

HOME LIFE.

BY THE REV. J. R. McCARTY.

"If solid happiness we prize,
Within our breasts this jewel lies,
And they are fools that roam.
The world has nothing to bestow;
From our own selves our joys must flow,
And that dear hut, our home."

THERE is a great deal of sweetness in life, if we only live as we should. It is the misfortune of too many that they pass by the true sources of human joy, and look for their happiness just where it is not to be found.

The real happiness of life is not in fame and riches, but in home life; and this is made up of little words and acts.

There is no word spoken in any language, around which cluster such a multitude of sweet affections, endearing thoughts, and holy memories, as gather about that one word, *home*. We need only speak it, and it carries our thoughts away to some other spot, possibly to some other land across the sea, more swiftly than the lightning's flash. There is some place which we once called "home," and which of all places we loved most and best. We have not forgotten that place—we never can.

The dream of the home of our youth is a very common experience. When the physical senses are locked up in sleep, the soul seems to have holiday; and, as if exulting in its freedom, it roams wildly everywhere. We are transported back to our childhood days again, and experience all that we once enjoyed. We wander over the grassy mead, we climb the rugged hillside, and listen to the murmuring brooklet, whose rippling waters spoke a strange language to us in the sunny hours of childhood.

And then in our dreams there come back to us, like angelic visitants from the better land, the friends of former days. We hear the songs which gladdened our early days; we catch the smile on a mother's face, and lean for support on a father's strong arm.

We awake out of our dreams. The vision has departed as the rainbow from the cloud. Life's realities are upon us, and we say it was only a dream. But so it is—in our reveries by day, as in our dreams by night, not least nor last in the mind are the memories of home.

In our life-journey we often meet those who are, or have been, deprived of all these sweet memories. They were homeless; death had made them orphans, or drunkenness had turned home into Pandemonium, or jarring strifes had banished every hope of domestic bliss. Who does not pity the man or woman whose experience of life fails to include all that is implied in the word *home*? They are like the blind, who never saw the light of this beautiful world. If we compare life to the Temple Solomon built, then home is its "holy of holies." Into this holy of holies they have never been permitted to enter. We pity them for what they have lost in life—home life.

A home consists usually of husband and wife; or, to use words still more replete with meaning, *father* and *mother*, as owners or governors, and children, who are its crown of joy. And this is not the invention of human society, but it has its origin in Divine law. This is the foundation of all society and of all government. In the very beginning of time mankind were set into families; and when the world became peopled, they went forth from a home altar to multiply, replenish, and subdue the earth. God created the world in love. He redeemed it in love. And so He has made love, in its highest sense, the great law of the universe. The love which gave your heart a new life and bound you in cords not designed to be broken to another, was planted in your heart by Him who declared Himself to be Love. And when St. Paul would use a forcible illustration of the love which there is between Christ and his Church, he compares it to the human love between husband and wife.

What, let us ask, would this life be without that reigning principle? The warm, gushing love of child, sister, wife, husband, parent, or friend, throws over life a peculiar radiance. The impulse which brings together those who were once strangers to each other, and in a very holy sense makes them one, is that which gives to life in this world its chief value.

This affection, which binds us into families, is a Divine gift to our hearts; and when it completely takes possession of the heart, it not only lifts us into a new life, but into a better life. We always have hope for those who have learned to love.

It is no uncommon thing for people to speak lightly of those very sacred things, and to regard the formation of their matrimonial alliances as mere accidents of their being. But who does not know that there is no one thing which so materially affects society and the general destiny of mankind as this? Home life is the secret of the nation's life. A homeless nation has no substantial basis—no beginning of government. Hence it is said, "He setteth the solitary in families." God binds on us the duty of mutual aid and of mutual forbearance, while He has so constituted us that we shall attract each other.

Like does not always attract like; but, as in the elements with which the chemist deals, the unlikes attract, and thus a sort of equilibrium is preserved, so the unlikes in human life. The weak are often taken care of by the strong, and the despondent are upheld and encouraged by the hopeful. In no one thing is that great law of the universe, "unity in diversity," seen more distinctly than in this sphere of our being. No two persons are exactly alike, and yet all are alike.

Home is not always what it should be, for several reasons: First, because there are too many alliances which have no other foundation than family wealth, or convenience, or passion; and all this violates the spirit of the institution of marriage.

If persons are thrown together by any cause—however remote from the true spirit and design of marriage—then what shall be done? We answer: Study each other, cultivate heart-life, bear each other's burdens; and those who seem to be unfitted for each other may yet find in those very points of diversity the footsteps of Divinity shaping their ends—a Providence leading them even into the fields which their youthful fancy once pictured.

But how common it is in these days for people to fly from themselves to others for redress, to forego the powers which they have within themselves, and resort to the civil courts, and thus profane what God in the beginning made holy. The true way for all is to accept life as they find it. It may sometimes be hard; then "endure hardness as good soldiers." Let it be a discipline of goodness, and in the end they will thank God for what seemed to be even an ill in life. Husbands and wives may separate, but only as a necessary step to protect life or preserve honour.

But "home" includes more than walls and land and government. It implies another side—one of brightness and innocence. The home not blessed with childhood is robbed of one of its chief delights. They are its music, its life, its central charms. They may cause labour and anxiety, and often the bitterest disappointment and sorrow; and yet all these can be borne with, and must be. They come of the sin which has tainted our nature. We can only wait and pity and pray.

God gives and takes away. But what a joy to every true heart is the gift of innocent, beautiful childhood! How much of promise and of hope there is in the advent of a sweet babe in the household! That look of dependence, that clinging love, how they mould us! How much of genuine culture we have received in educating a young mind and heart! How strangely hopeful to witness the opening of the faculties of the mind as some sweet flower unfolds to the spring or summer sun!

"Home is where the heart is." The walls may be unfrescoed and unhung with pictures, the floors may be uncarpeted; no gilded halls, no blaze of mirrors, no signs of wealth may greet us; yet it is "home," because hearts loving and true are there. It is a world within a world. Affection, tenderness, attention in little things, all centre there; and, by virtue of these, it becomes, in a large degree, a compensation for the thousand woes to which we poor mortals are heir.

The family is a Divine institution. It is first in order; it existed before any other. All mere civil government exists to protect us in our homes. The army and the navy are only the outer household guard. Hence, home should be first in our thoughts and affections. How to get a home, how to keep it, how to make it the most attractive spot on earth, should be a constant study.