

Woman and the World.

The Tyranny of Detail.

Mrs. Blank, a college graduate, married at 21, after several years of independent and highly successful work as a classical teacher. She has really a broad, scholarly mind, although charmingly easy and unpretending in manner, and is of the type of woman proverbially classed as an indifferent housekeeper, if not negligent mothers. But let us see.

It think it will be found that the development of woman is not always one-sided, but that, with a cultivation of the intellectual powers, the moral and affectional nature may be, and usually are, correspondingly enlarged. My friend's love of domesticity and her maternal cravings were strong enough to induce her to renounce a congenial and secure position for the more arduous and ungratified happiness with a poor and comparatively insignificant man. However, he was the man she loved, and it mattered little to her then what her friends might say! I know that she is willing, even humbly anxious, to subordinate her intellectual pleasures to her home duties, caring above all things to acquit herself wisely and completely of these new obligations.

Another point. It needs a trained mind as well as a womanly spirit, science no less than unselfishness, to create and keep a modern home. Here the mentally disciplined and mature woman is at a distinct advantage. She is able to plan rationally for her household, disregarding, if necessary, surface considerations of custom and fashion. Her theoretical knowledge of hygiene, sanitation and chemistry are put to practical use; the principles of education and psychology, especially of child-study, she finds quite indispensable to her as a mother; and what she does not know she knows how to acquire.

Mrs. Blank, then, who is now two years a matron, is as far superior to the average untrained woman in breadth of womanly wisdom and administrative ability as she is in pure mentality. She gives herself absolutely, without reserve, to husband and child, and her capacity for loving is something wholly beyond the comprehension of the pretty, childish, trivial girl who is so often men conceive to be "so affectionate!" All this I know well; and yet, when I last saw my friend, she was looking thinner and at a distinct disadvantage; and there was an indefinable restlessness in her manner and something of a baffled expression in the honest eyes.

"Yes," she said, in response to my close hand-clasp and look of solicitude—"yes, it will do me good to confide in you—it has been growing upon me of late—this horrible feeling of self-distrust! I have made my housekeeping a business and expected to succeed upon rational principles; but now it seems to me that I have failed and I cannot tell exactly how or why. Do tell me, and there, anything wrong with this room? I have studied and analyzed it until all my critical capacity is gone, and I can't tell whether it is not all a dreary discord. Do you think that picture belongs? and isn't the far on the mantel out of keeping? I go into my friends' homes and they seem so much more harmonious and restful than my own."

"Then there is the perfect order which I find elsewhere as a matter of course—dist is simply disgraceful, isn't it? And yet I can see that this moment in the carving of the table legs! Below stairs it is even worse! I have changed servants until I am weary and sick at heart, and am still as far as ever from the ideal sanitary cleanliness of pantry and closets."

"I rise at six and am almost incessantly busy till nine or ten o'clock in the evening, and followed by the more or less broken sleep of a baby, which is inevitable with such a young one. I am strong and don't mind it; but do mind feeling that I am a slave to my work, instead of an mistress of it, which I always used to be. Then, you see, I had only the one thing to do, and had it well in hand; now the multiplicity of quite different things overwhelms me."

"They tell me of women who do all their own work; take entire care of several children, and do their sewing and the children's bedside—it must be that I am a domestic incapable! For I keep my baby in the bath and the necessary changes of clothing, the five regular and separate meals, the dress of the children, the supervision of her play and all the other needful attentions occupy me during most of her waking hours. I do make her her clothes, and in the evenings, and they are made after the most approved hygienic patterns; but even my husband inquired the other day why I didn't dress her prettily and have her look more like other children!"

"Now she is getting old enough for discipline—and do you think that so much more trained than other babies?—there are times when everything else comes to a standstill until I can harmonize our respective wills! Yet a crisis of this sort seems to be no excuse for keeping breakfast waiting a half hour on washing day."

"What would you have said to my poor, harassed friend, who had really mastered the essential of domestic economy, but was humbled by the oppressive tyranny of detail? She had lost her habitual poise and that delightful repose of manner so rare among modern women, and so characteristic of herself. In her arduous exact system, and a nervous anxiety lest something might be going wrong, she seemed to keep one eye unconsciously on the clock, and one ear open to signals of distress from nursery or kitchen."

One or two suggestions occurred to me and I offered them in a few words: "Don't lose your sense of proportion. You are doing the important things—be satisfied to leave the unimportant ones undone. Exact less of yourself; omit some of the details; have the courage to dispense with a few of the superfluous luxuries of home! You must learn, too, when emergencies arise, as they frequently will, to neglect cheerfully, systematically, and with a good conscience, everything that does not bear directly upon the matter in hand."

"Finally, observe more closely the women who have an apparent genius for detail, who bring it smilingly to a perfection which is your despair. I have usually found that they are incapable of generalization; see life, not as a whole, but piece by piece, and, while they execute much useful household work, they never succeed in making a picture."—From the Interior.

Queerly Named.

The quaintness of the Puritan names of piety—not Bible words, but words or phrases of religious import—has long been recognized. In the days of Cromwell, contemporary jokes were rife among the "Malignants," in which such worthy Roundheads as "Flight-the-good-fight-of-faith Jones," "Help-from-on-high Robbins," and "Faint-not Pillsbury," figured prominently, and were treated with scant respect. The names themselves were not burlesqued. They were so queer it would have been difficult to do so.

The longest and strangest of the combinations in use in Old England did not, fortunately, ever become popular in New England. Nevertheless, the American colonies had their share. Our own Dr. Holmes has recognized this in his ballad of Puritan times, broken up in hot milk, with a light sprinkling of salt or sugar, as preferred. A dish of stewed prunes, or a glassful of prune juice.

Breakfast—Oatmeal and cream. Dinner—One-half cupful of mutton broth. Broiled, finely chopped steak, one large spoonful, or one lamb chop, lightly broiled. Boiled rice, as much as needed. Stewed celery, with drawn butter. Gelatine, flavored with chocolate or vanilla, for dessert. Supper—Saltine crackers, broken in hot milk. Bread and butter. Stewed prunes.

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