



MRS. GREENLEAF'S NERVES.

A STORY OF NERVES AND NONSENSE.

"I've a good mind to get nervous myself," said Mrs. Greenleaf as she looked around the kitchen, filled from side to side with tools, pieces of boards, nail piles, and all those odds and ends, dear to a farmer's heart (if not his wife's), to be found in the out-shed, or ell-chamber, on a farm. "Here Silas has spent the best part of the day trying to fix the bootjack, and then said he was so nervous he must leave it for a spell, so I've got all these things to pick up and then get supper. He won't be so nervous to eat supper, I'll bet," she added grimly. Silas Greenleaf was a well-to-do farmer living in a large house on a hill in Wilton. The farm itself sloped gently away toward the river, glimpses of which could be seen between the tall maples from the back windows. Mr. Greenleaf had been a hard-working, successful man till a year or so ago, when he began to shun work and say he shouldn't live long, his health was broken down. A purely nervous trouble," Dr. Hadly said, when called in by Mrs. Greenleaf. Silas accepted this theory fully and it had gained great power over him, till at this time his nerves were a sort of lightning-rod for any strange freak. At times the family crept about the house with hushed voices, it being one of the days every noise went through his head. Then there were days he couldn't bear to go to the barn, the cows made him so nervous; another he felt something was going to happen, and so on. Mrs. Greenleaf and her daughter taking his place as best they might. Lately he had not been sleeping nights and had poor Mrs. Greenleaf up to bathe his head or wash his feet, as the case might be. He had been through the doctors in his native town all to no purpose, for one practitioner he was sure gave the medicine too strong, and another gave the same thing to everybody, so the patent medicine fever was having full sway at present. He rarely finished a whole bottle of one kind, because it didn't seem to help him. The only daughter, Martha, of much his temperament, had grown so like him during the past year, that much as Mrs. Greenleaf needed her, she had been sent a few miles away to her uncle's for a short visit. Martha Greenleaf was one of those rarely beautiful characters whose whole life was centered in her home and family. She belonged to no club and had probably never heard of the new woman. Meekly, and as her right, she had taken care of six stalwart boys, now all married and gone. Now, in this brief day, before the setting of life's sun, this dark cloud had come to darken its rays. A look of resolve crossed her face as she stood there, and she muttered, "I'll try it, come what may." That evening as they sat at supper she said, "I believe I'll try a little of that sarsaparilla you got, Silas, I feel kind of queer in one side." He looked at her in surprise, for she had always rather despised any sort of doctoring, and called patent medicine trash; but he passed it over from his side of the table, remarking, "I hope you ain't going to be sick, Martha, for I don't know what we should do, no so poorly as I be, and all." "Well, I feel awful queer, kind of shaky, believe I'll lay right down for a spell; can't you make kind of a shift to pick up these tools, Silas," said Mrs. Greenleaf as she sidled onto the roomy old lounge that occupied one side of the kitchen. With many groans and exclamations, Mr. Greenleaf restored the kitchen to something of its usual order, and then cleared the food from the table, leaving the dishes at his wife's suggestion.

That night as Mr. Greenleaf was peacefully gliding off to sleep his wife gave a stifled scream. "What ails you, Martha? I'm all of a tremble, you know I can't stand a noise like that." Mrs. Greenleaf sank back into a sigh of relief. "I don't know," she said, "when I've felt so, but just as I was going to sleep I thought a railroad train ran into me;" and so it was all night with variations till three o'clock, when Silas arose, and going to the kitchen, threw himself on the lounge and slept soundly till seven, when he was awakened by his wife who came in looking like a ghost. "Well, I declare," said Silas, as he sat up, yawning and running his fingers through his hair, "don't know when I've slept so sound, suppose it's being broke so of my rest last night." Mrs. Greenleaf thought of her many sleepless nights when he would neither rest or let her rest, but said nothing as she set about getting the morning meal, moving with a slow tread, quite unlike her usual active tramp. When Silas returned from the barn, where he had gone with unwearied alacrity, breakfast was on the table and Mrs. Greenleaf already seated with wearied look on her peaceful face. "I believe, ma," said Mr. Greenleaf, "you're nervous." A few days ago she would have repudiated the idea, but now she only said, "I believe I am, I'm having a good many of those same feelings you described to me a while back." After breakfast, instead of staying around the house and complaining as he had been in the habit of doing, Mr. Greenleaf proposed going to the woods and getting up a load of wood, but his wife said "No," she couldn't bear to stay alone, so he was forced to stay with her, and help clear up, between whistles to listen to divers complaints and nervous fancies. So it went on for more than a week, until one day, as she was getting dinner, Mrs. Greenleaf said to her husband, as he had so many times said to her, "I ain't the woman I was, Silas, and I wanted to tell you in case anything happens to me, what—" but Mr. Greenleaf waited for no more, but with an exclamation started for the shed door and from there to the woods, like a haunted man. "How beset I am," he said when he had gained the shelter of the tall trees. "I believe Martha is about half crazy, talking so much about herself and her nerves, a thing she never done before since we were married, even when the boys were sick so much, and her mother died, when Jim was too small for her to go to the funeral; and then there was the time that note fell due, and she had to take the money she had been saving so long to buy a carpet for the front room, to help pay it." What a good wife she had been! Visions of her as a rosy young bride; as a fond young mother bending over their firstborn; as a pale, anxious woman, who walked the floor with Charlie in her arms, or paused beside the cradle where Bonnie lay in his first good sleep, when all four children had the measles; as the much-needed mother saved from the jaws of death, when their long-wished-for daughter came late in life to complete their happiness. Here many little scenes in their past life came before him! Here many evidences of her deep, though silent and unselfish love! The unbidden tears rose slowly to Silas Greenleaf's eyes, as he thought, "What if Martha has felt, as I do now, while I've been complaining all this time, for more I think of it, I have told her all my bad feelings lately, and I've had a good many. Perhaps it's worn on her, but if she is spared to me, I'll try to make it easier for her." And nobly has he kept this promise, with no witness save the murmuring pines, and now, though Mrs. Greenleaf has almost forgotten how to be nervous, when everything goes wrong, as everything will sometimes, she has been known to say, "I believe I'll get nervous."—Dorothy Richardson in *Good Housekeeping*.

Potato Straws.

Cut raw potatoes about two inches long and about one-eighth of an inch thick; fry in boiling fat till a golden brown, and crisp, drain well on a sieve before the fire and serve in the center of a dish of cutlets.

The Point of View.

SOME OPINIONS AND COMPARISONS OVERHEARD IN THE FARMYARD.

Once upon a time a Man was walking through a farmyard, and as his eyes fell upon the different animals therein he began to reflect upon his superiority to any and all of them. His own state compared with that of these members of the so-called lower creation made him regard them with supercilious contempt, and to experience more than ever he had done before his own greatness.

While in this enviable frame of mind he suddenly heard the sound of voices. Listening attentively he became aware that the animals were talking, and he appeared to be the subject of their conversation.

"It must be awfully tedious," said the Dog, "to be obliged always to walk upon one's hind legs, and how awkward this Man looks! I have to walk on my hind legs occasionally out of mere complacency to my master, but I am always ashamed of myself for assuming so undignified a position. And, then, think how much of his time this unfortunate Man has to spend in dressing and undressing, and how he is forever fretting himself about something or other. Talk of a dog's life! Who would change it for the life of a man?"

Said the Hog—"It has often made me laugh to see what a lot of dishes a Man has to have when he eats his dinner, and what a fuss he makes when everything isn't just so. Really it is perfectly ridiculous. For my part, I don't see why victuals that are going to be mixed together after they are swallowed should have to be kept apart before they are eaten. I like to have everything in one dish, and I know I couldn't enjoy a meal otherwise."

Said the Ass—"Did you ever notice what absurd little ears a Man has? To my mind they are quite a deformity. And then when a Man or a Woman undertakes to sing! It is positively exasperating; so different, you know, from a fine, mellow, ear-inspiring bray."

"And then," said the Horse, "the idea of having to take one's shoes off upon going to bed, and putting them on upon getting up! It would worry me to death, I'm sure."

The Hen thought it must be very annoying to have to pick up one's food with one's hands and carry it to the mouth, when it was so much easier to take it in the mouth directly. Hands and arms, she went on to say, were only rudimentary wings—a fact, which showed that Man was an undeveloped animal.

The Cow tossed up her head as she remarked how dependent man was upon her; the Sheep said it amused him to see how the poor creature tried to make a sheep of himself by masquerading in sheepish apparel, and the Cat referred to the ridiculous appearance of a person without a tail.

After listening to these remarks, and to what the other animals had to say, the Man's step became less buoyant; and as he hung down his head in humility, he murmured:

"After all, everything depends upon the point of view."

The Fairy's Gifts.

Last night when I was snug in bed,
A fairy came to me and said:

"Dear child, three gifts to you I bring—
A box, a mirror, and a ring.

"Each morning use the mirror bright
To bring your little faults to light;

"When you have found them, every one,
Open this box, as I have done,

"And pack them quickly out of sight.
Remember! shut the lid down tight.

"We call these, best of gifts to youth,
One, Self-control, the other, Truth.

"This golden ring, Sincerity,
Wins friends wherever you may be."

I never spoke, I did not stir,
I only lay and looked at her.

And where she went I do not know,
She melted like a flake of snow.

The door was barred, the window too—
How do you souse that she got through?

I'm sure she came—so real it seemed,
But Mamma says I must have dreamed.

—J. Torrey Connor.

The Bishop's Knee Breeches.

It is told of a certain bishop that, while dining at the house of one of his friends, he was pleased to observe that he was the object of marked attention from the son of his host, whose eyes were firmly riveted upon him. After dinner the bishop approached the boy, and asked:

"Well, my young friend, you seem to be interested in me. Do you find that I am all right?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, with a glance at the bishop's knee-breeches. "You're all right; only" (hesitatingly) "won't your mamma let you wear trousers yet?"

Errors of construction are common enough with many of the most famous authors. Take the following from Thackeray: "He had his top-boots in his room in which he used to hunt in the holidays." And this from George Eliot: "She disentangled her foot from her netting and wound it up—surely a very surprising anatomical feat. One of the most amusing blunders in syntax is to be found in Morse's old geography. According to it a certain town contained 'four hundred houses and four thousand inhabitants all standing with their gable ends to the streets.'"

THE QUIET HOUR.

The Plan and the Teaching of Christ.

(Continued from page 388.)

Let us consider the teaching of Jesus in some other aspects which equally exhibit its super-human character. Here let me interpose an explanation. We refer to the New Testament as our authority for what His teaching really was. And we do so without assuming its inspiration or its authority. For whatever we think of these books, *here they are*. And even if it were not true (as it is) that no competent or intelligent scholar would deny that they contain the historical reflection of the teaching of Jesus, we should still be confronted by the extraordinary phenomenon of the sublime practical and ethical teaching which they contain, incomparably more exalted and majestic than can be found in the writings of any philosopher or sage of antiquity. And the problem would remain, Who could be the author of teaching so sublime? It is easier to believe that Jesus taught thus than that any of His followers invented such discourses or such precepts.

To return, then. Here we are face to face with the unique and wonderful utterances of Jesus Christ. Open your New Testament and read the Sermon on the Mount, for example, and then tell me where you will find another such discourse among all the literatures of the world. What sage or philosopher ever taught as this uneducated young artisan out of an obscure Jewish village? Notice the majesty, the moral breadth, the depth of insight, the sublimity of tone, which breathe through the words. It has been well said: "If any one can doubt of the superior excellence of this religion above all which preceded it, let him but peruse with attention those unparalleled writings in which it is transmitted to the present times, and compare them with the most celebrated productions of the pagan world; and if he is not sensible of their superior beauty, simplicity, and originality, I will venture to pronounce that he is as deficient in taste as in faith, and that he is as bad a critic as a christian."

But there is much more than this. There is about the discourses of Christ an indescribable tone and perfume of another world. The voice that speaks here carries with it an authority such as is felt in no other teacher or philosopher who ever taught or wrote. It somehow commands us, and holds us, and impresses us, as none other. He does not argue with us; He simply announces His precepts or makes His demands as one having authority. And our consciences yield obedience to the kindly sceptre which He wields in these matchless discourses and parables and precepts. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," says the wise man of old. Yes, and this spirit of man responds to the teaching of Jesus; recognizes its truth, its authority. I speak now of moral truth, and I affirm that we can and do perceive the validity and the obligation of a moral precept or principle when stated. It appeals to us. It finds us. It arrests us, and we cannot challenge its authority.

Now, the moral teaching of Jesus has just this quality. It requires no credentials. It is its own witness. It bears stamped upon it the image and the superscription of the King. It is coin of the realm and kingdom of the truth, and every son of truth acknowledges its genuineness and its value. "He that is of God heareth My words."

I have not time to enter upon an analysis of Christ's teaching. Such an analysis would show, among other things, its difference from all other ethical systems, its spotless purity, its freedom from any weakness, or local prejudice, or national narrowness, or superstition. It would show how it discredits many of the most boasted virtues of the age in which it appeared, and exalts from the mire of contempt to the throne of glory such qualities as meekness, humility, purity. It would point out how Jesus made love the basis and root of His entire system of ethics and of social law. But I press the question, What account are we to give of such teaching? Is it thus that men have taught? Is it a phenomenon that takes its place in the course of natural development? Is it according to the law of human development that a young, uneducated Galilean youth, born of the narrowest and most exclusive race in the world, and brought up in a society the most unenlightened, in an age the most corrupt, should suddenly rise to the sublimest height of moral truth, as far outshining other great teachers as the sun is brighter than the smallest star, and that He should reign supreme in the firmament for eighteen centuries by the pure brightness and effulgence of His own teaching and example—is this, I say, a natural phenomenon? or is it not rather an event altogether unprecedented, altogether apart from natural development, plainly supernatural? In the words of Horace Bushnell, "What human teacher ever came down thus upon the soul of the race, as a beam of light from the skies, pure light, shining directly into the visual orb of the mind, a light for all that live, a full transparent day, in which truth bathes the spirit as an element? . . . Is this human, or is it plainly divine?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]