

Woman and the Home

My Little Girl

By Cora A. Matson Dolson

The laughing guests have come and gone—

I walked as in a dream!
Was it my hand, my needle, mine
That sewed the silken seam?

She grew so graceful, slim and tall,
So sweet and maiden-wise;
Yet still for me the child-heart looked
From out her wondering eyes.

They say it was the Wedding March
I heard the players play!
"My little girl! My little girl!"
Was all my heart could say.

The Poisonous White Lies

Marc N. Goodnow

A mother, pale and haggard of countenance, with deep lines of worry and shame carved in flesh and skin which once bore the blush of youth and hope, stood dejectedly before the railing which separated the judge of the juvenile court from the court room. She seemed to carry the weight of a thousand years upon her slender shoulders and they drooped visibly under the burden. Her tear-stained face turned appealingly to the judge who had just passed sentence upon her only son, and with a faint voice and trembling lips she said:

"Your Honor, I truly don't know how this could have happened. My boy was raised in a Christian home, surrounded with the comforts of life, sent to school, watched over carefully and showered with the affections of a devoted mother. Now you have pronounced him a convicted thief. . . . Judge, I can't understand it, it doesn't seem possible, or right, or just."

"Mrs. Mailey," said the judge, showing traces of emotion in his voice, "the court can express only a small share of the deep sympathy which it really feels for a mother in such dire distress. The sight of a boy of fifteen years being sent to the house of correction is indeed one which might well arouse questions of right and justice. Still, it is the law." The judge cleared his throat, then continued: "However, your boy developed tendencies which you knew nothing about; had you known them you would not be here to-day. The system of living, our whole social scheme, which countenances the insidious little 'white lies' of life has had its baneful effect here. It is unnecessary to remind you of these poisonous 'white lies' for they have already caused all the havoc possible for them to cause in your life."

There was a slight stir in the court room and the judge ceased speaking. The boy in the prisoner's dock looked down upon his mother. He seemed the personification of terror and shame. An unnatural light flickered in his shifting eyes and he moistened his lips again and again as if to speak, but no sound came from them. To the little woman before him—she who gave him birth, who reared him through tender years and who poured out the caresses and affections of devoted worship—to her it seemed a hideous, black dream; her boy standing in that prisoner's dock, the cynosure of a hundred pairs of morbidly curious eyes, a felon at the age of fifteen, branded for life as a criminal—because he had sold fifty pounds of lead pipe which did not belong to him.

Summoning her remaining strength and courage, Mrs. Mailey walked to the dock and with a display of wonderful self-control and affectionate tenderness bade her boy good-bye; bade him farewell for two years—two of the longest years it could ever be a mother's agony to suffer; two centuries they were to her, and full of the vivid horror of that court room scene. Then she left the court room, followed by the boy's grandparents and other near relatives, the crowd by now hushed with awed respect for a mother's bleeding heart. It was the silent sympathy, one would say, for

the tortured living, which is deeper by far in its human significance than the loud lamentations for the peaceful dead.

The terrible import of that scene in the dingy court room of a big city remained many days in the memory of even the most disinterested, most casual observer. To Mrs. Mailey, its poignancy never quite left her in all the dark and bitter days to come, weighing her down not only with the deep sense of shame and sorrow, but instilling the suspicion that by no means had her boy's offence merited this awful punishment.

The stricken woman returned to the home, which from now on was to be but a dreary abiding place, full of bitter memories and devoid of hope. Her husband had died a year before. Now, she felt as lonely as the veriest outcast, though her parents tried in their feeble way to comfort her. But the ache and shame of it all overcame any feeling of solace she might have derived from exterior sources. She had ceased to weep; her tears had dried of their own scorching heat; they were unavailing in this circumstance.

She sat dry-eyed and brooding that night in the dark of her lonely sitting room; brooding vaguely, dreamily, over the events of the day which had so cruelly torn her heartstrings to shreds; brooding of the future as it might come to pass and speculating in the hope which had no chance of fulfillment. She could even have faced death with a tinge of pleasure, such was the torment of her soul, but she only prayed that her mind might become a blank from that day forth, and that two years might be blotted from her life.

And as she sat there alone, the thought came: "What had the judge meant by the poisonous white lies—the poisonous white lies—the poisonous—" The thought kept running through her mind continuously. The last word mingled with the first and the sentence soon blurred into only a hazy streak which could hardly be called a thought. "What could he have meant?" she asked herself again and again, and finally sat up with a start. Why, she knew what he had meant; she knew well enough, but at the moment she could not formulate the impression into the semblance of a thought or an idea.

Then her mind flashed back with lightning rapidity to her early married life, when, as Bertha Sawyer, she first met and loved Robert Mailey. She remembered that they had started married life with only a small fund. Their housekeeping had been extremely modest, but as the circle of their acquaintance among married people widened they found they demanded more of the comforts and luxuries of life in order to be happy. There had been constant saving in the small ways that the Maileys might hold up their heads with the others of their circle.

When Tom, her first born, was seven years old, their telephone had been installed. She could now remember distinctly the day it was attached to the dining room wall. And she remembered that she had never deposited the money for the call until she had been asked several times to do so. She had even tried to get through with her calls without paying for them at all. It seemed a ridiculous thing to be thinking about, but it loomed large in her mental vision now in spite of herself. It was as if some demon of her brain were thrusting these insignificant, trivial thoughts from dark recesses into full view. She could think of nothing else.

She remembered one day when young Tom, a fair-faced chap with golden hair, looked up at her when she had finished telephoning a friend and said with a smile and a half-wink:

"You didn't have to pay for that, did you, mother?"

It all came back to her now, and with the poignancy of knife thrusts. She saw young Tom answering the telephone in his important way and asking his father, under his breath, if he was at home to the person who had inquired for him. She wondered why she had not given thought to these things when they occurred; now they were crowding

into her brain like bees into a hive and she could couple them with the shaping of her boy's character with a clearness that startled her.

She had taken Tom downtown with her a number of times on her shopping tours and she could now see the boy making mental notes when she failed to present the conductor with her ticket as he passed. The summer Tom was thirteen years old she had gone with him into the country to visit an old schoolmate. She remembered vividly telling the station agent that Tom was under twelve years and therefore entitled to half fare, and both she and Tom had chuckled over their ability thus to save the half fare. They had decided to buy circus tickets if the usual summer entertainment came their way. And then, when they did attend the circus, Tom's mother again passed him along for a boy of twelve years and entitled to half rate, despite the careful and suspicious scrutiny of the ticket seller.

How vividly these things recurred to her memory as she sat there that night, saddened and dejected in body, mind and spirit. A hundred other instances of a similar nature flashed through her tortured mind with such rapidity that they escaped being caught in the web of her thought, though she had a clear sense of their presence and a fresh feeling of pain as each of them fitted past.

She could even mark the mileposts in her boy's career of deceit, that career born and nurtured in the practice of her own petty follies. Thus she traced to his natural disregard of the truth his early leaning toward truancy and the notes of excuse to his teacher whose signatures he had forged. These things troubled her at the time, but she seemed unable then to tell the sources from which such impulses sprang. Tom's guilty conscience at once caused him to remain away from home all one summer's night and the mother's heart bled that night as it never had done before. Her son had slept on a park's bench for fear of the consequences of his truancy and forgery when he returned home, and still, at home he had been treated leniently, not cruelly. How was she to deal with him? Probably that question harked back to the time of the first mother. There had been no answer then.

It was with sickening dread that Mrs. Mailey now realized, in this worst of all moments, how she had played with truth and honesty; how she had invited the poisonous white lies of life into her very home, there to imbibe themselves with the influence of destruction in her boy's impressionable mind. She had not meant to be dishonest, she would have sworn to the innocence of her intent, but still she could not extricate herself from the blame which every true mother imposes upon herself.

Her boy's sense of right and wrong had been tampered with, dulled, stunted, all but obliterated, and the whole horrid thing had changed his outlook upon life. He was reared in the very atmosphere of petty frauds, and the petty things were the ones which impressed the child's mind because a child's life is logically composed of little things. They were too small for the adult mind, perhaps, but the growing brain of the child seized upon them eagerly and added each to his growing store of knowledge. Where was the wrong, he may have asked later, when his mother and his grandparents did these things? They were given the sanction of the household; perhaps he had never stopped to question.

But it was too late now; her son's very soul had been poisoned and both the mother and son were reaping the bitter consequences. The utter despair of hopelessness finally dulled her mind and she lay for a long time as if in a swoon.

In the still of that night of torment a cool hand smoothed her feverish brow and a soothing voice persuaded her to retire. She roused herself from the nightmare, her lips mumbling audibly "the poisonous white lies, the white lies." And when hushed voices asked the meaning, the response was still the same—"the poisonous white lies," whereupon the owners of the voices only looked at her blankly, shook their heads pityingly and in wonderment, and did not understand.

Decorating the Dining Room

The idea that a dining-room should be treated in a somewhat heavy and subdued style dies hard. Thus it is that a white and yellow dining-room is something of a novelty. When its windows have a green and shady prospect, the effect of the yellow dining-room is really quite enchanting. One apartment of this description has the walls panelled to within seven inches of the tops of the doors, and all the woodwork is painted ivory white. Above the panelling is a stencilled frieze in shades of daffodil, orange and chestnut.

The rug is in shades of brown and dull, soft blues. The tiled fireplace is in yellowish brown. The chair seats are of chestnut brown leather. The window hangings are of daffodil yellow and white.

Affection

The great lack in man's life is lack of affection, and the worst thing about this is that woman has no opportunity to test his affection before marriage. I believe our literature is responsible for much of our young girls' blindness to the truth about love. I was reading a love-story yesterday—it was a pretty story, and I love to read them—and I came across these sentences: "I have counted the hours," he declared. In the gaze he bent upon her his bared soul looked out." This is an expression to shake the heart of a girl and to make her believe that in the very next passionate glance she receives from a man she sees a noble and beautiful soul unveiled. It is a great injustice to youth to write like that about love. If there is ever a time when man's soul is in eclipse it is when the star of passion is in the ascendant. The soul shows its true identity in dark days when the children are sick and the coal bill comes in. The wedded couple who have learned the secret of actual soul intimacy have found the perfect love, and they know that in it there is no room for pride, no question of dignity nor of personal rights and wrongs, no suspicion of slights nor fear of infidelity. The woman who finds herself married to a man to whom real affection is a stranger will never win anything by pride. The man who will not be affectionate to an affectionate woman will certainly never be so to a cold, proud woman.

I have seen women who seemed to get a lot of pleasure out of a bitter attitude toward life. They seem to take a real joy in the attitude of proud suffering. Really this is just play-acting. The woman makes her own stage settings, thinks out her own situations and is her own audience. She is a tragedy queen, and it is strange how women enjoy being tragedy queens. If you are engaged in a warfare of diverse opinions, contrary tastes, different ideals and misunderstandings with the person you married under the impression that in the glances he gave you during courtship his bared soul looked out, examine yourself closely and see if you are not fixing your position on "a little personal pride" which you believe it your duty to cherish. Try the experiment of throwing this pride away. If it doesn't affect him it will at least release you from the guardianship of something you couldn't use, and give you a chance to take up some real work—some commonplace, profitable interest which will one day stand you in stead of the devotion and obedience and conformation to your wishes which you were demanding of a person who was not qualified to render them.

"Bridget," said the mistress, reprovingly, "this is absolutely the worst pie I ever tried to eat. You told me you could bake as good pies as any cook in the city."

"So I can, mim," she said. "So I can. But all the leddies I iver wurrked fur mixed the pies themselves beful I baked 'em, mim!"

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