

Family Circle.

THE CLAIMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STEP MOTHERS.

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A female who undertakes the training of children whose mother is living, is not always placed in an enviable position. It is her duty to curb the passions, to regulate the conduct, and to cultivate the minds of her youthful charge; no light task under the most favorable circumstances, especially as the mother reserves to herself the privilege of supplying the wants and gratifying the wishes of the children. But the mother feels that she is relieved from the most difficult part of her duty, by the conscientious substitute she has obtained, and considerably observes, that "the Governess may be rather strict about lessons and morals, but she does her duty, and she cannot be expected to feel exactly as a mother does." No, the Governess, with all her difficulties, and they are neither few nor small, is not expected "to feel exactly as a mother does." But is the same charity extended to the step-mother? Is not she expected both to feel and to act exactly like a mother?

The children of a former wife should be instructed by their father and the friends of their own mother, to receive with thankfulness the attention and the kindness bestowed on them by their new relative. They should be taught to regard her not as a mother, but as a valuable substitute for the beloved parent whom it has pleased Providence to remove; as one who is able and willing to increase the social and domestic happiness of the family circle; as their father's wife, worthy of esteem; as their mother's representative, deserving of kindness and affection. Alas! we fear but few families are thus prepared to receive among them her who ought to constitute their light, and life and joy.

But is the young wife always reasonable in her expectations? Is she prepared to encounter the peculiar difficulties of her new relation, with that patient kindness, that gentle firmness, so essential to success? She must not expect to find in the motherless children of whom she is about to take charge, that full flow of love which none but a mother can inspire, which none but a mother ought to look for. Affection cannot spring up in the hearts of children at a father's command, nor ought it to be required. It must be the natural result of kindness received, and of comforts enjoyed, by them.

The Step-mother, if properly alive to the important position she holds, will make it her first object to secure the respect of her adopted children by judicious treatment, and by evincing, in all her domestic arrangements, an anxiety to promote their happiness and welfare. She will be more desirous that they should regard her as a kind and tender friend, than that they should obey her because she has been invested by their father with the name and authority of a mother. She will strive to convince them that she loves them, for the sake of that father on whom she has bestowed her hand and her heart; that she pities them, because they have been deprived of the mother who watched over their tender infancy, and trained their early childhood. She will tell them that though she may not be able entirely to fill the place of the dear parent they have lost, she hopes to be able to make them more happy than they were whilst without maternal care. She will explain to them that, though they may have to submit to more restrictions, and to act with greater regularity, than they have lately been accustomed to, they may be assured that it will ultimately contribute to their happiness.

A proper understanding of this kind will be absolutely needful between the older children of a family and the newly-arrived wife, in order to secure permanent peace. To those who are too young to know the loss they have sustained, it would be unkind to explain it; let them regard as a mother her who takes upon herself the duties and responsibilities of the maternal relation.

She who intends conscientiously to act a mother's part towards her husband's children, will be as wishful to know how to perform her important duties as a mother would be. She will find no great difficulty in securing the affection of the younger children, and she will endeavor to turn this feeling to account in their early moral and intellectual training.

We warn young mothers to guard against making their children mere playthings on the one hand, or idols on the other. These are errors into which there is no danger of step-mothers falling, and thus far they have an advantage. They are able to enforce obedience and exercise discipline, without that sacrifice of feeling from which the real mother too often shrinks; if they have to watch over themselves, it is that they may avoid either a too stringent exercise of the power with which they are invested, or a total indifference to the welfare of their charge.

But the step-mother must not only avoid evil, but she must shun its appearance in her treatment of her husband's children. The discipline which would be thought highly praiseworthy in a mother, which would be spoken of as a proof of her judgment, firmness, and self-command, would in her substitute be regarded as severe and cold-hearted. The world in general

is inclined to attribute to the latter, motives the very reverse of what they would attribute to the former, even under exactly similar circumstances. The father also is apt to think, if he be too prudent to say—"Their own mother would not have been so strict," forgetting that he might have married a woman of whom he would have been constrained to exclaim, "Their own mother would have kept them in better order."

It such be the difficulties which the step-mother has to encounter in training the young or children of a former wife, what must she meet with from the older ones? The writer's attention has been directed to this subject for several years; and the result of her own observation, and the opinion of those on whose judgment she places great confidence, is, that wherever it is practicable, the older children of the family should be sent to school for a short time. It frequently happens that there is a great difference between the personal and domestic habits of the children and their new relative. If the father have made a judicious second choice, the probability is, that he has selected a woman whose habits of neatness and order are sadly at variance with the habits of disorder and irregularity, which have crept into his household during the illness of his former wife, and the period in which he has had no sufficiently influential person at the head of his family.

It is much easier to conceive than to describe the collision which takes place when a second wife enters a household, where disorder and untidiness reign rampant. She begins zealously and actively to regulate and restrain, and is immediately reproached with destroying all comfort. Doubtless she may destroy the comfort which results from sloth and self-indulgence; but she hopes in their place to introduce the more enlivening and permanent comfort which results from industry and activity. Here let her beware how she proceeds she treads on slippery ground, and must act with extreme caution. She should endeavor to convince the judgment of those who are old enough to be influenced by reason, as well as to work on their self-love, by pointing out the many advantages which would follow a thorough reformation of domestic and personal habits. She must be content to sap and mine, before she attempts to overthrow; or in striving to raise the superstructure which sloth and selfishness have reared, she may destroy her happiness, and prevent her future usefulness.

The difficulties of her position will be lessened by placing the older children at a well-conducted boarding-school, their habits, and morals, as well as their intellectual powers, will be carefully cultivated. Such schools, we hesitate not to state, may now be found in every English county; schools conducted by men and women of education, sense and piety, who strive conscientiously to perform their onerous duties as in the sight of God, as well as of man.

The children thus removed from a home which has too long been neglected, find themselves placed in a situation where they can draw no invidious comparisons. All are treated alike, and no one can say, "It would not have been thus had my own mother lived." They see clearly that, without the restrictions and regularities which exist at school, there could be no comfort either for teachers or pupils; and they are led to conclude, that the good habits they were desired to form at home would have tended to promote their own and others' happiness. Their visits to home during the holidays will now be looked forward to with with pleasure; what seemed superfluous strictness before they left it, will now be regarded as comparative relaxation.

If the step mother be truly alive to her own welfare, and desirous to promote that of her husband and his children, she will not neglect during these visits, to cultivate the affection, and secure the esteem, of the children. She will encourage them to look forward with pleasure to the period when their education will be completed, and they will again become permanent residents at home. She will point out to them the various means by which they may be able to add to the general stock of domestic happiness, and by which they may promote their own interests, and the well being of the family. If she be a woman of enlightened piety, she will impress upon their youthful minds the necessity of seeking the only true source of peace and joy, even in that renewal of the heart, and that subjugation of the will, which true religion can alone effect. She will strive to convince them, that though the loss they have sustained may never be entirely supplied, they may with confidence regard her as next to their father, their most faithful and most judicious friend.

It is possible that a second wife may be introduced to a family where some of its members are too old to be sent to school. A new class of difficulties is here presented; and grace and wisdom from above are indeed needed in order to overcome them,—nor these alone. She must now seek the cordial co-operation of her husband; not that he may exercise his authority, and command the outward forms of respect only; these will not suffice to satisfy the heart; or to secure that cordial good understanding without which there will be no real happiness. If there be sons only, there will be little danger of collision, they will be occupied with business or with study, and will not be sorry to see

an amiable and intelligent woman added to the social party. But with daughters it will be very different, especially if they have for some time managed their fathers' domestic affairs, and presided at his table. They will feel the introduction of a second wife as a usurpation of their power and their privileges, they will require much self-command for them to retire with grace into the shade. A judicious step-mother will, under such circumstances, endeavor so to arrange domestic duties, as to give to each her appropriate share, so that the daughters may still feel themselves of importance in the household, and be prevented from suffering that enmity and bitterness which most surely lead to discontent.

TO BE CONTINUED

Geographic and Historic.

DECLIVITY OF RIVERS.

A very slight declivity serves to give running motion. Three inches per mile, in a smooth straight channel, give a velocity of about three miles an hour. The Ganges which gathers the waters of the Himalay mountains, the loftiest in the world, is, 1800 miles from its mouth, only 800 feet above the level of the sea—that is, about twice the height of St. Paul's Church in London, or the height of Arthur's Seat near Edinburgh; and to fall these 880 feet, in its long course, the water requires more than a month. The great river Magdalena, in south America, running 1000 miles between two ridges of the Andes, falls 50 feet only in all that distance. Above the commencement of the thousand miles, it is seen descending in rapids and cataracts from the mountains. The gigantic Rio de la Plata has so gentle a descent to the ocean, that Paraguay, 1500 miles from its mouth large ships are seen, which have sailed against the current all the way, by the force of the wind alone—that is to say on the beautiful inclined plane of the stream have been gradually lifted by the soft wind, and even against the current, to an elevation greater than that of our loftiest spires.

BOTANY OF THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENT ON THE SWAN RIVER.

The first impression which the visitor to this settlement receives is not favorable. The whole country between Fremantle and Perth, a distance of ten miles, is composed of granite sand, with which is mixed a small proportion of vegetable mould. This unfavorable description of soil is covered with a coarse scrub, and an immense forest of banksia-trees, red gums, and several varieties of the eucalyptus. The banksia is a paltry tree, about the size of an apple tree in an English or French orchard, perfectly useless as timber, but affording an inexhaustible supply of fire wood. Besides the trees I have mentioned, there is the xanthoxea, or grass-tree, a plant which cannot be intelligibly described to those who have never seen it. The stem consists of a tough pithy substance, round which the leaves are formed. These, long and tapering like the rush, are four-sided, and extremely brittle, the base from which they shoot is broad and flat about the size of a thumb-nail, and very resinous in substance. As the leaves decay annually, others are put forth above the bases of the old ones, which are thus pressed down by the new shoots, and a fresh circle is added every year to the growing plant. Thousands of acres are covered with this singular vegetable production, and the traveller at his night bivouac is always sure of a glorious fire from the resinous stems of the grass tree and a comfortable bed from its leaves.—*Landor's Western Australia.*

WINTER IN SPITZENBERGEN.

The single night of this dreadful country begins about the 30th of October; the sun then sets, and never appears till about the 10th of February. A glimmering indeed continues some weeks after the setting of the sun; then succeed clouds and thick darkness, broken by the light of the moon, which is as luminous as in England, and during this long night shines with unclouded lustre. The cold strengthens with the new year, and the sun is ushered in with an unusual severity of frost. By the middle of March the cheerful light grows strong.—Arctic foxes leave their holes, and the sea-fowl resort in great numbers to their breeding places. The sun sets no more after the 14th of May; the distinction of day and night is then lost.—In the height of summer the sun is not hot enough to melt the tar on the decks of ships.

THE CALMUCK TARTARS.

Calmuck women ride better than the men. A male Calmuck on horseback looks as if he was intoxicated and likely to fall off every instant, though he never loses his seat; but the women sit with more ease, and ride with extraordinary skill. The ceremony of marriage among the Calmucks is performed on horseback. A girl is first mounted, who rides off at full speed. Her lover pursues; and if he overtakes her, she becomes his wife, returning with him to his tent. But it sometimes happens that the woman does not wish to marry the person by whom she is pursued, in which case she will not suffer him to overtake her; and we were assured that no instance occurs of a calmuck girl being thus caught unless she has a partiality for her pursuer.—*Dr. Clarke's Travels in Russia, &c.*

A MEXICAN PYRAMID.

The pyramid of Cholula has been recently measured by some American officers, and its height is given as 204 feet. Humboldt, the traveller, makes it only 162 feet, but he used a barometer, while the American officers measured it with a sextant. The height of this pyramid is nearly half as great as that of the pyramid of Cheops in Egypt! The pyramid of Cholula is quadrangular in form, and truncated, the area of the apex being 165 feet square. On this altar formerly stood a heathen temple, now supplanted by the Gothic church of our Lady Loretto. The temple on this pyramid was, in the days of Cortes, a sort of Mecca, to which all the surrounding tribes, far and near, made an annual pilgrimage, held a fair and attended the horrible human sacrifices peculiar to their superstition.

OPIUM TRADE.

Mr Williams, author of the extensive, able, and interesting work on China—"The Middle Kingdom"—lately made some very interesting statements in relation to the trade in opium and its use and effects in China. He stated that the kingdom of Siam was almost broken up in consequence of smoking this article, and the accompanying advices of gambling and drinking. The liquors imported there are much stronger than any article they can make.

It was the opinion of Mr Williams that from 45,000 to 50,000 chests of opium, of 132 lbs. each, are annually imported, and this together with other articles caused a great diminution of specie which was the principal reason that government interfered with the English merchants in the sale of this drug. Since, 1840 he said one hundred and forty millions of dollars, in specie had been sent out of the country, mostly for opium, of which twenty-seven millions—six from Canton and twenty-one from Nankin—were paid to the English. To teach a confirmed opium smoker, he said, was almost hopeless. The Chinese never chew opium except to commit suicide. They commence the use of opium by smoking one or two pipes daily, and go on until they become perfectly victimised.

They limit their smoking to the expense of about one shilling per day; if they exceed that, they think themselves on the road to ruin.

This is supposed to be very detrimental to government, as the Chinese have no loans or stocks, but are thrown upon the resources of the country and the precious metals therein.—Hence the necessity of stringent measures to keep money in the country. It was because they felt that they were rapidly becoming poor that they seized and destroyed eleven millions of dollars' worth of opium.

In China, it is death, by law, to smoke opium, or engage in the trade, but the abuse is winked at by government. Throughout the greater part of China, population and production are so nearly equal, that any suspension of the latter causes a sorrowful loss of life.

Fuchau, at the mouth of the Min river, the second in importance of the five ports, spends a million and a half of dollars annually for opium. This drug is used by almost all Assam, Bouthan, and Nepal, which, next to Tibet, are the most degraded countries of Asia.

The opium revenue brings to the East India Company thirteen or fourteen millions of dollars annually. In all parts of the eighteen provinces of British India it is extensively cultivated; and next to the wickedness of the heart, said Mr Williams, the missionary has no obstacle so formidable to contend with, as the use of opium. Almost all countries east of the Himalah mountains use this article. There are three kinds, but the Chinese prefer the India opium. The Japanese know nothing of its use except for medicine, the Dutch having taught them to make paregoric and laudanum. Dr. Morrison allowed one whom he baptised to smoke, as he said he should die without it. The revenue of India is applied to the payment of officers; so that England proper does not receive any revenue from this trade.

THE FEJEE ISLANDS.

A recent number of the *Sydney* (New South Wales) *Chronicle* contains an interesting account of these islands, furnished by a person who had resided there during seventeen years, from which we gather the following particulars:—

"The group consists of upwards of fifty inhabited islands, the largest of which is Vanan-lever, about 350 miles in circumference, with a population of nearly 30,000. Viteleva, the next in size, is about 300 miles in circumference, and contains from 20 to 30,000 inhabitants. The other islands are of various sizes down to 10 miles in circumference, with an average of from 80 to 100 persons to the square mile.—The climate is extremely healthful, extremes of heat and cold never being felt; and besides the ordinary productions of the South Sea Islands, coffee, sugar and cotton are produced.—European fruits have not been found to succeed well. Pigs are numerous, but there are few cattle. The basis of the islands is coral-land although there are mountainous regions, there is no abundance of level land for agricultural purposes, timber, &c. The principal articles of export are beche mer, cocoa nut oil, and tortoise shell.