

Our Contributors.

SEVERAL HUNDRED-DOLLAR HUSBANDS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Not long ago there was a fierce newspaper fight on the question: Is marriage a failure? Some of those who contributed to that wordy warfare showed clearly that in their particular cases marriage is worse than a failure, it is a fraud. Perhaps the right reply to the question, Is marriage a failure, would be, With some people it is and with some it is a great success.

In order perhaps to show that marriage is a long way from a failure in many cases, the *New York World* offered a prize of one hundred dollars for the "best description of the best husband." Thousands of replies have been received. How could it be otherwise? Many wives admire their husbands so much that it would be a positive relief to write a description of them for nothing, but when you add a hundred dollars for pin money the motive to write becomes irresistible. Some of the descriptions have so charmed the *British Weekly* that our London contemporary publishes a solid column of them, no doubt in the hope that by study of the American model the average of the English husband may be raised. In order to help on the good work of improving husbands we place in this column a few of the descriptions given of their husbands by American wives under the stimulus of love and one hundred dollars.

The good woman deals in superlatives and cannot find time to write half her husband's devotion, not to speak of his other good qualities:—

It would take me a long time to write half my husband's devotion. He is the best, the kindest, and most loving husband, I think, and I would give my life for my husband. Marriage has not been a failure for me, and there is no happier family in this world than ours.

The next that attempts a description of her goodman considers herself "the happiest woman in the world." That is pretty strong, but it is far more pleasant to hear a woman say she is happy than to hear her say the reverse. May kind heaven multiply a million-fold the number of wives who think themselves the happiest women in the world:—

My husband is everything that is good, kind, and considerate. In spite of a small income and many privations we laugh in the face of all difficulties, and consider "the world well lost for love." In all matters of choice my pleasure and comfort are always pre-eminent, and often I withhold my wishes, knowing that he will sacrifice his for the benefit of mine. I consider myself the happiest woman in the world.

Both of these happy wives live in Brooklyn. Perhaps Dr. Cuyler married them, and if he did that may in part account for their happiness. The next has a husband that should stand a good chance for the hundred dollars:—

I have a husband who is kind, affectionate, and loving, and who does all that lies in his power to make me happy. He is a poor man and out of employment at this time, but whenever he can earn a penny he brings it home. I have to go across the park to work, and he always comes after me, and if I am sick he attends to me with every care and kindness, and in every respect he is a true, kind, loving, good, affectionate husband, and I have found him good and true in every respect since my marriage.

On the whole we think this New Jersey husband looks like a winner. If he daily lives up to the Golden Rule he should stand somewhere in the front rank. His wife also must be good because she begins by affirming that there are other good husbands. We like her style and generous sentiments:—

There are model husbands who are nearly perfect, of one of which I will write. Truly pure and conscientious, daily living up to the Golden Rule. Affable and pleasing in his manner, at home and abroad. Loving and kind as husband and father, charitable in his views and dealings, upright in business, devotedly attached to one little woman, who is all the world to him, and thinks there is no place on earth so sweet and dear as his "ain fireside." My noble husband is all this, and even more to me.

The next wife has an eye to finance, and if the facts are as stated she must have a most generous husband:—

My husband is a man you can very rarely find. Oh, he's grand in all senses of the word; he is affectionate, loving and true; a noble, generous husband and a fond and loving father. Besides all his goodness as a husband, his character is stainless. He has a mind which any man, no matter how exalted his position, could be proud of. In thought, word and deed he is a gentleman in the true sense of the word. He works so hard to make me happy. When he is paid every Saturday night he gives me every cent of it, except his car-fare.

Here is another Brooklyn man who also has some marvelously strong points. He never goes out in the evenings; he gets up and makes the breakfast, and he always leaves the money where his wife has free access to it. If the award is to be made by women, this husband will probably win the hundred dollars:—

My husband is as nearly without faults as any man can be, and commands my respect as well as affection. In all things he considers my comfort and happiness first. He never leaves me to go to the "club," for home is the dearest place to him, and he never attends any place of amusement unless I go with him.

He fully confides in me in regard to business matters, and when I wish for money I do not have to ask for it, but go and help myself, for it is kept where we both have free access to it. And now comes something which I appreciate very much. He lets me sleep in the morning and gets up and prepares his own breakfast. I believe he thinks he can make better coffee than I can! He remembers all the incidents of the day to tell me when he gets home at night, and after supper very fervently reads to me from our favourite paper, the *World*.

Quite likely the man is right on the coffee question. A healthy woman who lies in bed while her husband prepares the breakfast is not likely to make very good coffee. There is some

reason to suspect that this description was never written by a wife. Women are not likely to publish in the newspapers that they lie in bed while their husbands prepare breakfast.

If expressed appreciation is a strong point with the judges, this man will not be far away when the money is counted out:—

My husband is one of those men who never tire of giving praise to every little thing I may do for him. He always observes and tells me how nice it is and that he has the best wife out. There is rarely a meal passes without some praise as to my cooking is given. I am new at housework, and I sometimes feel as if I were not worthy of the many compliments I receive. My dress is always to his liking and taste. Than, again, he is kind, generous and loving. He knows that when night comes he has a wife and home, and he stays at home with her, although he belongs to several different lodges; he feels as if his place was by my side. He seldom sits down to read but what he says: "How much I have to thank the world for—my position, my little wife and my home, and more, my happiness."

CHRISTIANITY IN THE HOME.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

No two words have a more vital importance than Christianity and Home. Underneath the foundations of both Church and State lies the household; it is older also than either of them. There is no such school of Bible religion in the land as a happy, God-fearing home. No Church is effective for restraint from evil and for growth in all Christian graces as "the Church in the house." There stands the domestic altar. There is felt the influence that moulds character from the cradle to the judgment-seat; such a home on earth is the surest preparation for the home eternal in the heavens. Of this "Church in the house" the parents are the God-ordained pastors. A whole volume might be written on domestic religion; but I must restrict myself to a few plain hints to parents. On you rests the responsibility.

(1) In the first place make your home attractive. Put into it every adornment that you can honestly afford. Books, musical instruments and pictures are good investments; but nothing will pay better than a bright open fire in the sitting-room. It makes a cheerful rallying-place for the whole family. Ned will not be so anxious to run off to the theatre, or to the billiard-rooms, and Mary will not be so hungry for the opera or the ball-room; they will be easier held fast to a warm, glowing hearth-shrine. Around that fireside you, father, ought to spend as many evenings as possible. The music of your daughter's piano ought to be sweeter to you than the screechings of any imported *prima donna*. A pleasant game with your children, or a good romp with them, or a half-hour with them over their lessons will make them love you the more, and will banish the cares that overloaded you during the day. To have such a home you must make it. The husband that forsakes his household for his club, or any other haunt—and a wife who lives in a constant round of outside engagements do not deserve to have a home; and from it their children will soon be glad to escape. It is idle for you to forbid your children to attend places of amusement if you provide no innocent wholesome recreation for them. A Christian father of my acquaintance has a music-room in his house; and another one has a billiard table at which he plays with his own boys. When two young people united with my Church their father said to me: "I have always anchored my children at home, and now I see the fruits of it." When boys and girls drift from their homes they commonly fetch up on the lee-shore of ruin.

(2) Remember that for the religion of your household you are chiefly responsible. Sunday schools are admirable institutions; but their original object was to reach the children who had no religious instruction at home. They were never intended to release Christian parents from the obligations which God lays upon them. All the Sunday schools in the world could never have done for me what my godly mother did—in my early rural home. Books for children were scarce sixty years ago; and my juvenile literature for Sunday was the Bible, "Pilgrim's Progress" and the New England Primer. The Primer contained its doggerel rhymes, its picture and story of John Rogers the martyr at the stake, and the Westminster Catechism. That Catechism ground into my memory has been my compend of theology and sheet-anchor of orthodoxy to this day; and to its form of sound words I have held fast with as tight a grip as a Churchman holds to his Prayer-Book, or a Scotch Highlander to the plaid of his clan. God's Word, thoroughly learned, Bunyan and the Catechism were the dairy that supplied the "sincere milk" of our childhood; it was fed to us by a praying, loving mother's hand. Has half a century of boasted progress made any improvement on that strong diet? Is one hour on the Sabbath in a school any substitute for your wholesome instruction of your children in divine things all the week?

The most effective religious influence you exert upon your sons and daughters does not come from the books you teach them, but from the example you set before them. Your character streams into your children; it enters through their eyes and through their ears every hour. How quick they are to imitate! No photographic plate is more sensitive to the images which lodge there. Your irritations irritate them; your dissimulations make them tricky and deceitful; your malicious gossip sets "their teeth on edge." If you talk "money-money," they will conclude that the chief end of life is to get rich. If you prefer the play-house to prayer-meeting, they will become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If you set a decanter on your table, your boys will sip

their first wine-glasses there. If you give your child a dollar for the toy shop, a place of amusement, and only a dime for the contribution-box, you teach them that self-indulgence is ten times more important than Christian benevolence. If you live for the world, your children may die in worldliness and be lost forever. Not more surely do you provide the clothes for their bodies than you weave the habits of their lives and the mind-garments that they will be wearing after you are dead. As clothes are made stitch by stitch, so you weave their character by numberless little things and by your unconscious influence. The Christian, or unchristian atmosphere of every house is created by the parents.

Outbreaks of passion have a terrible influence on your children. A very cultured gentleman of my acquaintance pleads as his excuse when he gets enraged: "I can't help it. My father was just so; his boys are all so. We cannot live together in peace; we never did. We are all possessed of the devil." What a penalty the living sons are paying for the sin of him who first brought that "devil" into the household! Where there is a profession of piety behind all such volcanic exhibitions, what disgust for religion must be excited in the young hearts that witness them!

(3) While I would not underrate the influence of the father—for good or for evil—yet it is mainly the mother who controls the home and imparts to it its prevailing atmosphere. Susannah Wesley's hand rings all the Methodist church-bells around the globe. Commonly it is true that like mother like man. If the mother is frivolous, prayerless and fashion-loving, and careless of the spiritual influence of her children, the whole home atmosphere feels the taint. As soon try to raise oranges in Greenland as expect to find much early piety under that roof. The downward pull of the mother's influence through the week is apt to be too strong for the upward pull of the best preaching or teaching on the Sabbath. On the other hand, if she does her utmost to make the religion of Jesus attractive to her family, if she is watchful of every opportunity to lead them Christward, if she follows up the effect of the Sabbath Gospel by the more powerful influence of home gospel, there is almost a certainty that God will send His converting grace into that household. Richard Cecil, the great London preacher, says that he tried to be an infidel when he was a youth; but he could not gainsay or resist his mother's beautiful piety. He tells us that "She used to talk to me and weep as she talked. I flung out of the house with an oath, but I cried too when I had got out into the street. Sympathy is the powerful engine of a mother." Yes; and if all mothers were but fervent in prayer and winsome in their every-day religion we should behold what Dr. Bushnell calls the "out-populating power of the Christian stock." The Church in the house would feed the Church at the communion table in God's house.

(4) There are two kinds of Christianity in the home. One is a pious sham; the other is a solid reality. One parent prays for the conversion of his family, and the other sets them an example of money-worship, or fast living—and even cracks jokes, talks politics, and gives Sunday dinners after the most solemn sermons in the sanctuary. The other parent not only prays for the conversion of his and her children, but aims to lead them towards Christ. The conversation of the fireside, the books selected for their reading, the amusements chosen for their recreation, the society that is invited, and the aims set before them, all bear in one way, and that the right way. It is in the power of every parent to help, or also to sadly hinder the salvation of their offspring. "Chips off the old block" are most of our children after all. Then how vitally important is it that the old blocks be sound timber! To train up a family wisely and for the Lord requires more sagacity than to write a book, and more grace than to preach a sermon. On the preaching in the home depends the extension of the Church, and the safety of the commonwealth. May God help all parents to fulfil their high and holy trusteeship!

Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE PASSION PLAY OF OBER-AMMERGAU.

MR. EDITOR,—The little hamlet of Ober-Ammergau, nestling among the Bavarian mountains "like a handful of pearls in a goblet of emeralds," was again the animated scene of the performance of the now famous Passion Play. It is beyond doubt an interesting survival of the miracle plays of the middle ages, and on this ground alone is entitled to more than passing notice. It is performed in commemoration of a merciful deliverance from a terrible plague which ravaged the district in 1333. The peasant actors have taken the best pictures of the old masters for their guide, and have succeeded with much reverence and simplicity in giving the world a play which must take rank before any other. The eve of a performance is an anxious time for all, and by three o'clock in the morning of the day which has been so long looked forward to, the booming of cannon calls the people from their slumber, and before

Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Is bathed in floods of living fire.

The hamlet is astir with an eager, expecting multitude. The pilgrims and natives of course attend early mass in the church, and the actors receive the sacrament, and soon after, the sound of music in the village ushers in the great festival. At eight o'clock three canonades that boom and rumble among the hills announces that the Passion Play is about to commence. The effect of modern artillery in connection with