



# AROUND THE HEARTH

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We wonder what, and where, and when,  
And who, and how, and why,  
And if there ever was a time,  
A people, nation, world, or clime,  
Which did not voice this world-wide cry,  
"I wonder."

## "I WONDER"

THIS expression most of us use every day, and many times a day—I wonder. We wonder all sorts of things, temporal and spiritual, interesting to us and otherwise. What will happen, when will he come, where will she go, who can it be, how do they feel about it, and why do people do such things. How will the crops turn out, how shall we live on so much income, what will people think, what would we do under the circumstances, will we pass our exam. From old and young we hear this same "I wonder." Our minds are ever open to wonderment, our lips always ready to express it. We wonder if it will rain, if the sun will shine, how the elections will come off, and we keep on wondering.

We look into the eyes of a baby and wonder what it is thinking about. We wonder if it can think at all. All along the line of a child's growth and education we wonder what is best, wonder what will be the future in store for our children. Old people wonder how young folks can act so foolishly, and plunge into all sorts of gayeties, and keep on going, forgetting "the young heart hot and restless," while their own is "subdued and slow." The young wonder what old people are dreaming about that they miss so much fun, not understanding that in quiet and meditation is their chief joy and solace.

I often wonder why we make mountains of small trifles. They disappear so suddenly, and what seems a veritable avalanche of calamities one day, may in the face of a real difficulty, sink into insignificance the next. The work is behind, the sewing and mending is piled up, there is a mountain in the way. Then some member of the family is stricken with sudden illness, and where are those troubles that seemed of so much importance? How small they appear, of how little account when weighed in the balance against the greater trial!

The different views of people on the same subject cause us to wonder why there is such diversity of opinion. Take the life beyond the grave for example. It is said that more than two thousand books have been written on the subject. People eagerly buy and read such writings, and usually are open to convictions that agree with what they are pleased to consider agreeable. Most of us have vague indefinite ideas as to the future life, which is enshrouded in darkness and mystery, and we wonder why it has not been made plain to our minds instead of the doubt and uncertainty that exists.

HOW, I often wonder at things that other people do, just as I suppose they wonder at my motives. I never could understand why little children are banished from the house, and kept from the knowledge of a death in the home. There are different reasons given for this, the two principal ones being that the child heart should not be burdened with such a grief, as the remembrance may leave a deep impression of sorrow upon the young mind; and the other that it is best to let the memory be a living one, of the person as last seen in life. Two very similar cases come to my mind. The young mother's life in each went out suddenly, leaving a baby brother to the only other child in the home, a little girl of three and over. They could not understand the anxious faces, nor why they could not kiss the dear mothers who held them so lovingly to their hearts every morning of their lives. One little girl was carried in her father's arms, and shown her dear mamma, so quiet and still, cannot speak again, God has taken her away to Himself. Her little heart, bursting with grief, her sorrow overflowing in baby tears she mingled with her poor father's, and silently followed his footsteps, his arms around her at the funeral, and his hand tightly holding hers at the grave side. She had seen her mother in the casket, had seen it lowered with its bed of flowers, and understood she would never see her again. She asked so many questions, that by degrees she was led to understand that the body only was in the grave, and the soul had gone back to God. She mourned her loss with the others, cried herself to sleep, but,

The tear down childhood's cheek that flows  
Is like the dew-drop on the rose,  
When next the gentle breeze goes by,  
And waves the bush, the flower is dry.

The other little girl was kept away until all was over, and my heart always aches as I recall the bitterness of her home-coming. "Where is my mother? I want my mother," and each morning "She will be home now." The dry sobs, the broken little heart as she fought her baby battle of loneliness and distrust was pitiful. They told her the angels had taken her away, and left baby brother. With wild, passionate speech, she said she didn't like the little brother, she wanted her mother back, it was real mean to take her away,

she could not understand, and the hearts were wrung that listened to that wail for her mother.

She was such a wise little darling, she could have grasped the meaning, had she been permitted to see dear mamma so ill, then dead, and followed it on through all the bitter mazes. As time rolled on she would have only a faint memory, and she would know her mother had not deserted her. It is mistaken kindness to conceal the truth, and trust they will forget. Better far to fill the memory, and keep it fresh with thoughts of the angel mother guarding her little one; teach the baby mind to remember the precious past, for is that not what most mothers would wish, that they be not forgotten? And do not those little sorrows, encountered one by one, prepare the way for the heavier griefs that cross the pathway in later years?

I WONDER why hazing is tolerated in colleges, and if there is no oversight in those institutions strict enough to prevent it, and why it cannot be abolished. It is a relic of barbarism, a form of cruelty that should be met with "Greek meets Greek" punishment, and offenders given a dose of their own inhuman treatment. Many a young man has been deprived of reason, or his life has been sacrificed through the instrumentality of students whose love of gratifying to the full the cruel propensities of their nature to torment has been given free rein. Wherein lies the joke? To forcibly hold a young man under a cold water tap until his teeth chatter, and he is thoroughly chilled through on a cold winter night, or drive him into the country, and leave him stranded, partially clothed, miles away, is something the civilization of to-day should find revolting. It seems to me that were I in authority where such misdemeanors were committed, I would have appointed night watchmen who would patrol the corridors continuously, until the leaders of such perpetrations were discovered, and dismissed in disgrace, a full account of their conduct being published broadcast through all the institutions of learning. A few examples would have a salutary effect.

Then there is the disgraceful street rows indulged in by this same class of young men. Every few months we read accounts of the "hoodlumism" of students who disturb meetings, obstruct street traffic, and destroy property, saying nothing of making the night hideous with their yelling and shouting. Arrests are made, and investigations ordered, but the punishment is not sufficient to prevent a repetition the first opportunity. I wonder where the fun comes in, and I wonder why boys who have been brought up in homes of culture can so far forget themselves as to lend assistance in such questionable sport, and I do wonder why laws are not stringent enough to correct the evil at the outset, to stop the crazy frolics before the mischief is serious. If it required every policeman in the city to enforce order, the experiment is worth while if future good behavior could thus be ensured, and innocent persons protected.

IT has always been a cause for wonderment why people talented and proficient in music need to be urged, begged, coaxed, almost forced to respond to a call for an instrumental or vocal selection. All manner of excuses are made—they do not play without their notes, they simply *can't* play, their voice is out of order, a bad cold, anything does for a plea. A whole roomful of people, probably half of them equal to furnishing entertainment for the non-musical, and for those who have not been privileged to improve their talents, yet no one will take the initiative, and break the ice, so to speak, which once broken, others would follow.

I remember once a crowd of fellow travelers in a small village hotel parlor with a long evening before them trying to amuse themselves. Of course, no one could play, and finally a woman took her seat at the piano, and played some simple old melody she had learned in her "teens," joking over the mistakes she made, and the informality of it all placed every one at their ease.

Next day on board the steamer a passenger said to me: "That is the clever woman of this party. She saved the situation. No one else in the company would have done as she did." Her knowledge was limited, but she willingly made use of what she had, and soon the gifted pianists were thrilling the listeners with selections from the great masters.

A quiet simplicity in obeying the request of a hostess, or the behest of a parent, or teacher, is much more to be admired than the unwilling attitude assumed by many who require to be teased and entreated before they will consent to sing or play for people, who are not there to criticise, but to be pleased and entertained in an informal way, and content to approve of very modest effort. Not only in music is this noticed, but in other accomplishments as well. I am certain if either the gift of playing an instrument, or of singing were *mine*, I would not hesitate to comply with a request to execute to the best of my ability, and I wonder why others seem so shy and backward, so reluctant, and so—so stubborn.

HERE'S another wonder. Why do not mothers teach their boys to be helpful around the house?

Time and again I have visited and boarded in homes where the boys sat around with perfectly idle hands, and a pale, weary mother prepared a meal, going from pantry to kitchen, down cellar, in and out of the dining room, and not a step was saved her by the stalwart sons and their father. Bless you, that wasn't their work! Haven't they carried in wood and water, haven't they been to the barn, or mowed the lawn, fixed the furnace, and carried out the ashes? True, they have, but that is no reason why one cannot watch the toast, and another go down cellar for the butter, and lend a helping hand when there are so many things to watch all at once, the porridge, ham and eggs, skimming the milk, and slicing the bread. It always amuses me how interested they are in the proceedings, they watch every move and turn, and yet if one of them faced the problem of getting breakfast, he would regard it as an appalling task. Every boy should be taught to arrange on a tray a dainty breakfast for mother when she has one of her bad headaches from over-work or anxiety.

I have wondered at girls, too, who are afraid to be seen doing anything in the province of man's labor, shrinking from helping father or brother because it is not their work. Away with such foolishness! The very dearest, brightest girl I ever knew would don her brother's coat and carry in the wood for him if he were late getting home; she would mow the great wide lawn, and often from the breakfast table would call, "Don't wait to shovel the snow, Dad, catch your car. I need some fresh air."

"You should not be out there sweeping the steps," a woman remonstrated, "so many are passing to their office, you don't have to do that."

"I know it; but I like to do it, and say, if folks don't want to notice me when I'm sweeping, all right, I don't want their notice." She was right. If they were ashamed of her saving her hard-worked father some labor, their recognition was not worth having.

Now, I do not believe in imposing on a boy, and making of him what other boys dub a "sissy," but he need not grow up in complete ignorance of household duties, because circumstances may sometime place him where a knowledge of how to prepare a meal for himself will be a necessity. He cannot better gain that experience than by assisting mother or sister where no maid is kept, and many a boy in a pinch has turned his information thus gained into a practical channel, obtaining a position where such qualifications were required, often accompanying an exploring expedition in the capacity of cook, receiving both pleasure and profit from the trip.

Many a delicate wife has blessed the mother who taught her boy to lend a hand in times of illness and stress, and—well, we will not discuss the "many a woman" who plays on her husband's ability along those lines, and imposes on good nature to the extent of neglecting her home, knowing he will come to the rescue. A man's knowledge should not receive such a test, it should be held as a possession in reserve, and one highly valued by a conscientious wife. Of course, women do not prize such a gift in man, when he uses it to depreciate her work, or interferes too much in her household affairs.

## What to Serve at Children's Parties

PERHAPS the success of a children's party depends more on the refreshments than on the entertainment.

The dishes should be of the simplest description, and in the most attractive form. Let plentiful plates of thin bread and butter, with a dusting of pink sugar, be served. And when cakes take a place in the menu they should be mostly of the sponge variety.

Various candied fruits cut in small pieces may be mixed with the cake and a good boiled custard poured over. Decorate with more pieces of candied fruit. One or two of the whites of the eggs may be left out when making the custard and whipped up stiffly with or without cream. They should be laid over the custard and a little pink sugar sifted over all.

Ice cream, in whatever form it is served, will always please the childish appetite, but let the flavoring be vanilla or fruit juices or the fruit itself when in season.

Fresh fruit when served should be prepared before being placed on the table. The oranges should be peeled, with pith removed, and the fruit divided into sections. The pips can be taken out with the point of a knife.

Grapes should always be skinned and seeds carefully removed.

Very little in the way of meat is needed, and such meat dishes as are served should take the form of meat molds—that is, chicken, veal or even beef pounded and moulded with meat jelly or a good white sauce stiffened with a small quantity of allspice. Small molds may be made in various pretty shapes.