

THE HOME

MOTHER'S VACATION.

I turn with serious look and thought, to a passage in a letter from an active member of our family:

"Say a word, please, for our house mother at this season. She is the only member of the household who does not enjoy a stated rest and relief from the cares of the home. She sews for her daughters; urges the husband to take recreation and to enjoy it to the full, and works from 'alarm clock to alarm clock.' In the name of humanity, won't you put in a plea for respite from the maddening grind?"

"The maddening grind!" When duties which were once a delight and a pride get to be that, nature sounds an alarm, that means danger and much of it. A woman who loves her home and is a capital and cheerful housekeeper used to me the other day, that she did not want to vote unless John should settle every morning what to order for luncheon and dinner. That was as much responsibility as she could carry, year in and year out. The mother in every home knows what she meant and felt; knows, too, why she loses appetite for home food with the coming of the summer days she hates almost as heartily as the children love them. It is bad enough to order meals, she will tell you, without having to eat them. Also, that, "nothing tastes right." When the girls have their own homes, and have to consider for 365 days in the year the problem of what to eat and how to serve it; to calculate how to market bills; to the actual income upon which she may draw to pay them; to set so good a table that the waning appetites of hard worked husband and school children, fraying under examinations and heat, may be tempted and their strength kept up until vacation, the now thoughtless young women will look back remorsefully to those days of ignorance and uncharitable judgment of the appetiteless toiler-in-chief.

"She sews for the daughters." There is an appalling quantity of sewing to be done. The dressmaker who comes by the day to take breadths out of last summer's skirts; and fashion her waists out of the surplus material thus gained (the one and only benefit to lean purses accruing from the scant skirts) expects mother to help her for as many hours of the day as other tasks will allow her to do. The prospective wearers of the abridged garments have their hands and heads full of other matters. They are up betimes to play tennis in the nearest court or golf on a neighbor's links; there are water parties and picnics and strolls "by the pale, silver light of the moon." The boys have their swimming club and football team to "keep the life in a fellow" until vacation begins in good earnest. One and all, they would characterize the lessons and other impositions of the last ten months as a "maddening grind." The father of the crew would catch eagerly at the phrase as descriptive of his daily vocation, be it a profession, commerce or a craft.

The mother has been driven to the extreme end of her wits to maintain a tolerable standard of good humor and outward cheerfulness for the last few weeks. She has invented new dishes and novel combinations of old standbys when she could not afford all the delicacies of the season demanded by capricious appetites. With broilers at forty cents per pound, she must, of necessity, have fried bacon and eggs for the Sunday morning breakfast once in a while and rice pudding for dinner instead of fresh berries. If she has a roast duck once a week, a series of boiled mutton and the left-overs she can contrive to make from it, she must establish an average expenditure or she will overrun the weekly allowance, which does not take into account winter scarcity and summer luxuries. Boys will outgrow their clothes and girls must dress as well as their associates or suffer mortifications that cut more deeply into the mother-heart than she ever confesses to them. Part of her trade is to put the best foot foremost. Her husband and children know this to be a fact, and that, as Inspector Bucket says of his wife's amateur detective work, "She has acted up to it nobly." In the say when the master balances accounts with his employees the

mother's name will be found in line with heroes and martyrs of whom the world was not worthy. She will be more astonished than anybody else when the award is made. The suspicion that she is anything higher than a commonplace wife and mother, who tries humbly to do the duty of the day without a taint of self-pity in word or thought, has never dawned upon her commonplace intellect.

Yet she is keen witted in deeming the talents of her offspring and zealous in the sacrifice of her personal ease and comfort to secure recognition and improvement of these gifts. Her husband is the head of the home. If he had his deserts, he would be the leading man in the community. She spares him every care that she can ward off from the dear head already bowed by the weight of responsibility and the mysterious fardel she calls "business." The weight and "grind" of business are the abundant excuse for surly tempers, harsh criticism of her ways and works, impatient faultfinding with the children she shields from his wrath by every ingenious art love can devise.

In how many homes—even among the very well-to-do classes in our country—is mother's vacation a stated family "institution?" Who plans that she shall step out from the shadow of money cares and homely contrivances to get for husband and children of more moderate means recreation and holiday? She would plead against herself that she cannot be spared from the helm. Nobody else can run the house as she runs it; her duties may not be delegated to daughter or hirelings.

It is the plain duty, then, of husband and daughter to take the matter of mother's vacation out of her hands. She is so evidently incapable of caring for herself as her worth deserves that she should be cared for; armed intervention is necessary. Find out what she would like to do, obeying the advice of the nerve specialist, and see that she does it. I knew one confirmed homebody who, when put into the confessional by a visiting relative, owned to a long-indulged wish to go to Saratoga and watch the "folk" promenade the verandas by day and dance in the ballroom by night. Whereupon the family clubbed in and brought a new black silk for her; had it made handsomely and sent her off to Saratoga in company with a neighbor who was ordered to drink the waters. "Mother" had the time of her life! She made the acquaintance of two other "plain people" and the three sat for hours in the shade of the veranda roof, eying the butterflies of fashion in their fitting back and forth. At night they "did" their hair afresh; brushed their black silks and put on their best brooches; shook rosewater upon clean handkerchiefs, and repaired to the coign of vantage in the ballroom for yet more brilliant views of the gay world. The effect upon the quiet homebody's health and spirits was so pronounced that she has been sent to the "Springs" every August since. She has never drunk a tea-spoonful of the waters. She does not need it. For one golden week and a half out of the fifty-two she gets just what she likes to do, setting clean out of the "maddening grind" of everyday drudgery.

Another—the hard-worked wife of a village pastor—was convicted these years ago of a longing to taste the delights of New York as a summer resort, and found it so exactly to her liking that she goes to the metropolis periodically when heat and desolation are at their height; takes rooms in a quiet boarding house not far from Central Park, and is happier than the July days are long, storing up incidents and experiences that beguile thought and engage tongue all winter.

A third, who is not especially fond of church-going for the rest of the year, takes her outing at Northfield, attending every meeting, indoor and out. When I looked politely surprised at hearing this, she explained the idiosyncrasy by observing diffidently:

"You see, it is so unlike anything I have for the rest of the year. It refreshes me through and through. I look forward to it longingly from the beginning of the season."

She bit upon the truth without knowing one word of Latin. She

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empties her mind of all that absorbed thought and time for the rest of the year and follows whim rather than duty. The indulgence is a genuine vacation.

If you can beguile the mother into an expression of personal inclination on the subject of her holiday, exercise your ingenuity to extract it painlessly. That is, without letting her suspect what you are bent upon. If she has grown so weary in body and in spirit that she has no preference for one place or thing above the other, the greater is her need of a thorough change. When a woman of sense and native energy ceases to care whether she stays at home or goes abroad, and begs to be left alone, she is in a bad way. Sometimes if teased by affectionate importunities, she flares up with the declaration that she "would as soon die as live—she is so tired out!" Poor, faithful, over-driven creature! She means what she says in her desperation.

Do John and the children, who have for all these months accepted her service as a matter of course, ever bethink themselves of the terrible statistics relative to mad houses? That was the name "asylums" bore in the olden times. We are familiar with the uncontented statement that more than one-half of the inmates of these institutions are farmers' wives. Who sets him down to reason out the puzzle? It is not the brain-work, or the ill-paid factory girl, or the shopwoman, of whose wages we have heard so much lately through letters to our Exchange, who is most likely to recruit the wretched corps of lunatics. The evil agencies in the work are the monotonous toil of the wife who does not set her foot off the farm for six months together, except when she can get the housework out of the way in time to go to church Sunday forenoon, and who then carries the dinner in her mind while she seems to take part in the devotions of the rest; the scarcity of amusements that might distract her thoughts from petty cares and ignoble anxieties—in three words, "the maddening grind" of housemother and wife. All this is what frets her into a premature grave or sends her to the sadder living tomb of the insane ward.

I do not apologize for speaking strongly and at length upon a subject that may not interest readers in general. It should appeal powerfully to those in whose service the mother has spent and been spent until self-forgetfulness is the law of her being.

She saves others; herself she never thinks of saving. Do you, her husband and you, her children, see to it that the evil is rectified. Begin as soon as you lay down this page to arrange for mother's vacation, no matter who else of the household goes without his or hers. I heard a girl say not long ago that "poor dear mamma would not know what to do with a holiday if one were forced upon her."

Begin, then, to teach her how to use it. If necessary, make a new and wholesome application of the system of compulsory education.—Marion Harland.

LEGEND OF THE WILLOW PATTERN.

Every collector of rare old china knows the "willow pattern," one of the most sought after of all the china antiques. There are a great many, however, who are not familiar with the love legend attached to the two blue and white doves winging their flight across the blue and white bridge, which is a conspicuous part of the decoration. The story is a Chinese one, because the first willow plate came from China. It runs as follows:—

A beautiful Chinese girl, named Koong-Shee, loved her father's secretary, Chang, who was poor. Because her father wanted her to marry a rich man, and because she would not give up the poor secretary, he sent her to live in a little

house at the end of the garden. Outside Koong-Shee's window was a willow tree, and just beyond a fruit tree. Koong-Shee sat all day watching it bloom.

One day when she was most unhappy, Chang found a coconut shell to which he attached a sail. In it he placed a letter asking his sweetheart to fly with him. The shell sped across the lake where Koong-Shee sat watching. She read the letter and answered that she would go if he would be brave enough to come for her.

Then Chang went boldly up to the little house and took her away. They had to cross a bridge to leave the garden. As they were half way across Koong-Shee's father saw them and sent out an alarm. The girl went first with her distaff. Chang followed with her jewel case and behind, the father with a whip. The lovers escaped however, to a little house across the lake, where they lived happily. Finally, one day the rich man who wanted Koong-Shee for his wife, and who hated her for refusing him, found out where she lived. He set fire to the pretty little house and Koong-Shee and Chang died together.

MOTHERS, SPEAK LOW.

I know some houses, well-built and handsomely furnished, where it is not pleasant to be even a visitor. Sharp, angry tones resound through them from morning till night, and the influence is as contagious as measles, and much more to be dreaded in a household. The children catch it, and it lasts for life—an incurable disease. A friend has such a neighbor within hearing of her house when doors and windows are open, and even Poll Parrot has caught the tone and delights in screaming and scolding, until she has been sent into the country to improve her habits. Children catch cross tones quicker than parrots. When mother sets the example, you will scarcely hear a pleasant word among the children in their plays with each other. Yet the discipline of such a family is always weak and irregular. The children expect just as much scolding before they do anything they are bid; while many a home, where the low tone of the mother or a decided look of her steady eye, is law, never think of disobedience, either in or out of her sight. Oh, mothers, it is worth a great deal to cultivate that "excellent thing in women," a low, sweet voice. If you are ever so much tired by the mischievous or wilful pranks of the little ones, speak low. It will be a great help to you to even try to be patient and cheerful, if you cannot wholly succeed. Anger makes you wretched, and your children, also. Impatient, angry tones never did the heart good, but plenty of evil. You cannot have the excuse for them that they lighten your burdens; they make them only ten times heavier. For your own sake, as well as your children's sake, learn to speak low. They will remember that tone when your head is under the willows.—Selected.

GOOD LOOKS AND HEALTH.

Our admiration—yes, our worship—of beauty is based upon the soundest and sanest of biologic bases. Beauty is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace—health.

Every line, every tint, every texture that makes for ugliness, makes for or indicates ill health, inefficiency or ill temper. It is no mere coincidence that "ugly" means, in popular acceptance, "spiteful" and "vicious" almost as often as "unbeautiful."

It is a painful but significant truth that most of us were far more beautiful as babies than we have been ever since. It is the Golden Age of Beauty to which we can all look back, the only time in our lives when we were perfectly natural. Nearly everything that makes a man or woman homely comes from bad surroundings.

WIRE WOUNDS.

My mare, a very valuable one, was badly bruised and cut by being caught in a wire fence. Some of the wounds would not heal, although I tried many different medicines. Dr. Bell advised me to use MINARD'S LINIMENT, diluted at first, then stronger as the sores began to look better, until after three weeks, the sores have healed, and best of all, the hair is growing well, and is not white, as is most always the case in horse wounds.

There is a good deal of stern justice in the "cry baby" stigma of the school playground, much to be commended in the rounder's approval expressed in the statement, "He's a dead game sport."

Nobody likes a quitter—everybody, big, little, refined or unrefined, likes any kind of a man who can put up a good fight and take the consequences without complaint. This principle runs through all life, and is recognized by all grades of society to be universal and unavoidable.

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Persons tendering are notified that tenders will not be considered unless made on the printed forms supplied, and signed with their actual signatures, stating their occupations and places of residence. In the case of firms, the actual signature, the nature of the occupation, and place of residence of each member of the firm must be given.

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