

back room or an attic, by no means; for how could they learn cultivated manners that way? If possible, it was the parlor, and mother was the life and heart of it all. Games and jolly times were theirs, and, because boys do dearly love something nice to eat, there was always a simple, but plentiful, lunch. They were people of very limited means and economy was necessary. Three or four eggs boiled hard, then grated fine, seasoned with salt and a little melted butter, and spread between thin slices of bread and butter, then cut into triangles and piled upon one of the prettiest plates, made sandwiches that the boys pronounced "just swell." These with a cup of chocolate for each, made them all happy; and served, as it always was, in the prettiest dishes and with just as graceful courtesy as if they were guests of social distinction; do you wonder the boys and their friends grew manlier and truer?

Sometimes it was only apples and pop corn, or a dish of nuts, or lemonade and wafers, but one never-failing condition was the dainty service.

No wonder that this mother's boys thought home the loveliest place in all the world, and proudly spoke of her as "our best girl." Do you say they were exceptional boys? No, not at all, except as this treatment developed the manliest traits of character.

Perhaps you think this mother had plenty of time, while you are far too busy to "bother with the boys." But this mother did all the house work for a family of six, not even having the help for washing and ironing. Nearly all the family sewing, too, was done by her busy fingers. A share in church work, a large class in Sunday school and many another outside demand kept her every moment busy. But to her mind the most important duty of her life was to keep the close, loving confidence of her boys. Whatever interested them, they expected her to enjoy, also—and she did.

And when, after a number of happy years together, one of her boys, with loving eyes uplifted to his mother's, and her dear name on his lips, went to what the boys had always called "The Beautiful Home," is it any wonder that the other boy said, with loving chivalry, "I'll try to be both boys to you?"

It pays to be "real friends" with the boys.

It cannot be done by spasmodic effort; it takes steady living. But is it not what God designs for us? Real friendship is nearer than kinship. "I have called you friends," is Christ's tenderest saying to His disciples.

To feed and clothe and reprove is not a mother's highest duty; but, while these may not be neglected, let her rather strive to bind her children to her heart in a friendship so true that nothing can shake it, and so strong that it will last into eternity.

BABIES IN CHINA.

When a Chinese baby takes a nap, people think its soul is having a rest—going out for a long walk, perhaps. If the nap is a very long one, the mother is frightened. She is afraid that her baby's soul has wandered too far away, and cannot find its way home. If it doesn't come back, of course the baby will never awaken. Sometimes men are sent out on the street to call the baby's name over and over again, as though it were a real child lost. They hope to lead the soul back home. If a baby sleeps while it is being carried from one place to another, the danger of losing the soul along the way is very great. So, whoever carries the little one keeps saying its name out loud, so that the soul will not stray away. They think of the soul as a bird hopping along after them.

LOVE TO BROTHERS AND SISTERS; OR THE BUNDLE OF STICKS.

A man was lying ill upon his bed. He was drawing near to his end. So he called his children together, for he had something to say to them. First he gave them a bundle of sticks and told them each to try and break it. They all tried, but not even the strongest could do it, though he tried very hard. Seeing this, their father bade them unloose the bundle and break the sticks one by one. This they all did, even the little children. Then their father told them what he meant by it, that if they all held together when he was dead, no trouble would be able to break them. But if they did not, then very little would break them one by one.

What is the bond that keeps brothers and sisters close together? It is love. We must take care not to untie love. We shall become weak if we stand alone. Therefore "let brotherly love continue" (Heb. xiii., 1).

If brothers and sisters are tempted to be angry, let them think of that bundle of sticks, and strive by God's help to keep it bound together. It is pleasant to see children sitting at the same table to eat their food, and then drawing their chairs round the same fire-side. It is like a bundle of lives. When one gets cross, then the bond gets loose. When one wants the best place, then one stick is slipping out. Take care! that stick may be broken if ever trouble comes upon it alone.

How shall we draw the bond tight again? I will tell you. One way is every night to have family prayer. Then, let all go to church together—that binds them fast, because God does it. As it is written, "He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house" (Ps. lxxviii., 6). We must ask God to do it.

By and by death will draw one out, and then another. Will that loosen the bond? Not if God has bound it.

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You will see in the churchyard each new grave placed beside the old ones, just as the chairs used to stand about the fire in the home. Those that are left begin to talk of "going home," and they mean that "long home" (Eccles. xii., 5.), where the father and mother and sisters and brothers are gathered for a time, to rise together at the Last Day.

—The best thing in life is that which is not in it, but above it. The natural is, because the supernatural spheres it.

—Life returns to God who gave it. But it is never the same life when it returns as when He gave it.

—When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.—Prov. xvi., 7.

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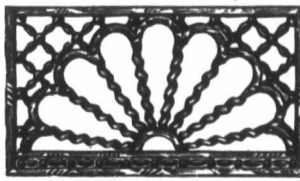
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