

Family Circle.

THE CLAIMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STEP-MOTHERS.

Continued from Page 258

But there is more frequently cause of complaint from the unwillingness of grown up daughters to take their proper share of domestic duties; and the new wife is mortified to find that she must either content herself with seeing her husband's house in confusion, or be the servant of those who ought to be her cheerful and active coadjutors. While she is desirous of pleasing only the husband of her choice, they wish to be pleasing to all; while she is content to smile at home, they are anxious to shine abroad, and gladly leave to a stranger the duty of attending to their father's comfort, and to the training of their younger brothers and sisters. It will require a clear head and a steady hand to guide aright under these circumstances.—The desired changes must be effected gradually. Let the father join his wife in requiring judicious works to be read aloud in the hours of leisure, and freely commented upon by all parties. It seems almost invidious to mention only one of the authors who have written on the duties of the female sex; but Mrs. Ellis's "Women of England," and her "Daughters of England," are works so peculiarly adapted to the case in point, that we cannot forbear strongly to recommend them. Let me advise the new mother not to talk at her stepdaughters; but kindly point out what she thinks wrong in their conduct, and induce them, if possible, to join with her in striving to correct their bad habits. Let her also avoid speaking of their faults to strangers: nothing will be more difficult for them, to forgive, than having their characters discussed in their absence, or in the presence of indifferent persons. They know that they have it in their power to make their new relative uncomfortable; and they will not fail to exercise that power if provoked to it. A strong appeal may be made to the young people, so circumstanced, on behalf of the father, whose happiness must be destroyed if he see the wife of his choice treated with unmerited disrespect and neglect.

Shall we be searching too deeply into the springs of action in the female breast, if we remind the young step-mother that there is a danger of her feeling jealous of any real or supposed personal superiority in her adopted daughters? It is possible that such a feeling may unconsciously exist: let her, therefore, examine her own heart, and carefully guard against a passion so destructive of peace.

Let us also warn the step-mother against partiality towards one or more of her adopted charge. There is so great a difference in the tempers and dispositions of children, that their own mother has frequently to struggle against this evil. Some are so lovely in person, so amiable in temper, so noble in spirit, that it is impossible not to admire and love them. Others are so much the reverse of this picture, that it becomes, even with parents, a point of duty to cultivate a feeling of love towards them.—We do not require impossibilities. It is not likely that a step-mother should feel the same affection towards one who repulses all her approaches, and defies her authority, which she must feel for one who receives her with respectful kindness, and contributes as much as possible to her comfort; but if she cannot govern her feelings, she may control her words and actions; and she will find it her best and wisest plan to show no partiality whatever.

But it is not from the children of her adoption, with all their faults and all their perversities; it is not from the watchful jealousy of her husband, who is perhaps apprehensive that she may either neglect her duty, or stretch her prerogative too far; it is not from the envious, malignant world, who mark her every action, and misconstrue her every motive; that the step-mother needs to apprehend danger: it is from the purest emotions of her own heart that she has most cause for fear.

It is when she becomes indeed a mother, when she presses the dear object of her love to her throbbing bosom, that she has need to tremble, to doubt herself, to pray for grace and strength to perform her duty to those whom she now feels she never has loved, never can love, with all the tenderness, all the devotedness, of a mother.

Let not the step-mother think we speak too strongly of the difficulty she has now to encounter. We have thought it needful to guard mothers against exciting jealousy in the first-born, by the caresses lavished on a second infant.—How much more, then, will it be needful for her to exercise caution, lest the children of another should think themselves slighted, for one she feels to be the most emphatically her own!

We are not so ignorant of the workings of a mother's heart, as to advise that any efforts should be made to check the full flow of her feelings towards the helpless object of her love. We only warn her against the injudicious display of those feelings. Let the mother indulge the natural impulses of her heart; let her exult in the new and delightful feeling her infant inspires; let her thankfully enjoy the happiness which almost overwhelms her; yes, let her confess to herself that she loves her own child infinitely more than she ever loved the child of another; but let her rest. She must on no account indulge a wish that her husband may

love her child more than his others: the wish, even, is sinful, and may tend to awful consequences. How often has the almost heart-broken husband been heard to exclaim, "My second wife was kind to my children till she herself became a mother!" And how much more frequently have the oppressed or slighted children been constrained to say, "Now that she has children of her own, we are evidently an encumbrance!"

It is true that the firmness and affection of a father may shield his offspring from open oppression, but no care on his part can guard them from the coldness and indifference, which is more galling to a susceptible mind than positive unkindness. But these things ought not to be. While the young mother feels how dearly she loves her own infant, she ought to cherish increased sympathy for those whose loss she can now appreciate: she knows that no one could fully supply her place, and should resolve so to act towards her charge as she would wish another to act towards her own child, should she be removed from it.

One of the most fearful effects of a second family is, the entire or partial alienation of the father's affections from the children of his former wife. Who can foretell the result of woman's influence on man, when that woman is the wife of his bosom, the mother of his younger children? The cares of business occupy the father's attention during the day; and if, on his return in the evening, he is required to listen to the dark catalogue of offences committed by his first children, while he is cheered with the praises and soothed by the caresses of the others, is it to be wondered at that he should in time look upon the one party as a painful burden, and on the other as a source of consolation and delight?

But we are not now addressing the wilfully unjust and malignant: we could scarcely hope that so feeble a pen as ours could reach hearts so hardened. It is our more pleasing duty to guide those who conscientiously desire to perform the duties which devolve upon them in their new relation. To her who, under these circumstances, has become a mother,—who knows, by actual experience, what is meant by a mother's love,—we would say, Do not by any influence of yours, deprive the motherless children you have promised to protect of the greatest earthly blessing they can enjoy,—a father's love.

But let not the step-mother look only on the dark and cloudy side of her prospects. An incident has been mentioned to the writer since she commenced this chapter, which is calculated to encourage and stimulate this important class of society in the faithful discharge of their duty.

A young lady was united to a gentleman who had been left with one daughter by his former wife. The lady treated this child with judicious kindness, secured for her a liberal education, and at a proper age initiated her into the duties of domestic life. It need scarcely be added, that the adopted child loved her step-mother, and strove to return her kindness by every attention it was in her power to render. In the course of a few years, a second family surrounded the domestic hearth, and were treated with tenderness by the oldest daughter, more especially when she perceived that their mother's health was failing. That fond mother died, and left her own motherless children to the care of her step-daughter. And well did the faithful and attached girl repay the kindness which had been exercised towards her. She supplied a mother's place to the young family, saw them well brought up under her own care, and most of them comfortably settled in life. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and it shall be found after many days."

A step-mother may be placed in circumstances more complex, if not more difficult, than any to which we have yet alluded. She may herself have children by a former marriage, so that there will at once be a union of two families, whose tastes and habits will be in great danger of clashing, even if their interests be not opposed to each other. If the children be young, the difficulties are much lessened, as young children easily become attached. If they be more advanced in years, it will require much judgement on the part of both parents to prevent petty jealousies and bickerings. True, self-interest may strongly induce both parents to be kind and just to each other's children, in the hope of securing kindness and justice for their own. The young people may from similar motives, be respectful and obliging to their new parent, or they may be naturally amiable and conciliating in their disposition and manners: If to these be added a liberal education and cultivated minds, there is great reason to hope that family concord may subsist; but it is on the influence of religion alone that entire dependence can be placed. If genuine piety reign in every heart, there will be little danger of discord pervading the domestic sanctuary. Parents and children who daily meet to hear the word of God, and to bow in humble supplication at his footstool, will not need to apprehend any serious misunderstanding: still, such a position involves serious responsibility on all parties. If a third family be added, the difficulty will probably be decreased, as the younger children will be equally related to both families, and will perhaps be the favourites of all.

Great as are the difficulties, and strong as are the prejudices, the step-mother has to encounter, she may certainly evince the possibility of overcoming these sources of discouragement and anxiety. By steadily pursuing the course of duty, in humble reliance on divine grace, by manifesting a spirit of judicious kindness towards those who may not have the first place in her affections, she may substantiate the claims of woman to those refined and noble attributes which are the glory of her character. She may be rewarded by the esteem and gratitude of those who realize the advantages her influence confers upon them: to her they will ever look with mingled feelings of reverence and affection; and fondly will they cherish the memory of one who has blessed them with all but a mother's love. But greater still will be her reward in heaven, when that God who has marked her conduct, and sympathized in her trials, will give her the tokens of his special approbation, and welcome her to that kingdom where the toils of duty are exchanged for endless rest, and the sorrows of tribulation for boundless joy.

And should the step-mother be instrumental in leading her young charge to give their hearts to God, and to devote their lives to his service, she may look forward with holy confidence to that day when they must all appear before the Judge of the whole earth; and when she may hear the joyful sentence: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

Geographic and Historic.

JACOB'S WELL AND THE SAMARITANS.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

Our last view of Jerusalem was very fine. We looked back from a ridge on the northern road, and saw it lying, bright and stately, on its everlasting hills; but it looked lower than from most other points of view, from the Moab Mountains forming its lofty background. We descended the slope before us, and lost sight of the Holy city forever.

Again we were struck with the vivid coloring of the scenery. All this day, the hills were dressed in brilliant hues:—the soil, red, gray and brown, the tiled portions of the brightest green; and the shadows purple or lilac. All the hills show traces of having been once terraced, and they were still completely so in the neighbourhood of our encampment this evening,—the terraces following the strata of the stone, which all lay slanting. This gives a singular air of wildness to the most cultivated spots. Here and there were basins among the hills, the red soil drooped all over with fig and olive trees, or full of corn; and the upland tracks winding among slopes all strown with cistus, iris, cyclamen, and anemones, and bristling with tall flowering hollyhocks. On we went, past deep old wells yawning in the hollows, or stone cisterns, few camels here and there, browsing in the dells; past groups of Arabs with their asses, carrying corn to the city, past stone villages crowning the steep, till, at 6 P. M., we were encamped beside a beautiful old pool. We were under the shelter of a rock whose crevices were fringed with delicate ferns. While dinner was preparing, I went back on our road—the narrow, stony road which wound round the verdant promontory opposite to our rock—to find a honeysuckle which I had seen climbing and blossoming to a great height, and I brought back a charming handful of flowers.

While we were at dinner in the tent, a sound of scuffling was heard outside; and when our dragoman next entered, he was out of breath. We afterwards heard the whole story, and were amused to find how zealous our Mahomedan servants could be in the cause of Christians. Some Arabs with their loaded mules, had come with the intention of encamping beside the pool; and, on finding the ground partly occupied, though there was plenty of room left, they became abusive, and wondered aloud what business these cursed Christians had in their country. Our dragoman resented this, and threw the speaker down over the tent-ropes. There was then a stout scuffle, and our cook coming to help, and the Arabs falling one upon another over the tent-pegs in the dark, they had the worst of it, and went off vowing vengeance. We heard no more of them, however.

The next morning we saw the Mediterranean, like a basin of deep blue water between two hills. We were not going towards it, however, but to Nabulus, the ancient Sychar, where lies that Jacob's well at which the women of Samaria were wont to draw water.

Our road lay through a most fertile valley now called Hawarrath, where the crops were splendid for miles, and the villages were thickly planted on the hills. The ground rose in a series of table lands, of which there was a succession of three, when we were leaving to the Hawarrath valley. The roads in this part of the Holy Land were mere lanes full of stones between walls, or tracks through olive grounds and meadows, or paths running along shelves of the rocks, with a bit of rocky staircase at each end, above ascending or descending which our good horses made no difficulty.

Before entering the valley where old Sychar lay, between the mountains Ebal and Gerizim we came to the fine fertile parcel of ground

which Jacob bought. The valley opens out into this wide basin; and the junction of the valley and the basin is the old well which is the supposed scene of the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Some of our party wound round the base of the hill to the well; and some (and I for one) rode by the upper path, over the shoulder of the hill, and came down on the other side. I had thus a fine view of the whole locality, of the valley where the city lies—a narrow valley, rich with fig and olive groves, and overhung by the rocky bases of Ebal and Gerizim where the square black entrances of tombs dotted the strata of the rocks. From this height, Jacob's land looked a beautiful expanse. The well is a mere rough heap of stones, with a hole in the middle, nearly closed up. What there is below ground, I cannot say, but this is all that is to be seen on the surface. It is not a well likely to be in use now, for there are many springs and shallow cisterns (though no well) between this and the town, which lies about a mile and a half off.

Everybody knows that the Jews had no friendly dealings with the Samaritans in the time of Jesus. The quarrels had then lasted above 500 years. How many suns had gone down upon their wrath! The Samaritans had wished to assist the Jews in rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem; but the Jews hated them as a mixed race, and would not admit that they had any right to share in temple worship, or any other Jewish privileges. It really was a most serious objection to the Samaritans, that they were of a mixed race, not only because the Jews believed that they held the promises on the very ground of the purity of their race; but because the intermarriages of the former Samaritan Israelites with Assyrians and others disposed them to idolatry, or at least to a worship as mixed as their race. So the Samaritans were excluded from the rebuilding of the temple above 500 years B. C. And not being permitted to help, they did all they could to hinder!

About one hundred years after, they obtained leave from the Persian court (to which both the Jews and they were subject) to build a second temple to Jehovah, and they built it on Gerizim. This was a shocking impiety in the sight of the Jews, and it was the occasion of a number of law-minded Jews, who had broken the law, by marrying heathen wives, or otherwise, and who yet wished to worship Jehovah in the temple, resorting to Sychar, to join the Samaritans, and render their race yet more mixed.—This was the quarrel which the woman of Samaria referred to when she spoke of the question, whether "men ought to worship in this mountain or in Jerusalem?" and thus explained her wonder, that Jesus being a Jew, should ask water of a Samaritan. There was also a quarrel about their Scriptures; the Jews insisting to this day, that the Samaritans had altered two or three texts, relating to these two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, in their own sacred copy of the Books of Moses; the Samaritans insisting, of course, that their was the only true copy.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A CITY OF PRIESTS—A PICTURE OF ROME IN 1847.

Rome is a city of priests. They penetrate every cranny of domestic life with the subtlety of air or light, are found everywhere from the corner to the dungeon, they cluster in the streets like musquitos, you cannot turn round without stumbling against an ecclesiastic; in short that which is a very large episode in the life of all Italian cities, is the whole life of Rome. This is the first and last impression left on the mind of a stranger. When you enter Rome, the first thing that strikes you is the immense concourse of priests of all kinds, crowding, pressing, driving, sauntering, and hanging about the streets; when you leave Rome, this same tumult of priests is the last thing you see and hear. The image of that ghostly multitude rises upon your imagination long after you have crossed the Roman frontiers; and when years have elapsed you can never think of Rome, that the same heaving multitude of sacerdotal costumes does not come upon you as vividly as ever.

CURIOS CRY OF AN AUSTRALIAN BIRD.—There is a ridiculous, owl-like bird, which sits upon the trees at night, and utters a peculiar cry, which cannot be mistaken for any thing but "more pork." The bird is, in consequence, called by that name. And I heard of an instance of a young man, of rather moderate intellect, who had gone out with a friend at night opossum shooting, and who, on hearing one of these birds for the first time, insisted on leaving the spot and returning home, being morally convinced that he heard the voice of a man calling for "more pork," and that the man must be a bushranger; and indeed who else could eat pork at that time of night?—*Sinclair's Colonial Magazine.*

GRASSHOPPERS OF BORNEO.—Some of the grasshoppers found in the island of Borneo are as large as sparrows, and in St. Edward Belcher's narrative of the voyage of the Samarang, it is stated that a specimen presented to him by Mr Brooke measured more than four inches in length, and was of a delicate grass-green color.