

Woman and the Home

Imagining

By Abbie Craig

On the path way down where the thistles bloomed
And the cows came up at night,
A thicket of wild, rank plum shoots loomed,
Still black in the fading light;
Nor could he pass but he searched round-eyed
For the gleam of a panther's skin,
Or a bandit, crouched like a wolf to hide,
In the brush-lined depths within.
And sometimes, late, when the sky held rain,
And the red-eyed kitchen fire
Glowed out through a foggy windowpane,
Like a beast that might devour,
A bit of punk to a flash light made
And a gun from a crooked stick,
He lay in a ragweed ambuscade
Till the dusk fell gray and thick
And his father came with the bell-led cows;
And the hired men, whistling, passed—
Teams loosed from their keen, loam-brightened ploughs—
Day's labor done at last;
Nor guessed that down through the dark-filled glade
As they kept their fearless way,
To the boy in the ragweed ambuscade
A brigand band were they.

The Woman Who Did Not Tell

For five years the Rev. Horace Reed tried in vain to interest Mr. and Mrs. Starr in the activities of his church. Although the young lawyer and his wife were not openly hostile to religion, they conducted themselves everywhere as if, as far as they were concerned, the church of Christ were not in existence.

Mr. Reed accepted a call to a larger parish, and was somewhat troubled to find, a few months later, that Mr. Starr had opened an office in the same city. He feared that the young people would attract and lead away from the church some of the young people in whom he had become deeply interested. But, greatly to his surprise, Mr. and Mrs. Starr became regular attendants at his church and members of the Sunday school. A complete change had taken place in their lives. The minister accepted the miracle without a questioning word. And it was to him, and to him alone, that the lawyer told his story.

"I think we were proud of our indifference to the church," he said. "Our idea of life was to do our daily work faithfully and then to amuse ourselves. At first our married life was happy. Then, I don't know just how, we began to drift apart. No one suspected it; we never admitted it to ourselves until one morning after we had been out late at some social festivity. I suppose we were nervously tired from the excitement and our efforts to appear natural before our friends. Over the breakfast table the storm broke. We rehearsed the petty incidents that had led to the present state of affairs, sketched boldly the undesirable characteristics we had discovered in each other and, for the first time, openly spoke of a legal separation. Then I got up to go to my office. I hurried into the library to get a book, and there stood face to face with three women of your former church who had come to interest my wife in some charitable object, and whose arrival the maid had neglected to announce. These women admitted that they had heard all we said and had hoped to slip out unseen. And then each woman in turn promised for the sake of Christ and the church never to repeat the words she had overheard.

"We did not believe that those promises would be kept. We waited for a change in the attitude of our friends; to those not our friends the spoken thoughts we had hurled at each other would be savory morsels of scandal. 'For the sake of Christ and the church,' I found myself repeating again and again. A year passed—a year of such watching and waiting as few young people, I hope, have ever known. It brought my wife and myself together

in a forgiving, and enduring love. At last we had to believe that the promises that had been made had all been kept. Through the church we were saved from disaster. In return we have given ourselves into the keeping of Christ and His church."

A Word for Gossip

When Tom's business obliged him to move from Winnipeg to a small Eastern town, Mrs. Tom, like the plucky woman she was, tried to hide her disappointment from her husband, and make the best of the new and uneventful life that she foresaw for several years to come. "I can start a Current Topics Club," she said, hopefully. "They've never had anything of the sort, and it would be a blessing to the community. These small towns are always narrow, with nothing to talk about but gossip. I'll return Mrs. Black's call to-morrow, and talk it over; perhaps I shall discover that I had a mission in coming here—who knows?"

Accordingly, Mrs. Tom went over to Mrs. Black's the next afternoon. She reported the result at dinner.

"You know the Current Topics Club I was going to start?" she asked.

Tom nodded—and waited.

"Well, I've changed my mind."

Tom looked expectant.

"I might as well tell you first as last. I returned Mrs. Black's call this afternoon, and everything went pleasantly enough until I mentioned gossip and current topics. Then she began to talk. She said that she thought it was wrong to decry gossip; for her part, she thought that being interested in your neighbors—in their joys and sorrows and hopes and ambitions—was one of the first duties of life; that she would a thousand times rather have her daughters interested in people than in dress or European politics or Eastern philosophies. Of course she didn't mean that she wanted them to say unkind things about others, but 'gossip' did not mean that; that was an instance of a noble word abused—'gossip' was really a word of friendliness and relationship; she had often wished that some one would form a society for the cultivation of gossip as a fine art; for it was intimately concerned with all the kindness and unselfishness and philanthropy in the world. I am not saying it at all as she did—she was so charming that you couldn't possibly feel hurt; I'm just giving you the idea."

"And the conclusion?" Tom asked, smiling at his wife's flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"There are three conclusions," Tom's wife answered, frankly, smiling back.

"The first is that it is well to know your field before planning your campaign; the second, that it is also well to define your terms; and the third, that perhaps current topics, like charity, should begin at home. I'm going to study gossip, Tom."

The Hunger Stone of the Elbe

A few weeks ago the newspapers reported that there was great depression in Saxony and Bohemia because the famous "hunger stone" of the Elbe, near the town of Tetschen, had come into view. This rock is usually covered by the river; it appears only when in time of drought the water has fallen far below its usual level, and it is a tradition in that part of Germany that its appearance means that a time of famine and suffering is at hand. Carved on the stone is the sentence, "Wenn du mich siehst, dann weine" (When you see me, you shall weep); and there are marks to show the point to which the river fell in various years of drought. The earliest and one of the lowest records is that of 1616. Other years are 1746, 1790, 1800, 1842, 1868 and 1900.

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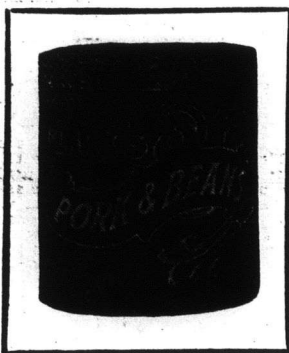

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