

SISTERS AND WIVES.

In the "Leaves from the Note Books of Frances M. Buss," edited by Grace Toplis, the chapter of Family Love is full of inspiring thoughts, especially that part of it in which Miss Buss speaks of the influence of sisters and wives in determining the life work of distinguished men. Many great men, she points out, have expressed what they owe to their sisters:—

In the dedication to "Arcadia" writes Sidney:—"Here now you have, most dear, and worthy to be most dear, lady, this idle work of mine, which I fear, like the spider's web, will be thought fitter to be swept away than worn to any other purpose. Your dear self can best witness the manner being done, in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest sent by sheets unto you as fast as they were done."

"What do I not owe to my sister's prayers and example?" wrote Henry Martyn, when toiling in India.

Lady Trevelyan writes: "There are many places I never pass without the tender grace of a day that is dead coming back to me. After dinner he (Lord Macaulay) walked up and down the drawing-room, chattering all the time. Our noisy mirth—his wretched puns—then we sang, none of us having any voice, and he, perhaps, least of all. After tea the book then in reading was produced, he walking about, listening, commenting, and drinking water."

Macaulay lived in the closest friendship with his two sisters, Hannah and Margaret. The latter died young. His love for Hannah, Lady Trevelyan, glowed as warmly in his manhood, when he was famous, as in his boyhood. The sister was not less dear to him as a woman than as a girl. To the last she was his confidante and adviser. To the last he gave her his unreserved confidence. His successes would have been nothing had she not been able to share them.

A similar affection existed between the Brontës. Hannah More and her four sisters lived together for fifty years in love and harmony—a harmony never disturbed until the angel of death came in their midst, and took them away, one by one.

Wordsworth wrote of his sister Dorothy:—

She gave me eyes; she gave me ears,
And humble cares and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,
And love and thought and joy.

One wintery day Hawthorne received his official notification that his services would no longer be required. With heaviness of heart he repaired to his humble home. His young wife recognised the change, and stood watching for the silence to be broken. At length he faltered, "I am removed from office." Then she left the room. She returned with fuel, and kindled a bright fire with her own hands. Next she brought pen paper, and ink, and set them before him. Then she touched the sad man on the shoulder, and, when he turned to look at her beaming face, she said, "Now you can write your book." The cloud cleared away. The lost office looked like a cage from which he had escaped. "The Scarlet Letter" was written, and a marvelous success rewarded the author and his stout-hearted wife. She was a woman worth loving.

De Tocqueville says of his wife: "More than all I have to thank Heaven for having bestowed on me true domestic happiness, of all blessings which God has given, the greatest of all in my eyes is Marie. You cannot imagine what she is in great trials; usually so gentle, she then becomes strong and energetic. She watches me without my knowing it; she softens, calms, and strengthens me in difficulties which disturb me, but leave her serene."

This is an old Scotch tradesman's address to his wife, after forty-two years of marriage:—

A wedding heart of strong young love
Will last through winters many;
The frost of years but tend to prove
The links that bind to Nannie.
Though teeth are fled and locks grown grey,
Love that outlasts young life's heyday
Is the love I bear my Nannie.
'Midst a' the thoughts that trouble me,
The saddest thought o' any
Is wha' may close each other's e'e,
May it be me or Nannie,
The one that's left will sairly feel,
Amid a world uncannie;
I'd ra' her face old age my self,
Than lonely leave my Nannie.

Gray wrote, sadly, he had made the discovery that we

can have but one mother. We all make this discovery, if we live long enough. Let it not be made in repentance.

Nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote,
A courage to endure and to obey;
A hate of gossip parlance, and of away,
Crown'd Isabel, through all her placid life,
The Queen of Marriage—a most perfect wife.

J. S. Mill inscribes his work "to the beloved and deplored memory of her who was the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings—the friend and wife whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation was my chief reward—I dedicate this volume. Like all that I have written for many years, it belongs as much to her as to me; but the work as it stands has had, in a very insufficient degree, the inestimable advantage; some of the most important portions having been reserved for a more careful re-examination, which they are now never destined to receive. Were I but capable of interpreting to the world one-half the great thoughts and noble feelings which are buried in her grave, I should be the medium of a greater benefit to it than is ever likely to arise from anything that I can write, unprompted and unassisted, by her all but unrivalled wisdom."

Julian Hawthorne's tribute to his mother was: "Sophia Hawthorne was loved by every one who knew her. She gave happiness and emancipation to one of the foremost men of his time. Apart from her blessed influence, he never could have become the man he was. Greater intellectuality, tenderness, enlightenment, and strength have not been combined in a woman. She lived for her husband, and when he died (1868) her love of life died also, but her children remained, and she stayed in this world for their sake. Their love and support was the very breath of her existence; had these failed, or had she felt that they no longer needed her, she would have vanished at once. Her every act and thought had reference to them." She died in 1871 in London.

Of unmarried women, Monod writes:—"If I search through the whole world for the type of the most useful, the most pure, the most Christian charity, nowhere finds its conditions better fulfilled than in the good aunt, who accepts the fatigues and cares of motherhood without knowing its delights. Mother, yea and more than mother, when the question is one of advantage and pleasure only."

THE BEAUTY OF GENTLENESS.

BY DR. MILLER.

This world needs nothing more than it needs gentleness. All human hearts hunger for tenderness. We are made for love—not only to love, but to be loved. Harshness pains us. Ungentleness touches our sensitive spirits as frost touches the flowers. It stunts the growth of all lovely things.

We naturally crave gentleness. It is like a genial summer to our life. Beneath its warm, nourishing influence beautiful things in us grow.

Then there always are many people who have special need of tenderness. We cannot know what secret burdens many of those about us are carrying, what hidden griefs burn like fires in the hearts of those with whom we mingle in our common life. Not all grief wears the outward garb of mourning; sunny faces oft-times veil heavy hearts. Many people who make no audible appeal for sympathy, yet crave tenderness—they certainly need it, though they ask it not—as they bow beneath their burden. There is no weakness in such a yearning. We remember how our Master Himself longed for expressions of love when He was passing through His deepest experiences of suffering, and how bitterly He was disappointed when His friends failed Him.

Many a life goes down in the fierce, hard struggle for want of the blessing of strength which human tenderness would have brought. Many a man owes his victoriousness in sorrow or in temptation to the gentleness which came to him in some helpful form from a thoughtful friend. We know not who of those we meet any day need the help which our gentleness could give. Life is not easy to most people. Its duties are hard, its burdens are heavy. Its strain never relaxes. There is no truce in its battle. This world is not friendly to noble living. There are countless antagonisms.