

Family Circle.

A Song for Mothers.

"O weary mothers, mixing dough,
Don't you wish that food would grow?
Your lips would smile, I know, to see
A cookie bush, or a pancake tree.

"No hurry, no worry, or boiling-pot;
No waiting to get the oven hot;
If you could send your child to see
If the pies had baked on the cherry tree.

"A beefsteak bush would be quite fine;
Bread be plucked from the tender vine;
A sponge-cake plant our pet would be;
We'd read and sow 'neath the muffin tree."

—Exchange.

PILLOW-SHAMS.

BY M. R. HOUSEKEEPER.

I am a quiet, patient, easy-tempered man; and I am willing to endure almost any discomfort or provocation rather than have a fuss in the family. I want these facts distinctly understood, for they are facts, as any one who knows me will admit. Becky says my patience is only another name for indolence; that I will put up with almost anything rather than have any trouble about it. It may be so; I am ten years older than Becky, and she has energy enough for half-a-dozen, so I feel as if any display of that virtue on my part would be superfluous.

I gave Becky her own way when I courted her, and she took it after we were married. She did exactly as she pleased while the girls—our three daughters—were little, and she did the same, as far as they would let her, after they were grown up. They are married and gone now, and we celebrated our silver wedding, Becky and I, two years ago last spring, upon the same day that our youngest girl was married. We have settled down, now, for a quiet, comfortable old age, or, at least, I have; I don't feel so sure about Becky.

We live in a snug little house of our own, on an income which, if small, is sufficient for our wants, for mine are few, and Becky is a wonderful manager. There are a great many points that Becky and I don't agree upon, and as she is such a remarkably energetic person we could never have lived happily together if I had not long ago hit upon a happy compromise. A proper self-respect forbids me to sacrifice my opinion to her's; as a matter of principle I have always been firm in asserting that my way was the right way; I insist upon thinking as I please, but I let Becky do as she pleases, and thus we are both contented.

The arrangement is, perhaps, a fairer one than, at a casual glance, it might seem to be. The fact is, in the realm of practical, troublesome, every-day matters, which Becky understands as well as I do, I very much prefer that she should monopolize the management and responsibility—things that I detest and she enjoys; so she takes all the trouble and does all the work, and I sustain a proper marital authority by criticising it after it is done; and upon any point upon which, in the beginning, I have advanced an opinion adverse to Becky's I sustain that adverse opinion in any event, upon principle, as I said.

I don't think Becky always has the best of the bargain, for she is so constituted that she cannot altogether enjoy even her own way, unless she can make everybody admit that her way is the best.

Becky likes to argue, too; I do not; but Becky knows very well that no silence me is not to convince me, and it is a curious fact that she will expend more words and more arguments upon me, who makes no attempt whatever to refute her, than she would upon either Rose or Emma, our oldest girls, who are exactly like their mother in their love for the last word.

Lena, our youngest, who is five years younger than Emma, is a thorough shoemaker, her mother says, and I think myself she is more like me than our other children are; she is quiet and indolent, but she is the only one who ever got the upper hand of Becky.

So long as Lena was at home Becky's will was not always law, and as Lena and I generally thought about alike on most subjects, I did use to enjoy a difference of opinion between Lena and her mother, because Lena invariably came off conqueror. But Lena is married and rules in her own home now, and Becky does as she pleases in ours.

I feared that the reader would hardly appreciate the little family episode I am about to relate, without this preamble.

The little analysis I have given of Mrs. Shoemaker's character was necessary, I thought, to make my story credible.

Among many little keepsakes and testimonials of affection which were presented to Becky, last Christmas, were two which afforded her special satisfaction. The first was a pair of remarkable pillow-shams, presented by a sister of mine who lives in Boston, and whom we know to be wealthy and aesthetic.

I am not going to try to describe those pillow-shams; there were ruffles and tucks, and I know not what beside, of a decorative nature, crowned by an embroidered hieroglyphic which my wife said was a monogram of "L. R. S."—Lemuel and Rebecca Shoemaker.

I was rather ashamed of myself, as she said I ought to be, when I found that by no effort, either of mind or imagination, could I discover any resemblance to those letters in the so-called mon-

ogram. I felt better, afterward, when I found that none of Becky's friends to whom the articles were shown, profuse though they might be in admiring adjectives, were any wiser concerning the hieroglyphic than I was, until Becky enlightened them.

Pillow-shams are one of the points upon which Becky and I do not agree; she thinks them tasteful and elegant; I consider them foolish, useless encumbrances. As usual, I keep my opinion, and Becky her shams.

Our spare-room bed had long been decorated with a pair made by Lena before her marriage, which her mother had hitherto thought too fine for ordinary use. This pair were now to be used upon our own bed, and the spare-room was to be honored with those from Boston; but, when the change came to be made, it was found that the shams did not fit the pillows.

Our pillows were oblong, the shams were square; our pillows were big, soft, luxurious, fitted by years of comfortable, familiar use to the heads that slept upon them; Becky shook, pounded and bumped them vainly, morning after morning, to bring them to the proper pincushion-like consistency necessary to display properly that monogram and its accessories, but it was not in the soft, comfortable nature of those good old family friends to assume the required shape, and Becky was unhappy.

The other present to which I have alluded, which Becky received that Christmas, was a ten dollar bill from a kind old uncle of hers, who had paid us a brief visit in December, and, upon leaving, gave Becky this gift "to buy herself a Christmas box."

It was not often that Becky had ten dollars over and above our necessary income and unreckoned on it before it came, and, consequently, it was some time before she could settle upon the manner in which it could be most satisfactorily expended. At last, one evening as we sat upon either side of our domestic hearth, she with her stocking-basket, and I with my magazine, she suddenly exclaimed:

"I know now what I am going to do with uncle Jeff's ten dollars! I will get a new pair of pillows to fit those shams."

"What will you do with your old ones?" said I. "I'll use them to fix up the other pillows; we haven't a pair in the house that will stand up as they ought to do on the bolster; they are all flabby, and need renovating. I can get one new pair, large and handsome, and have feathers enough to fix up all the others. Wouldn't you?" she added, seeing that I was about to resume my reading without making any comments upon her plan.

"The pillows suit me very well as they are," said I, "but please yourself."

Next day she went down town and bought her feathers and ticking. When the bundles were delivered, I said: "Why didn't you have your pillows made and filled at the upholsterer's? You don't know what a troublesome task you will have if you undertake to fill them yourself."

"I should have had to pay fifty cents extra, and a penny saved is just as good as a penny earned," she replied, in a tone which always silences me effectually; then she continued, "besides, I wanted to change the other pillows, so I should have to have the muck around anyhow. I don't mind the work."

"Where will you do it?" I asked; "it is too cold to go out of doors, and if you fill pillows in the house you will have down on your carpets, and everywhere else, for a month to come."

She meditated a moment; "I guess I'll take up the spare-room carpet and do it there; I want to make some changes there when I put the new shams in, and if I clean the room now I shan't have to do it in the spring."

And if you'll believe me, that energetic creature did, in the dead of winter, tear to pieces her neat, comfortable spare-room, for no earthly reason but to make a pair of pillows she did not need, upon which to display those shams!

Of course the carpet, as it was taken up, had to be beaten before it was put down. Becky paid a half-dollar to have that done, for she couldn't do it by herself, and I positively declined going out of doors, with snow on the ground, to lend a hand in the operation. It will, I trust, be considered a proof of the forbearance of which I have boasted, when I state that I never once suggested to Becky that the money thus spent would have been much more satisfactorily earned by the upholsterer.

Becky soon stitched up her ticking into a shape modelled upon that of the new shams, and after having devoted one day to emptying her spare-room of all its movable contents, devoted another hour over her self-imposed task, emerging when household duties called her forth, like a sitting hen from her nest, fluffy and feathery, the down that flew from her as she moved around settling everywhere and upon everything, a stubborn, impalpable annoyance that she did not succeed in getting rid of for a week afterward.

But Becky had her way. By supper-time, in high spirits she brought forth to display before my unappreciative eyes a pair of huge, square, unyielding cushions that, combined, would have made quite a comfortable bed for a single person, and, in addition to these, our own old-fashioned, familiar pillows, now plump and firm as their aristocratic congeners. And I had feathers enough left to fill up the pillows on the girls' bed, too," she cried triumphantly. "Don't you call that a pretty good day's work, Lemuel?"

"I certainly should if I had it to do," I replied.

"But don't you think it pays, now, really?" she persisted. "Every pillow we have is as good as new, and I can fix up all the beds so much better than I ever could before; I do think there is nothing looks neater than a handsomely dressed bed, and if your pillows are soft you just can't make a bed look nice."

"Very well, my dear," said I, "if you are satisfied I ought to be."

And I was—until I went to bed. My head had no sooner touched the pillow than I knew that comfort had vanished; too high, too hard, too big every way.

I had not been Becky's husband for over a quarter of a century without becoming as well acquainted with her ideas of comfort in a pillow as I was with my own, and I was satisfied that the new arrangement suited her as little as it did me; but, poor soul! she had had such a hard day's work, and had taken such solid comfort in the result of it, that I had not the heart to confirm by a word the misgivings which I knew she must be beginning to feel.

I did my best to endure the discomfort she had brought upon me, without complaining, but finding that it was impossible to get to sleep in what was almost a sitting posture, I at last tossed the pillow to the foot of the bed, saying, apologetically:

"It is rather higher than I like."

"Yes, they are a little too high, now," Becky conceded, "but they will soon wear down." By dint of doubling up my end of the bolster I succeeded in raising my head to its accustomed attitude, and I got through the night without serious moon-venance. Betty, like the heroine that she is, slept on her pillow, and did her best to effect the desired "wearing down."

The next night the same incidents were repeated, but this time my forbearance endured less well the trial that was put upon it, and as I tossed the useless pillow to the floor, I asked, a little testily, "Are none of the other pillows softer than these?"

"No, they are all alike," said Becky, meekly.

I tried again at doubling up the bolster, but the result upon the preceding night had not been such as to make me very hopeful at present, and finally, after an hour or so of restless discomfort, I arose, groped my way down stairs in the dark, and soon returned bearing with me an old chintz-covered lounge cushion that, in spite of the duck feathers that filled it, had been worn down in the course of a generation of hard service to a soft, comfortable, shapeless mass.

"If you just would have a little patience," was Becky's remark, as she saw me disposing myself comfortably to sleep upon this, "it would be all right in a few nights; the stiffness would get worn out of the new pillows, and we should get used to sleeping with our heads high."

Well, when you wear yours soft, you can wear mine down, too," said I; "meanwhile, I shall use the lounge cushion."

The next evening, when we retired, I took my pillow up with me, and so I did every succeeding night, except when I forgot it, and had to come down in the dark to get it; and upon those occasions I am afraid I was cross to Becky.

At other times I was magnanimously silent; the lounge pillow was very comfortable, and, as I had become thoroughly convinced that, in the matter of pillows, at least, "handsome is that handsome does," I really had not much to complain of. But my lounge pillow was a great eyesore to Becky, whose morning remark was, as she carried it down stairs, "Gracious, Lemuel, I do wish you wouldn't use that horrid old chintz cushion!"

Meanwhile, night after night she resolutely propped herself up upon her own pillow, though the prophesied "wearing down" was still imperceptible to either sight or feeling.

At last there came a night when Becky went to bed with a headache. She had lain upon the lounge with my pillow under her head all the evening, and when we retired I took it up with me, as usual.

"Take the lounge pillow, Becky; I can get along very well without it," said I, compassionately.

"Indeed I won't," was her answer.

No further suggestions occurring to me, I was obliged to let her bear her own burdens, though I could not myself sleep while I knew from her restlessness the pain and discomfort she was enduring.

About a half an hour after we had gone to bed, Becky's pillow alighted upon the floor with emphasis, and a very emphatic expression issued from her long-enduring lips.

Repeating the experiment I had made before her she tried for some time, by doubling the bolster, to obtain the comfort she desired, and—as I also had done—she found the experiment a failure. At last she rose from her bed and, taking the lamp with her, left the room. I heard her going up the cold stairs into the still colder attic.

A little later she returned, the object of her journey in her hand; a little flabby, discolored, half-yard-square pillow, that had lain unused for long, long years in the cradle it was made for. It was soft and comfortable, and without a case as it was, poor fastidious Becky placed it beneath her aching head, and at last fell placidly to sleep.

The next day, when I came to dinner, I found her making pillow cases to fit the lounge pillow and the cradle pillow. "If we have to sleep on old pillows they shall be white and clean ones, anyhow," she said with em; hasis.

"Why don't you alter the bed pillows—take a few of the feathers out again?" I suggested; and without a smile!

"Do you think I'll take a carpet up again this winter to fuss with feathers?" she replied, sternly.

"Then why don't you buy a pair of small pillows that will be handy and comfortable?"

And Becky replied again, "Do you think I'm going to spend any more money on pillows, when I have three pair now that I can't use?"

So the case stands. Night after night I carry up my lounge-pillow, and Becky draws forth from some secret hiding-place her cradle-pillow; and we repose upon those which, aiming not at style, are content to fulfill the purpose for which pillows were constructed.