. "To every man is given according to his several ability"—"five talents," "two talents," "one talent."

The lord, in due time, "reckoneth with his servants." Two out of the three had acted boldly and wisely with their trust—"they went and traded with the same." To each of these his lord said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

The third "was afraid; so he went and hid his talent in the earth." For him the judgment is "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

These are the main features of the story, and it is with these that we propose now to concern ourselves.

The record of the world is that of men, each in his own day endowed with talents—with "gifts differing," according to the era and according to the man. Of these talents the man and the age have to render an account. If this account be bad, then there is a curse and the "outer darkness."

To illustrate this. Looking to the ancients, we see mankind with gifts widely differing. There is the pastoral age, the heroic age, the æsthetical age, the moral age. There is a Greek life of beauty and philosophy; and a Hebrew life of moral struggle—a reaching after, a hungering and thirsting after, "the Eternal who judgeth righteously." To these peoples and nations this Eternal gave gifts, and "they went and traded with the same;" as is witnessed by the Hebrew and Eastern sacred books. The names of the great and wise and holy of those days are household words.

Looking to the middle ages, we find men and nations "afraid," "burying their talents in the earth;" afraid to use the new talent given them; afraid of science, of history, of free thought; afraid of the "hard man," as they called