

THE HOME CIRCLE.

IF MOTHER WOULD LISTEN.

If mother would listen to me, dears,
 She would freshen the faded gown,
 She would sometimes take an hour's rest,
 And sometimes a trip to town.
 And it shouldn't be all for the children,
 The fun and the cheer and the play,
 With the patient droop on the tired mouth,
 And the "Mother has had her day!"

True, mother has had her day, dears,
 When you were her babies three,
 And she stepped about the farm and the house
 As busy as ever a bee.
 When she rooked you all to sleep, dears,
 And sent you all to school,
 And wore herself out and did without,
 And lived by the golden rule.

And so your turn has come, dears,
 Her hair is growing white,
 And her eyes are gaining the far away look
 That peers beyond the night.
 One of these days in the morning
 Mother will not be here;
 She will fade away into silence,
 The mother so true and dear.

And, if mother would listen to me, dears,
 She'd buy her a gown of silk,
 With button's of royal velvet,
 And ruffles as white as milk,
 And she'd let you do the trotting,
 While she sat still in her chair;
 That mother should have it hard all through
 It strikes me isn't fair.

—Selected.

A MOTHER'S SECRET.

BY DR. MILLER.

The mother's life is not easy, however happy she may be. Her hours are long, and her load of care is never laid down. When one day's tasks are finished, and she seeks her pillow for rest, she knows that her eyes will open in the morning on another day full as the one that is gone. With children about her continually, tugging at her dress, climbing up on her knee, bringing their little hurts, their quarrels, their broken toys, their complaints, their thousand questions to her, and then with all the cares and toils that are hers, and with all the interruptions and annoyances of the busy days, it is no wonder if sometimes the strain is almost more than she can endure in quiet patience.

Nevertheless, we should all try to learn the lesson of gentleness in our homes. It is the lesson that is needed to make the home happiness a little like heaven's. Home is meant to be a place to grow in. It is a school in which we should learn love in all its branches. It is not a place for selfishness or self-indulgence. It should never be a place where a man can work off his ill-humor after trying to keep polite and courteous all day outside. It is not a place for the opening of doors of heart and lips to let ugly tempers fly out like ill-omened birds, and soar about at will. It is not a place where people can act as they feel, however unchristian their feelings may be, withdrawing the guards of self control, relaxing all restraints, and letting their worse self have away. Home is a school in which there are great life-lessons to be learned. It is a place of self-discipline. All friendship is discipline. We learn to give up our own way,—or if we do not we never can become a true friend.

It is well that we should get this truth clearly before us, that life with all its experiences is just our chance of learning love. The lesson is set for us,—“Thou shalt love;” “As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Our one thing is to master this lesson. We are not in this world to get rich, to gain power, to become learned in the arts and sciences, to build up a great business, or to do large things in any line. We are not here to get along in our daily work, in our shops, or schools, or homes, or on our farms. We are not here to preach the Gospel, to comfort sorrow, to visit the sick, and perform deeds of charity. All of those, or any of those, may be among our duties, and they may fill our hands; but in all our occupations the real business of life, that which we are always to strive to do, the work which must go on in all our experiences, if we grasp life's true meaning at all, is to learn to love, and to grow loving in disposition and character.

We may learn the finest arts of life—music, painting, sculpture, poetry, or may master the noblest sciences, or by means of reading, study, travel, and converse with refined people, may attain the best culture; but if in all this we do not learn love, and become more gentle in spirit and act, we have missed the prize of living, if

in the midst of all our duties, cares, trials, joys, sorrows, we are not day by day growing in sweetness, in gentleness, in patience, in meekness, in unselfishness, in thoughtfulness, and in all the branches of love, we are not learning the great lesson set for us by our Master in this school of life.

We should be gentle above all to those we love the best. There is an inner circle of affection to which each heart has a right without robbing others. While we are to be gentle unto all men,—never ungentle to any,—There are those to whom we owe special tenderness. Those within our home belong to this sacred inner circle. Much is said of the importance of religion in the home. A home without religion is dreary and unblest indeed. But we must make sure that our home religion is true and real, that it is of the spirit and life, and not merely in form. It must be love—love wrought out in thought, in word, in disposition in act. It must show itself not only in patience, forbearance and self-control, and in sweetness under provocation, but also in gentle thoughtfulness, and in little tender ways in all the family intercourse.

No amount of good religious teaching will ever make up for the lack of affectionateness in parents toward children. A gentleman said the other day, “My mother was a good woman. She insisted on her boys going to church and Sunday-school, and taught us to pray. But I do not remember that she ever kissed me.” She was a woman of lofty principle, but cold, undemonstrative, repressed, wanting in tenderness.

It matters not how much Bible-reading and prayer and catechism—saying and godly teaching there may be done in a home, if gentleness is lacking, that is lacking which most of all the young need in the life of their home. A child must have love. Love is to its life what sunshine is to plants and flowers. No young life can ever grow to its best in a home without gentleness.

Yet there are parents who forget this, or fail to realize its importance. There are homes where the sceptre is iron, where affection is repressed, where a child is never kissed after baby days are past. A woman of genius said that until she was eighteen she could not tell time by the clock. When she was twelve her father had tried to teach her how to know the hour, but she had failed to understand him, and feared to let him know she had not understood. Yet she said he had never in his life spoken to her a harsh word. On the other hand, however, he had never spoken an endearing word to her; and this marble-like coldness had frozen her. After his death she wrote of him, “His heart was pure—but terrible. I think there was no other like it on the earth.”

I have a letter from a young girl of eighteen in another city—a stranger, of whose family I have no personal knowledge. The child writes to me, not to complain, but ask counsel as to her own duty. Hers is a home where love finds no adequate expression in affectionateness. Both her parents are professing Christians, but evidently they have trained themselves to repress whatever tenderness there may be in their nature. This young girl is hungry for home love, and writes to ask if there is any way in which she can reach her parents' hearts to find the treasures of love which she believes are locked away there. “I know they love me,” she writes; “they would give their lives for me. But my heart is breaking for expressions of that love.” She is starving for love's daily food.

It is to be feared that there are too many such homes.—Christian homes, with prayer and godly teaching, and with pure, consistent living, but with no daily bread of lovingness for hungry hearts.

*“The lonely heart that knows not love's
 Soft power, or friendship's ties,
 Is like yon withering flower that bows
 Its gentle head touched to the quick
 For that genial sun hath hid its light,
 And, sighing, dies.”*

An earnest plea is made for love's gentleness in homes. Nothing else will take its place. There may be fine furniture, rich carpets, costly pictures, a large library of excellent volumes, instruments of music, and all luxuries and adornments; and there may be religious forms,—a family altar, good instruction, and consistent Christian living; but if gentleness is wanted in the family intercourse the lack is one which leaves an irreparable hurt in the lives of the children.

It is one of the superstitions of an Indian tribe that they can send their love by a bird to their dead. When a maiden dies they imprison a young bird until it first begins to sing. Then they load it with kisses and caresses, and set it at liberty over the grave of the maiden who has died. They believe that the bird will not fold its wings nor close its eyes until it has flown to the spirit-land, and delivered its precious burden of affection to the loved one there. It is not uncommon for twenty or thirty birds to be unloosed by different relatives and friends over the same grave.

There are many people who when their loved ones die wish they could send thus by some bird-messenger words of love and tenderness which they have never spoken while their friends were close