

THE HOUSEHOLD.

THE EVOLUTION OF MRS. THOMAS.

BY MRS. MARY H. FIELD.

(Continued.)

There drifted in her way an advertisement of some cheap reprints of standard and classical books. It was quite wonderful how many things "drifted" in her way. She seemed to have helping hands reached out to her from every side, and she took the proffered aid with a happy and grateful heart. These little volumes of the classics were not beyond her slender purse, and she indulged in several. She found Plato not beyond her grasp, and very delightful, yet it cost her only fifteen cents. In the same frugal way she flavored a good deal of homely fare with Attic salt. An investment of a dollar gave her a choice selection of most famous English poems, an equal amount brought to her growing library some of the prose master-pieces of our best English and American authors.

When the minister called to see her one day he caught a glimpse of the little textbook, *Studies of the Stars*, lying open on the mantel-piece, and was at once astonished and delighted to find his parishioner, whom he knew only as a model housewife and good church worker, evidently studying the science which to him was like a gateway to heaven. He turned to her with a beaming countenance: "Are you really interested in astronomy, Mrs. Thomas?" he asked.

And when she assured him that not only herself but her whole family were reading Bishop Warren's *Recreations in Astronomy*, and enjoying it as if it were a story, he insisted upon shaking hands over the discovery.

"You make me very happy," he said. "I shall certainly venture now to give a little series of lectures I have prepared upon astronomy, but have never offered to our people lest they should lack popularity. I have quite a collection of astronomical works which I shall be very glad to lend you. Have you read *Ecce Caelum*?"

And so the Thomases read *Ecce Caelum* on Sunday afternoons during the next month, and were lifted into a celestial atmosphere of which they had never dreamed. As they together trod the starry highway, and with almost breathless awe followed their guide in his lofty descriptions and imaginations, their very faces took on new lines of refinement and spiritual culture. The higher education to which the mother was now leading them had its beneficent influence in many ways. A sort of toning-down went on by slow and wholesome processes; voices grew softer; manners more courteous; they "trod more gently among the parts of speech," a growing reverence for the mother's opinions brought a quicker deference to her feelings and a prompter obedience to her authority. This did not come about in a day or a year. It was a gracious and beautiful growth, like any of the developments of nature.

We may not in this brief space attempt even to outline all the influences which came to this household through the mother's uplifting. A whole book could not do justice to the theme. A life-time, an eternity, can only reveal it all. But we may be sure this light was not hidden under a bushel. "It gave light unto all that were in the house." Nay, this little candle shed its beams much farther than that. The neighbors began to wonder what was the secret of the Thomas family's growing power in the community. The boys were so fond and proud of their home and their mother; the girls so sensible and intelligent; Mrs. Thomas and the minister were so often heard speaking of books and magazine articles of which other people had not heard. An explanation came one day, less than two years from the date of our story's opening. The minister proposed to his congregation to meet at his house for the purpose of forming a literary society, and those who responded to the call found Mrs. Thomas there—shy little Mrs. Thomas, who had never spoken a word in public in her life, and whose face glowed with blushes when the good pastor told them that she would tell them about a new society which was having a wonderful growth at the East, and in California too, and which was called the Chautauqua circle. With a voice that shook so she

could hardly control it, and a heart whose throbs she thought must be audible to all present, our heroine told the story of her own experience, and with eyes which threatened to overflow she closed by saying: "Only my Heavenly Father knows how thankful I am that I have had just the help and inspiration which this course of study is bringing to me."

As a result of this meeting a little Chautauqua circle was started in San Luis with the minister for president and Mrs. Thomas for secretary. Thus the good seed grew and multiplied. Not long since the general secretary received a letter from this same minister saying that he had never found any thing so helpful to his work in the community as this Chautauqua circle. "It has given me a hold upon the members such as I could have obtained in no other way. In helping them intellectually there has come to me an influence over them morally and spiritually. Neither does it fail to bring to my own mind a refreshment in many lines of thought which repays me a hundredfold."

Half a dozen years have gone by. Mrs. Thomas finished the Chautauqua course in good season in 1883. She was not able to go to Monterey to graduate, for every dollar was needed to help Mary through the Normal, and the mother was only too happy to deny herself for the sake of her good daughter. But the diploma came from Plainfield, with the signatures upon it, which, to Mrs. Thomas, represented the grandest and best of men. The family grew fairly jubilant over the arrival of that diploma; the boys gave it the benefit of "three cheers and a tiger;" Mary got up on a chair and presented it, with a speech which, to say the least, was highly rhetorical, while Amy conducted her mother to "the platform" to receive it. Finally Mr. Thomas bore it off in triumph to be suitably framed, and to-day it hangs upon their parlor wall, its proudest ornament. Each year the back of the frame has been carefully removed and the diploma taken out to have one or more "seals" added to it. Soon there will be a "rainbow" of them, Amy says.

In the corner of the parlor are some beautiful home-made book shelves, the work of the younger boys' scroll-saw, a Christmas present to "mother" for her Chautauqua library; and here are gathered her beloved books and her nicely-bound "Chautauquans." The way in which the whole family regards them reminds one of the old Penates, while to Mrs. Thomas they stand for more than words can represent; help, comfort, inspiration—these only partially tell the tale. She stands before them sometimes and loses herself in a happy reverie, which ends not infrequently in clasped hands and an uplifted face. A few weeks since the Chautauqua circle of San Luis gave a reception of their little community, and Mrs. Thomas was the essayist of the evening. As she came quietly forward upon the platform of the town-hall, and with perfect self-possession bowed to the full house, her sweet, matronly face looked so thoughtful and cultured, so pure and intellectual, that an old-time friend would hardly have recognized her. She had chosen for her theme "A Roman Matron," and her paper showed so much acquaintance with Roman customs, such familiarity with their history and modes of life, and yet such appreciation of the fact that the Roman woman had a human heart beneath her sternly-dignified exterior, that her audience were instructed and pleased, yet moved to deep sympathy. She told the story of a woman's life in that far off and cruel age, from the cradle to the grave, stirring every mother's heart as she pictured the poor heathen woman in times of bereavement and trouble—"Christless, lifting up blind eyes to the silence of the skies."

At the close she pictured her death and burial, without a gleam of hope for the future lighting the pitiful darkness of the grave.

"Over her," she wrote "creeps the tender grass; above her bloom the sweet wild flowers;

"Is the unseen with the seen at odds,
Nature's pity more than God's?"

A hush of solemn thought filled the room as the sweet, womanly voice ceased to speak.

A stranger present walked home with the minister.

"Who is this Mrs. Thomas?" he asked. "One of the best and noblest women I know," answered the clergyman. "Yet you would hardly believe me if I were to tell you how she has developed since I first knew her. She proves a pet theory of mine, that the powers of the mind and spirit strengthen with our strength, and that the mature mind is better capable of growth than that of a child. Just by virtue of its developed power it can grasp ideas with more force, and is infinitely superior in appreciation and resolute perseverance. In short, we are immortal. As to Mrs. Thomas, my friend—ah, it is a wonderful case of Evolution!"

THE END.

FOR SISTERS.

Some years ago, as I sat on the piazza of a summer hotel, I noticed, among the crowd, a party of young people,—two or three pretty girls and as many bright young men, all "waiting for the mail."

"Oh, dear!" said the prettiest of the girls impatiently. "Why don't they hurry? Are you expecting a letter, Mr. Allison?" and she turned to a tall youth standing near.

He smiled. "I'll get one surely," he said. "It's my day. Just this particular letter always comes. Nell is awful good; she's my sister, you know; and no fellow ever had a better one."

The pretty girl laughed, saying, as he received his letter: "Harry would think he was blessed if I wrote once a year."

Gradually the others drifted away; but Frank Allison kept his place, scanning eagerly the closely written sheets, now and again laughing quietly. Finally he slipped the letter into his pocket, and rising, saw me.

"Good-morning, Miss Williams!" he said cordially; for he always had a pleasant word for us older people.

"Good news?" I questioned, smiling. "My sister's letters always bring good news," he answered. "She writes such jolly letters."

And, unfolding this one, he read me scraps of it—bright nothings, with here and there a little sentence full of sisterly love and earnestness. There was a steady light in his eyes as, half apologizing for "boring" me, he looked up and said quietly: "Miss Williams, if I ever make anything of a man, it will be sister Nell's doing."

And, as I looked at him, I felt strongly what a mighty power "Sister Nell" held in her hands—just a woman's hand like yours, dear girl, and perhaps no stronger or better; but it made me wonder how many girls stop to consider how they are using their influence over these boys, growing so fast toward manhood, unworthy or noble, as the sisters choose.

So, dear girls, may I not ask: "What of the brothers?" Perhaps they are only little brothers yet; but they will be larger all too soon, and you cannot at once change from careless, indifferent sisters to loving, helpful ones. Would you willingly be like one of whom her brother said: "I'd do less for her than for any girl I know?"

You expect your brothers to be courteous and gentlemanly to you, to show you the little attentions a woman loves to receive; and yet are you ready to do your share towards making home pleasant for them? Not always, perhaps, and so you lose those brothers whom you so honestly love. This has not come at once; it has grown year by year. You were impatient with the baby-boy, and hasty with the awkward lad whose clumsiness annoyed you, and so it has gone on, and now your brother is yours only in name. You know none of his plans, and share none of his hopes; he keeps these to himself.

There is but one way, dear girls; begin at once, while they are still the little boys of the home circle, ready to come to "sister" with everything. Let them feel that you love them. These great honest, boy-hearts are both tender and loyal; and if you stand by these lads now, while they are still neither boys nor men, while they are awkward and heedless, they will remember it when they become the courteous, polished gentlemen you desire to see them. Do not snub them; nothing hurts a loving boy-soul more than a snub, and nothing more effectually closes the boy-heart than thoughtless ridicule, and re-

member the wise man who said: "Shall the woman who guards not a brother be lightly trusted with husband and sons?"—*Congregationalist*.

KEEP CLEAN.

An old physician, being once appealed to for some general, comprehensive rule for the preservation of good health, replied; "Keep clean." Cleanliness, from a medical point of view, generally means the absence of noxious germs. The laity generally comprehend in the term freedom from foreign substances, while the psychologist and moralist have reference to the purity of the mind and the soul. All these combined would form the first principle of good health. Freedom from all filth with reference to the body and its surroundings, freedom from contamination of mind and soul, would make the individual not only free from material pollutions, but would inspire him with a sense of cleanliness, a feeling of purity that would cleanse life and glorify the consciousness of living. There is a meaning in that word "clean," that penetrates beyond things seen and touches the mental and spiritual nature of humanity. Cleanliness in a material sense may not abhor dissipations and debauches which oppress life with a sense of impurity, vitiating the sources of health and impairing its enjoyment. "Keep clean" is an admonition carrying with it an inspiration which not only invigorates life, but makes it enjoyable and beautiful. Cleanliness brings not only comfort and health, but it adorns living, gives existence a charm, imparts consciousness of life, real enjoyment, thought, and feeling of existence, the purpose and sanctity of living. There is a world of meaning in the two words "keep clean." The physician, the psychologist, and the moralist united in that one advice would give to humanity a law of health, the observance of which would not only purify physical existence, but would inspire a consciousness of the enjoyments of life and animate it with its hopes, purposes, and destiny.—*Sanitary News*.

PUZZLES—NO. 16.

DECAPITATIONS.

Years ago, in boyhood days,
While the grass was wet with dew
I used to think it nice indeed
When I could *whole* the meadows through

Now if this whole you do behold,
A waiter will appear instead;
Behold again, there comes to light
That which means a line of light.

Behold again, and you produce
A little word which sailors use,
Which Webster says is always meant
Simply to express assent.—*Exchange*.

SQUARE NO. 1.

My first is the bed of a horse,
My second the subject of discourse,
A kind of riddle is my third,
To divert is the meaning of my fourth word,
My fifth a river will be found,
In a country much renowned.
PERCY PRIOR.

SQUARE NO. 2.

1. To stop. 2. A mistake. 3. Interior of a building. 4. Melodies. 5. To emendate.
THE SAME.

SQUARE NO. 3.

1. A small weight. 2. Over. 3. Cords. 4. To prevent. 5. Trials.
THE SAME.

BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. Who slept on an iron bedstead?
2. Whoslew a lion in a pit on a snowy day?
3. What bird took a seed, and planted it in a fruitful field?
4. What was sowed and sealed up in a bag?
5. What soft thing breaks bones?
6. What deceitful messengers helped out their deceit by means of their shoes?
7. Where in the Old Testament does it say the Lord redeemed His people because He loved them?
8. Who said a fox could break down a stone-wall?

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES.—NUMBER 15.

BIBLE ENIGMA.—Worship God. Rev. 19: 11.
INVESTIGATION PUZZLE.—Matthew 9: 22; Mark 11: 22; Acts 6: 5; Romans 5: 1; Ephesians 2: 8; James 2: 20.

BIBLE QUESTIONS.—1. Isaiah 13: 12. 2. Zeph. 1: 10. 3. Zechariah 1: 18-20. 4. Zeph. 2: 6. 5. Zech. 2: 4.

ENIGMA.—Happy.

BIBLICAL ENIGMA.—Thou God seeest me. (Gen. 16: 13.)

PUZZLERS HEARD FROM.

Answers to Puzzles No. 14 were received from S. Moore, Fred Dainty, A. McM.

THE ANSWER PRIZE.

The prize has been awarded to Miss Lizzie A. Ogden who sent the best list. Other puzzlers who sent good lists were John Thorne Mackay, Lizzie E. Caldwell, Louis G. Hamilton, Janie Black, Sarah E. Mills, (very good list), George Edmund Garbutt, John Lennon Wilson, Nell C. Barker, of Assiniboia, and others whose lists came too late.