

A BLESSING OR A CURSE.

"HE that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief." That is what Bacon said some years ago, I believe, yet with all due respect to the memory of a dead man who was, no doubt, honest, and whose feelings I would shrink from injuring, he was wrong. I do not recollect just at this moment whether Bacon was married or not. He may have been, and may have had several children; but not having been on intimate social terms with the departed, I am unable to speak with that degree of accuracy which always is characteristic of my sayings and writings. We will let that pass, however, for the moment. If Bacon was not living in wedded bliss, it was either his wife's fault, if he had one, or his own fault, if he had not. When I read his extraordinary statement the thought which at once suggested itself was, "How did he know?"

Let this be an understood fact. If a man wants to make a broad, deep mark, or furrow if you wish, on the historic page, the best thing he can do is to marry a brave, sensible, big-hearted woman. Then if he has any "sand" in him, it will come out. Let his trade or his profession be what it may, the encouragement and assistance of a good womanly woman will constitute a constant spur to hard work and enterprise, instead of being, as Bacon and some others would endeavor to lead us to imagine, an impediment. If he be wedded to his art, his wife will not prosecute him for bigamy, but will rather play the part of the bridesmaid.

This writing of the good that may come from marriage is only a little excuse of mine to get down to the text of this week's sermon. And it is with feelings of profound reverence that I approach the discussion of the many miseries and heart-breakings which result from what is "an honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocence, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and His Church." There are to-day husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, yes, and children too, who number many, many thousands, whose hopes and ambitions have been blasted, whose idols have been rudely torn down and desecrated, whose lives have been embittered and impoverished, whose mental development has been stunted and dwarfed—all because of the accursed mockery of a marriage in which there was no union of hearts, or of sympathies, or of purposes. May God in His abundant mercy forgive those who have erred. Their sin—for it is a sin—is visited upon themselves first and on their children. They have eaten the forbidden fruit. They must pay the allotted penalty.

I do not propose to give any advice. Others can sound and have sounded the warning note much more sharply than I can, or would wish, too. Neither do I desire to intimate whether I think the men are most to blame or the women. They are both guilty, in what proportion you can for yourself judge. But I cannot refrain from noting the absolute indifference

and carelessness displayed by some parents who admit within the sacred precincts of the home circle men whom the world know to be polluted with vice and corrupted with intemperance. Of such painful matters it were perhaps better not to speak, but I know full well that there are in Victoria many homes where young men of my acquaintance are received with open arms—men that I, a man of the world, and well capable of taking care of myself—would scorn and avoid as I would a viper. In course of time these young men become husbands. They marry the fairest and the purest girls in the community. The world says, "What a handsome couple, and how happy they are." Who soweth the wind shall reap the whirlwind, and when trouble comes and with its blighting hand smites the erstwhile joyous home, who then is blamed? It is *her* fault. *She* should have known better, *she* drove him to drink, *she* did not understand his temperament or appreciate him! And the cruel gossip of a bitter world adds fuel to the flame until the cup of misery is full.

I have in mind one particularly brazen "social viper" whose present place of abode is Victoria, but whose ultimate destination is hell. How I would like to show the world who and what he is! To do so would be balm to a weary soul. Would that I could go to a certain home in this city where wealth and ease are joined with purity and refinement. Would that I could take a certain father or a mother or a daughter by the hand and for a brief period explore the haunts of their intimate friend—their unknown enemy. Some day that daughter will be led to the altar by the reptile. I wish she had a brother, a big, strong, manly brother with muscles like whipcord and a grip like a vise. Don't fear, dear reader; there would be no tragedy. But there would be a drama, a one act, one scene drama, and the villain in the play would find it convenient to stay out of sight for a while lest some inquisitive person should enquire whence came those discolored eyes and that general appearance of having been through a cyclone. The world is large, my friends, but sometimes it is mighty small.

A party of us were sitting in the corridor of a well known, down-town hotel, the other day. There were four or five married men in the party, men with loving wives and happy homes and little children. The man who acted as chairman was a commercial traveller, a drummer or a missionary for merchandise, as you like. A young married man whose charming wife I have the pleasure of knowing fairly well, began to tell an off-color story when our chairman, whose name was Brown or Smith or something of the kind, called out, "barred." "This is not exactly a sanctification meeting," he explained apologetically, "but the chairman has æsthetic scruples against listening to a story that might not be repeated in the presence of ladies." The aforesaid young husband expressed his surprise when Mr. Brown continued: "No, I am not a prude; I have much compassion for a man who is swept into error by the whirlwind of passion, but there is positively no excuse for a party of professing gentlemen

sitting deliberately down to drag their minds through reeking cesspools. I am had enough I know, but I never yet told an off-color story nor listened to one if I could avoid it. I would as soon think of wallowing in a sewer. If a man's mind is stored with moral rottenness, he should rather strive to lessen than to increase the unsavory stock."

There is an abundance of good taste, to say the least of it, in the above. "Professing gentlemen"—yes, there are lots of them. They wear good clothes, have affable manners and possess all the visible constituents of gentlemen, but if we could only photograph that diseased mind where there is no cleanliness and no purity, what a picture it would be!

EXERCISE.

THE PHOENIX.

The ancient tradition concerning the phoenix has introduced into all languages the custom of applying that name to whatever is singular or uncommon among its kind. Arabia is said to have been the home of this fabulous bird.

According to Herodotus and other ancient writers, the phoenix was a bird of great beauty and about the size of an eagle.

A shining and most beautiful crest adorned the head; the feathers on the neck were a bright golden color, while those on the body were a rich purple; the tail was white intermixed with red, and the eyes sparkled like diamonds.

Only one of these birds could live at a time, but it lived five or six hundred years. When that period drew to an end, it built for itself a funeral pile of wood and aromatic spices; with its wings it fanned the pile into a blaze, and therein consumed itself.

From its ashes a worm was produced, out of which another phoenix was formed, having all the freshness of youth. The first care of the new phoenix was to solemnize its parent's obsequies.

For that purpose it made a ball in the shape of an egg out of myrrh, frankincense and other fragrant things.

At Heliopolis, a city of Lower Egypt, there was a magnificent temple dedicated to the sun. After making the egg shaped ball as heavy as it could possibly carry, the phoenix then took the ball on its shoulders, and, flying to the temple at Heliopolis, burnt it on the altar of the sun.

The priests then inspected the register, and found that exactly 500 or exactly 600 years had elapsed since the same ceremony had last taken place. The phoenix is always represented as rising from the midst of flames.—*Wide Awake.*

EXPERIENCE is a good schoolmaster; to a business man it is invaluable. No amount of capital can compensate for it. Start two men together upon a business career, one with experience and the other with capital, and the former, in nine cases out of ten, will come out ahead. All legitimate success in the business world is more or less the result of continued patient plodding. A few acquire fortunes by daring speculations, but out of the thousands who court the favor of the fickle goddess in this way, the majority fall to win her smile.

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