

MINNIE MAY'S DEPARTMENT.

MY DEAR NIECES,—

This is the season "when the stormy winds do blow," and during the past few weeks they have blown very vigorously at times. The barometer has been standing at "Stormy" and "Very stormy," and we have heard of many disasters on sea and land. But let us shut out the howling of the wind and its eerie sighing and sobbing among the trees, and rather than sit and listen, let us have a talk about storms.

Well, there are many kinds of storms. There are wind storms, and rain storms, and snow storms, and thunder storms, and storms in teacups, and storms at sea, and so on. But there is still another kind, and that is when the Home-Barometer stands at "Storm"—when there is unpleasantness in the home. How much brighter our homes would be if gentle manners were more prevalent there! There are people whose manners are considered charming when they are among strangers, but who never dream of carrying these pleasant manners into their own homes. They even think that in the family circle they are at liberty to be as rude and uncourteous as they please. How often at breakfast do we see one or two of the family buried in the newspaper instead of taking part in the general conversation, and so helping to make it a cheery meal! They say, "It is only at home I do that, of course. I should not dream of doing it elsewhere." A poor reason, and a mean one too. Are one's own relations to receive less courtesy than strangers? Surely that is a poor compliment to pay oneself.

We must try to avoid hurting the feelings of others by personal remarks. Living with people allows us to find out their little failings, and as Tennyson says, we should "take no mean advantage" of our knowledge; and yet sometimes the most sensitive spot is made the subject of some bitter and cruel speech by those who should be the very ones to shield from hurt.

When we go outside the home to our daily duties we find hundreds of trifles to annoy us and ruffle our tempers. Do not let us carry this ruffled feeling home with us, and so make others uncomfortable; but leave it outside the door—forget it if possible—and try to be as bright as we can, remembering that those whose daily work lies in the home have their troubles just as well as the others whose duties take them out of the home. A pleasant greeting on both sides when one gets home again after the day's labors are over will do a great deal towards soothing some worry and maintaining peace in the family. We should refrain from disputing, and should hold back our opinions if we find that others do not like them. There is no need for too much self-assertion. Familiarity breeds contempt, they say, and we know our own family so well that this familiarity may lead to argument, and that to high words, and so the mischief is made. Now, our duty—which we should always do, but *don't*—is clear: we should treat our own family as we would strangers in this respect. Listen to the story of the grievance patiently and sympathetically, and try to smooth it away. But beware of the conciliatory manner, which irritates instead of soothes, and with the Scotchman "aye remember that a soft answer turneth away wrath—forye it maketh them all the madder."

Frequently, nay, very often, in a family where courtesy is unknown, does one hear such ugly remarks as "Shut up!" or "What a fool you are!" Strange that those contemptible phrases should be addressed to loved ones, when they are carefully avoided towards acquaintances! But so it is—we are far less polite (as a rule) to our own flesh and blood than we are to strangers. I do not mean that *we*, my nieces and I, go to such a length as to use the above objectionable expressions—*ladies* do not—

but the fact remains that we are not so courteous to our own as to those outside the home. We should try to remedy this; and what better time could we find than now when the New Year is young? These vulgar retorts never do any good, but usually degenerate into a quarrel—a deplorable scene anywhere, but especially in the home.

Careless and thoughtless habits too may bring the barometer around to "Storm." A door left open or shut with a bang; a paper thrown on the floor; books tossed about; humming, to the annoyance of others; hats and coats left anywhere; grumbling at everything;—these small things are large enough to cause a domestic storm. We cannot call them trifles, for they proceed from selfishness and disregard for the comfort of others. Sometimes one hears such a remark as "She is so patronizing!" Now, nobody can bear to be patronized; it seems to rouse antagonistic feelings at once. Besides, it implies a consciousness of one's superiority. Some people think that a patronizing style is the correct thing to use towards those who may be of a lower social standing than themselves. This is a great mistake. Everybody is human, and a kindly and sympathetic manner will do far more good than anything else, whatever one's station may be. Try to keep the domestic barometer always standing at "Fine Weather," so that whatever kind of storm may rage outside, it may be continual peace and happiness in the home.

"Let gentle thoughts abide within,
And gentle deeds will follow them."

Your loving old Auntie, MINNIE MAY.



"THE DOCTOR."

"The Doctor."

This beautiful and touching picture by the celebrated artist, Luke Fildes, is well known and has been widely copied—and no wonder, for it tells a story which goes straight to the heart. There can be but few who do not feel a thrill of deepest sympathy with those grieving ones who, in wordless agony of suspense, await the verdict, "To live" or "to die"? The unconscious child lies hovering on the brink and seems as though already gone over to that great and mysterious beyond—so inert is the attitude born of utter weakness. But this is not death, for there sits one who, with rare skill, helped by God's mercy, is straining every nerve to bring back to strength this frail flower. The whole figure and expression of "The Doctor" is forceful to a degree, as he watches that young face, the light thrown upon it from the raised lamp-shade. The poor mother, with head bowed on her arms, is unable to longer look upon her darling. The father seems as though *compelled* to look, and that quiet watcher with the kind and noble face, so full of strength and self-control, will stay at his post unflinchingly, and will make no sign until he is *sure*, and we think that fair child will be saved for those who love her!

There is so much artistic merit in this picture, that one might linger long over its discussion. The wonderfully natural position of the child's hands is a study in itself, but somehow it seems almost sacrilege to analyze thus. The picture is simply a grand study in human nature, and its masterly drawing stands second to its exquisite conception.

Christmas with My Old Mother.

Oh! I never felt so happy as upon last Christmas night,
Coming near the little home where mother lives,
The familiar scenes of boyhood, and the window with the light,
And the joy anticipation ever gives.
Eager fingers tingled gladly as I opened the old gate,
And my feet impatient hurried to the door;
But her ear had caught my footsteps, and her love remembered well!
On the threshold mother met me as of yore.

Oh! I clasped her to my bosom, as she used to clasp her boy,
While tears and loving kisses answered mine;
Then she led me to the table, where the good things kept for me
Were all waiting, with the chair of auld lang syne.
She remembered ev'rything I liked, and how to make it best,
Serving me as though my place were still a child's;
Cakes and jellies, homemade candy, and ev'ry choicest thing,
Heaped before me, with caresses and her smiles.

Oh! I seemed a very boy again as we sat talking there,
And she told me how she had thought of, prayed for me;
How I'd been a joy and comfort to her all her widowed life;
And her spirit, like an angel's, I could see.
How in ev'ry whistling boy that passed she heard me coming home,
So she had love-waited for me all the years;
Then, arising from the table, she would stand caressing me,
As she breathed on me a blessing through her tears.

When I went to bed she came to me and tucked the covers round
"In that dear old way that only mothers know."
Oh! I felt so blissful, peaceful, and so full of tender love
That all silent came my glad heart's overflow.
Happy, grateful, joyful tears I shed; ay, cried myself to sleep,
Dreaming in a heavenly dream-land free from cares;
In my boyhood home and bed again, the covers tucked around,
Safely guarded by my dear old mother's prayers.
Lu B. Calk, in Harper's Bazar.

Our Own.

If I had known in the morning,
How wearily all the day
The words, "un-kind,"
Would trouble my mind
I said when you went away,
I had been more careful, darling,
Nor given you needless pain;
But we vex "our own"
With look and tone
We may nevertake back again.

For though in the quiet evening
You may give me the kiss
Of peace,
Yet it might be
That never for me!

The pain of the heart should cease.
How many go forth in the morning
That never come home at night!
And hearts have broken
For harsh words spoken
That sorrow can ne'er set right.

We have careful thoughts for the stranger,
And smiles for the sometime guest;
But oft for "our own"
The bitter tone,
Though we love "our own" the best.
Ah, lips with the curve impatient!

Ah, brow with that look of scorn;
"Twere a cruel fate
Were the night too late
To undo the work of morn."

—Selected.

The Old Year and the New.

BY LOA B. ROMAIN.

Toll, toll, ye bells!
The Old Year calmly dies;
E'en now he shrouded lies;
So neath the Past's still wave
He'll seek his lowly grave.
Farewell! Old Year, farewell!
Kinds deeds still live to tell
Thy life was not in vain;
Fond memories still remain
A monument to thee.
Within thy bosom we
Would bury all regret,
Mistakes and wrongs forget,
Our sins bid turn to dust;
In God we'll hope and trust.
Alas! those precious hours,
Like golden-hearted flowers
That bloom, but fade and fold
Ere we have caught their gold,
Have vanished; they have flown;
They are no more our own.
True gems those bygone days,
Those priceless, countless ways
For good we might have done,
All, all are dead—are gone.
Toll, toll, ye bells!

Ring, ring, ye bells!
Send tidings far and near
Proclaim the glad New Year.
Upon his infant brow
Peace, love and pureness glow.
O God forbid that we
Should mar that purity.
Thrice welcome, bright New Year,
We hail thee without fear.