

## Side Talks by Ruth Cameron

### THE CHILD WHO FAILS TO THINK

A Letter Friend has a plaint to make to-day.

It represents an experience which she and a friend both had and she wants to know if I think it is a common one, and if it ought not to be avoidable.

This Letter Friend gave some money to some of her young friends who were graduating from high school to buy themselves graduation presents. She is a woman in moderate circumstances and the gift was not large, but it did represent sacrifice and this is how the sacrifice was rewarded.

### The Very Things She Went Without

These girls out of a class of mine at High School did not acknowledge the money we gave. The girls would make their own selection and there is where a part of the hurt comes in—they bought the very things I went without to be able to give.

"Now if these little gifts at graduation are not worthy of recognition it is the time the custom of gifts was omitted."

All these girls are the cream of the valley. We are proud of them. One had credits enough for college entrance. But why, oh why, are they not "sought courtesies?"

Why, indeed?

I suppose because their parents simply do not realize how they label themselves and handicap their children by neglecting such teaching.

The Will of Human Kindness Seized. Nothing sours the milk of human kindness more quickly than failure to show gratitude for gifts and courtesies.

The air over the white sand is as light and feelingless to my skin as complete, comfortable clothing. On one side it the dark river; on the other the dark jungle full of gentle rustling, low, velvet breaths of sound; and I slip into the water and swim out, out, out. Then I turn over, and float along with the almost tangible moonlight flooding down on face and hair.

Suddenly the whole air is broken by the chorus of big red balloons, which float and tumble toward me in masses of sound along the surface and over the jungle, till I am hurled back by the swarming chorus of another clan. It is one to the marrow, for there is no more in it than mere meaning of beauty; and I turn over, and swim, surging back toward the sand, swimming now, making companionable noises.

And then again I stop, trading water, with face alone between water and sky; for the monkeys have ceased and very faint and low, but muffled in wonderful minor harmony comes another chorus—from three miles down the river; the convicts sing hymns in their cells at midnight. And I ground gently and sit on the silvered shadows with little bearded shrimps flicking against me, and unlanguage smiles, too poignant phrases to be stopped and fettered with words, and I am neither content nor man nor naked organism, but just mind.

With the coming of silence I look around and again consciously take in the scene. I am very glad to be alive, and to know that the possible dangers of jungle and water have not kept me warm and indoors. I feel, somehow, as if my very daring and gentle slipping off of all signs of dominance and protection on entering into this realm had made friends of all the rare but terrible serpents and scorpions, stinging and peral, vampires and electric eels. For awhile I knew the happiness of being well.

And I think of people who would have more joyful lives in dense communities, who would be more tolerant and more certain of straightforward friendship, if they could have a background a fundamental hour of living such as this, a heaven for the time of what, in comparison, seems the existence.

"Laugh and grow fat" is an axiom. We advise the use of good tonic, named "Bick's Tonic." Price \$1.00; postage 25c. extra. Write to Bick's Tonic Co., 1234 Broadway, New York City.

My Letter's Friend's reaction is typical—"If these little gifts at graduation are not worthy of acknowledgment, then it is time the custom was discontinued."

One gives not for gratitude, but because one likes to give, one does favors because one likes to help, but there are always plenty of directions in which one can send one's gifts and service, and one turns naturally to those directions where one receives the encouragement and stimulation of acknowledgment and appreciation.

Children are thoughtless about these things and are likely to be neglectful unless prodded, and that is what I mean by the parents labelling themselves by the child's discourtesy.

I sent a steamer present to a little girl who is going away on a sea trip. I have never heard one word from her.

### A Grateful Letter.

Some days after that I sent two little girls some ten-cent store vanity cases. (I had heard that they were displaying envelopes with bits of glass and rough towel as their vanity cases, and thought it an opportunity to give much pleasure at small outlay.) I have already received two grateful letters thanking me over and over for the "lovely vanity case and powder puff and powder."

Yet the first little girl is just as nice as the others. Only she has not been made to realize that such small courtesies should be acknowledged.

This is the day of the child. In many homes children are so thoroughly accustomed to being constantly considered and never asked to make any return that they get the take-it-for-granted habit. It is not a good habit. It will not stand out into a grown-up world. Wise is the parent who tries to overcome this tendency.

### WELL ENOUGH ALONE.

Old Bill, who once was Kaiser, now runs his sawing mill, and had he acted wiser, he might be Kaiser still. A gift—bespangled sinner, he ruled a mighty realm, and Prussia seemed a winner, with Wilhelm at the helm. He might have kept on ruling, before the awe-struck crowd, till he was old and drooping, and ready for the shroud, had he cut out the scheming that proved to be no good; but he was fond of dreaming—and now he's sawing wood. Alas, no wizard, gnome-eyed, approached the monarch's throne, to hand him out this bromide, "Let well enough alone!" No prophet or forecaster, no seers in double teams, explored the royal master to can the hopjot dreams. So Wilhelm went on planning—and now he's whacking aim. With rusty saws and axes he lays the hemlock low, and he must pay his taxes like John or Richard Roe. But few of us are Kaisers, and few of us have thrones; we're mostly early risers who rustle for the bones. But many are disgusted with "well enough," I know; and some day they'll be busted, and full of shrewd woe, because some fool ambition has led them far astray; the "well enough" condition can't please the hophead Jay. Old Bill, that outcast critter, might still be on his throne, had he known when to twitler, "Let well enough alone."

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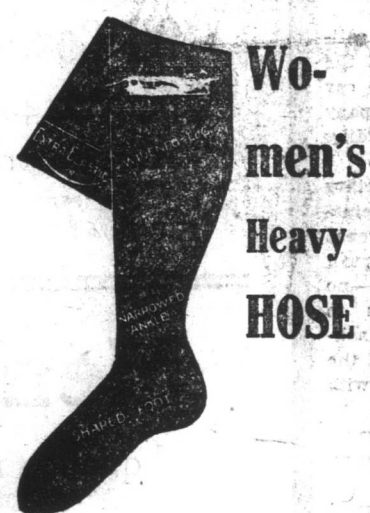
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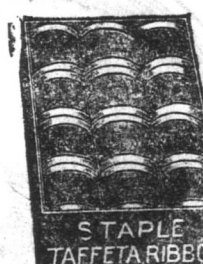
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