

The habit of reading is only noxious when it becomes, as it often does among indolent people, a disease. Their mental emptiness produces a morbid hunger; they must for ever have a tattling paper in their hands. They can read only literature which deals with known people and with "personalities" and gossip, but of that they are insatiate. They have grafted on malice and idleness the form, but not the essence, of the habit of reading. It is a habit which is depriving lecturers in the Universities of their office, and which once threatened to silence orators. Fortunately it has been found that the speeches of orators are very useful as texts for the endless flow of printed matter which streams from the literary men. If Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield did not speak there would be nothing to write about, therefore nothing to read, and a serious void in the breakfast hour of respectable families. Bookworms ought to be anxious to have themselves marked off as a species distinct from mere newspaper worms. There is something respectable in the habit of the bookworm, which causes libraries to be kept up and knowledge to be stored, while the devourer of the flying leaves of literature is another creature, a sort of butterfly or locust. He is indolent, ignorant, and retains nothing but a confused memory of gossip, with the wrong facts affixed to the wrong names. No honest bookworm would willingly share the habit of the newspaper devourer; he would rather consort with the depraved mechanic who lives in a fantastic world of romance. In him there may be the undeveloped germs of the scholar or poet; but the languid butterfly who settles on the leaves of the lighter press is generally nothing but a scandalmonger too lazy to walk and talk and pursue his profession in the old manner of the backbiters and sneerers. For the worthier habit of reading, Fulke Greville is the best apologist, with his confession of the advantage of retiring from "the heavy wheels of fortune" to "the safe society of books and of dead men."

PRETTY MRS. OGILVIE.

All the women are jealous of her; there is no doubt about that. The first time she appears in church with crisp mauve muslins floating about her, and a dainty mauve erection on her head, which presumably she calls a bonnet, I know at once how it will be. And of course the other sex will range themselves on one side to a man; that is also beyond question. As she rises from her knees and takes her little lavender-gloved hands from her face and looks about her for a moment with a sweet, shy glance, she is simply bewitching; and I doubt if any male creature in our musty little church pays proper attention to the responses for ten minutes afterward. A new face is a great rarity with us, and such a new face one might not see more than once in a decade, so let us hope we may be forgiven.

As I gaze at the delicate profile before me, the coils of golden hair, the complexion like the inside of a sea-shell, the slender, milk-white throat, and the long, dark eye-lashes, which droop modestly over the glorious gray eyes, shall I own that I steal a glance of disapproval at Mary Anne—my Mary Anne—the partner of my joys and sorrows for twenty years, and the mother of my six children? Mary Anne's figure is somewhat overblown, her hair is tinged with gray, and the complexion of her good-natured face is slightly rubicund. But she has been a good wife to me, and I feel with a tinge of compunction, that I have no right to be critical, as I think of a shining spot on the top of my own head, and of a little box I received from the dentist, only a month ago, carefully secured from observation. But as we emerge from church I draw myself up and try to look my best as we pass the trailing mauve robes. Jack, one of our six, stumbles over the train, which gives me an opportunity of raising my hat and apologizing for the brat's awkwardness; and I am rewarded with a sweet smile and an upward glance out of the great gray eyes, which is simply intoxicating.

"We must call on Mrs. Ogilvie at once," I observe to Mary Anne as we proceed across the fields on our homeward walk. "It is my duty as her landlord to find out if she is comfortable. She is a lady-like person," I continue, diplomatically, forbearing to allude to the obvious beauty; "and I dare say, my dear, you will find her an agreeable neighbour."

"Lady-like!" cries my wife, with a ring of indignation in her voice. "I don't call it lady-like to come to a quiet country church dressed as if she were going to a flower show. Besides, she is painted. A colour like that can't be natural. But you men are all alike—always taken with a little outside show and glitter."

"But, my dear," I remonstrated, "perhaps she did not know how very countrified and bucolic our congregation is; and I really do think it will be very unneighbourly if we don't call. It must be very dull for her to know no one." I ignore the remark about the paint, but in my heart I give the assertion an emphatic contradiction.

Mrs. Ogilvie has rented a small cottage which I own in the west country village, in which I am the principal doctor. She is the wife of a naval officer who is away in a flying squadron, and has settled in our sleepy little hamlet to live quietly during his absence. All her references have been found quite unexceptionable, and, indeed, she is slightly known to the squire, as also her absent husband. "A splendid fellow he is," Mr. Dillon tells me; "stands six

feet in his stockings, and is as handsome as Apollo. Indeed, I don't believe that, for good looks, you could find such another couple in England."

The following day Mary Anne, with but little persuasion, agrees to accompany me to the cottage and call on Mrs. Ogilvie. The door is opened by a neat maid-servant. She is at home, and we are ushered into the drawing-room, which we almost fail to recognize, so changed it is.

Presently Mrs. Ogilvie comes in, looking, if possible, even lovelier than she did the day before. She is in a simple white dress, with here and there a knot of blue ribbon about it; and she has a bit of blue also in her golden hair. Her manner is as charming as her looks, and as she thanks my wife with pleasant, cordial words for being the first of her neighbours to take compassion on her loneliness, I can see that my Mary Anne, whose heart is as large as her figure, basely deserts the female faction and goes over to the enemy. Mrs. Ogilvie is very young, still quite a girl, though she has been married three years, she tells us.

"It is dreadful that Frank should have to go away," she says, and the tears swell up in her large, gray eyes: "that is the worst of the service. See, here is his photograph," lifting a case from the table and handing it to Mary Anne. "Is he not handsome?"

He is most undoubtedly so, if the likeness speaks truth, and we both say so; Mary Anne with the privilege of her sex and age, adding a word as to the beauty of the pair.

"O, yes," replies Mrs. Ogilvie, without the smallest embarrassment; "we are always called the 'handsome couple.'"

I suppose something of my astonishment expressed itself in my countenance, for she smiles, and says: "I am afraid you think me very vain; but I cannot help knowing that I am good-looking, any more than I can help being aware that my eyes are gray, not black, and that my hair is golden. It is a gift from God like my talent, a valuable one, too, I think it, and I own that I am proud of it for my dear Frank's sake, who admires it so much."

Yes, this is Mrs. Ogilvie's peculiarity, as we afterward discover—an intense and quite open admiration of her own beauty.

At first every one is astonished at this idiosyncrasy of hers, but in a little while all come to laugh at it; there is something original and amusing about it; and in all other ways she is so charming.

My wife, with whom she speedily becomes intimate, tells me that she is sure she values her beauty more for her husband's sake than her own. "She evidently adores him," says Mary Anne; "and he seems to think so much of her sweet looks. She says he fell in love with her at first sight, before he ever spoke to her."

But Mrs. Ogilvie has many more attractions than are to be found in her face. She is a highly-educated woman, a first-rate musician, and a pleasant and intelligent companion, and, more than all, she has a sweet, loving disposition, and a true heart at the core of all her little vanities. She is very good to the poor in our village, and often when I am on my rounds I meet her coming out of some cottage with an empty basket in her hand, which was full when she entered it.

In a quiet little neighbourhood like ours such a woman cannot fail to be an acquisition, and everyone hastens to call on her, and many are the dinners and croquet parties which are inaugurated in her honour. To the former she will not go; she does not wish to go out in the evening during her husband's absence—much to my wife's satisfaction, who approves of women being "keepers at home"—and it is only seldom that she can be induced to grace one of the croquet parties with her presence.

But when she does, she eclipses everyone else. She always dresses in the most exquisite taste, as if anxious that the setting should be worthy of the jewel—the beauty which she prizes so highly.

She has been settled at the cottage rather more than two years, and is beginning to count the weeks of her husband's return. We do not number them quite so eagerly, for when he comes he will take her away from us, and we will miss her sorely. It is summer again—a hot, damp summer; and it has been a very sickly summer, and my hands are full.

"I shall have to get a partner, my dear," I say to my wife as I prepare to go out. "If this goes on I shall have more to do than I can manage. There is a nasty fever about which I don't like the look of; and, if we don't have a change for the better in this muggy weather, there is no saying what it may turn to."

"I am glad the boys are all at school," observes Mary Anne, "and I think I will let the girls accept their aunt's invitation and go to her for a month."

"It would be a very good plan, and I should be glad if you would go, too. A little change would do you good."

"And, pray, who is to look after you?" asks my wife, reproachfully. "Who is to see that you take your meals properly, and don't run off to see your patients, leaving your dinner untasted on the table?"

Mentally I confess that I should probably be poorly off without my Mary Anne; but it is a plan to encourage vanity in one's wife, so I say, "Oh, I should be very well by myself;" and with a parting nod betake myself to my daily duty.

In the village I meet Mrs. Ogilvie, basket in hand. She doesn't look well, and I say so.

"You have no business out in the heat of the day," I tell her. "What will your husband say if he does not see you looking your best when he comes back?"

A shade passes over her face. "Ah! he would not be pleased," she says, rather gravely; "he always likes to see me look my very best and prettiest."

"Well, then, as your doctor, I must forbid you doing any more cottage visiting just at present. You are not looking strong, and going into those close houses is not good for you. I will come and see you on my way back."

Which I do. I find there is nothing the matter with her; she is only a little languid.

"You had better send the children away tomorrow morning, Mary Anne," I say as I get in. "Mrs. Black is very ill, and I am afraid—I cannot quite tell yet, but I am afraid—she is going to have small-pox. Of course, I will have her removed at once, if I am right; but it may prove not to be an isolated case, and it will be as well to get the children out of the way. I shall try and persuade every one in the village to be vaccinated to-morrow."

"You will be clever if you manage that," says my wife. "I am afraid some of the people are very prejudiced against it. You know when the children and I were revaccinated three years ago, you could not persuade any of the villagers to be done at the same time."

On the following day we dispatch the children early to their aunt's under the care of an old servant, and as soon as I have seen them off I go down to Mrs. Black's. To my consternation, I find Mrs. Ogilvie just leaving the house.

"I have been disobedient, you see," she says gayly; "but I promised to bring Mrs. Black something early this morning, and she seemed so ill yesterday that I did not like to disappoint her. But I am not going to transgress orders again—for Frank's sake," she added, softly.

I gave an internal groan. Heaven grant she may not have transgressed them once too often! And I hasten into the cottage, to find my worst fears confirmed. Mrs. Black has small-pox quite unmistakably.

For some hours I am occupied in making arrangements for her removal to the infirmary, and in vaccinating such of my poorer patients as I can frighten or coerce into allowing me to do so; and it is afternoon before I am able to go and look after Mrs. Ogilvie.

She seems rather astonished when I inform her what my errand is—that I want to vaccinate her (for I do not wish to frighten her by telling her about Mrs. Black); but she submits readily enough when I say that I have heard of a case of small-pox in a neighboring village (which I have), and think it would be a wise precautionary measure.

"It is very good of you," she says, in her pretty, gracious way, as she bares her white arm.

"I have never been vaccinated since I was a baby, so I suppose it will be desirable."

"Desirable? I should think so, indeed!" And I send up a prayer, as I perform the operation, that I may not be too late. I am so busy for the next few days that I am unable to go down to the cottage. One or two more cases of small-pox in the village, and I am anxious and hard-worked; but Mary Anne tells me that Mrs. Ogilvie has heard of Mrs. Black's removal, and is dreadfully nervous about herself. "I hope she will not frighten herself into it," adds my wife.

"If she hadn't contracted it before I vaccinated her, I think she is pretty safe," I reply; "but there is just the chance that she may have had the poison in her previously."

Almost as I speak a message comes from Mrs. Ogilvie, who "wishes to see me professionally." My heart sinks as I seize my hat and follow the messenger; and with too good reasons. I find her suffering from the first symptoms of small-pox; and in twenty-four hours it has declared itself unequivocally, and threatens to be a bad case. I try to keep the nature of her illness from her, but in vain. She questions me closely, and when she discovers the truth gives way to a burst of despair which is painful to witness. "I shall be marked: I shall be hideous!" she exclaims, sobbing bitterly. "Poor Frank, how he will hate me!"

In vain I try to comfort her, to convince her that in not one out of a hundred cases does the disease leave dreadful traces behind it; she refuses to be consoled. And soon she is too ill to be reasoned with, or indeed to know much of her own state. She is an orphan and has no near relatives for whom she can send, so Mary Anne installs herself in the sick room as head nurse, and as I see her bending lovingly over the poor, disfigured face, and ministering with tender hands to the ceaseless wants of the invalid, my wife is, in my eyes, beautiful exceedingly; so does the shadow of a good deed cast a glory around the most homely countenance.

For some time Mrs. Ogilvie's life is in great danger; but her youth and good constitution prevail against the grim destroyer, and at length I am able to pronounce all peril past.

But alas! alas! All my hopes, all my care, all my poor skill, have been in vain, and the beauty which we have all admired so much, and which has been so precious to our poor patient, is a thing of the past. She is marked—slightly, it is true, but the pure complexion is thick and muddy, the once bright eyes are heavy and dull, and the golden hair is thin and lustreless. We keep it from her as long as we can, but she soon discovers it in our sorrowful looks, and her horror, her agony, almost threaten to unseat her reason. My wife is with her night and day, watching her like a mother, using every argu-

ment she can think of to console her, and above all counselling with gentle words submission to the will of God. But her misery, after the first shock, is not so much for herself as for the possible effect the loss of her beauty may have on her husband, who is now daily expected. His ship has been at sea, so we have been unable to write him; and only on his arrival at Plymouth Sound will he hear of his poor, young wife's illness and disfigurement. Before her sickness she had been counting the hours, now she saw every day go past with a shudder, feeling that she is brought twenty-four hours nearer to the dread trial. At length his vessel arrives and I receive a telegram telling me when we may expect him, and begging me to break the news gently to his wife. She receives it with a flood of bitter tears and sobs, crying out that he will hate and loathe her, and that she is about to lose all the happiness of her life. My wife weeps with her, and I am conscious of a choking sensation in my throat as we take leave of her an hour before Mr. Ogilvie is expected, and pray God to bless and sustain her.

We are sitting in rather melancholy mood after dinner, talking of the poor young husband and wife, when Mr. Ogilvie is announced, and I hasten to the door to meet him.

"She will not see me!" he says, impetuously, coming in without any formal greeting. "She has shut herself into her room, and calls to me with hysterical tears that she is too dreadful to look upon, that I shall cease to love her as soon as I behold her, and that she cannot face it." And then the strong man falls into a chair with a sob.

"I don't care how bad it is," he cries; "she need not doubt my love. My poor darling will always be the same to me, whether she lost her beauty or not."

Whereupon I extend my hand to him and shake his heartily; and I know my wife has great difficulty in restraining herself from enveloping him in her motherly arms and embracing him.

"We must resort to stratagem," I say. "I will go down to the cottage at once, and you follow me in ten minutes with my wife; I will try and coax Mrs. Ogilvie to come out and speak to me, and you must steal upon her unawares."

Mrs. Ogilvie at first refused to see or speak to me; but I go up to her door, and am mean enough to remind her of my wife's devotion to her, and entreated her, for her sake, to come down to me.

"Where is Frank?" she asks.

"I left him at home with Mary Anne," I reply, feeling that I am worthy of being a diplomatist at the court of St. Petersburg, as she opens the door and descends the stairs. I take her out into the garden and begin to reprove her for her conduct, with assumed anger. She listens with eyes blinded by tears. I am on the lookout for it, hear the latch of the garden gate click; but she, absorbed in her sorrow, does not notice it. I look up and see Frank Ogilvie's eyes fixed hungrily on his wife. Her changed appearance must be an awful shock to him; but he bears it bravely; and in a moment he has sprung forward, clasped her in his arms, and the poor scarred face is hidden on his true and loving heart.

Then Mary Anne and I turned silently away, and leave him to teach her that there are things more valuable, of far higher worth than any mere beauty of face or form.

After all, we do not lose her, for Mr. Ogilvie, coming into some money, leaves the navy and purchases a small estate in the neighbourhood, on which they still reside. Mrs. Ogilvie is no longer young, and has a family of lads and lasses around her who inherit much of their mother's loveliness. But one of the first things she teaches them is not to set a fictitious value on it; "for," she says, "I thought too much of mine, and God took it from me." No one ever hears her regret the loss of her beauty; "for," through that trial," she tells my wife, "I learned to know the true value of my Frank's heart."

She simply worships her husband, and is in all respects a happy woman. Indeed, seeing the sweet smiles which adorn her face, and the loving light which dwells in her eyes, I am sometimes tempted to call her, as of yore—Pretty Mrs. Ogilvie.

OUR CHESS COLUMN.

Solutions to Problems sent in by Correspondents will be duly acknowledged.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. S., Montreal.—Letter received. Many Thanks. Also, correct solution of Problem No. 192.

Student, Montreal.—Correct solution of Problem No. 192 received.

W. T., Montreal.—Not quite correct. Try again.

E. H., Montreal.—Solution of Problem for Young Players No. 188 received. Correct.

We are much pleased to see the complimentary notice which the *Ayr Argus and Express* gives of our Chess Column. We can assure our contemporary that we are always anxious to have what may be done in the way of Chess in the Dominion occupy some part of the attention which our friends at home give to the progress of the Royal Game in distant parts of the world. Considering the number of Clubs that exist in Canada, the establishment of a hitherto successful Chess Association, and the recent commencement of a Chess Correspondence Tourney, which is being carried on with much satisfaction by a large number of players, we do not think we err when we say that interest in the game exists, to a considerable extent, amongst us.