

touching scene is that of Ovid in exile, struggling to do the orthodox honours of the birthday of his absent wife. But wherever the Roman might happen to be, the old customs appropriate to this occasion were religiously observed. In every household the fresh green altar was built up, loaded with its pile of fragrant oils and spices, and hung with garlands of sweet flowers. As the scented flame burnt up it was sprinkled with libations of the best wine that the cellar could produce—a propitiatory offering to the presiding deity of the occasion, the ever-present genius. A beautiful superstition, from which the modern doctrine of the guardian angel was undoubtedly borrowed, assigned to each Roman at his birth one of these attendant genii, and at each anniversary the unseen spirit was welcomed and worshipped with votive sacrifices. At the ceremony assisted only the most intimate friends, who offered vows for their entertainer's welfare, not as we do by drinking his health, but by an old and slightly similar custom. This was the eating of sweet cakes made of flour, honey and oil. The host partook first and alone of the auspicious food, clad in a snow-white robe, and invoking blessings on his own head. While he ate, the guest remained devoutly silent, inwardly echoing a similar prayer; and then took their turn at the festal cakes; so that though the health of their entertainer was not exactly drunk, it might be said to be eaten.

The imaginative and unæsthetic Romans were not, of course, the first people to observe birthday festivals. The sons of Job "feasted in their houses, each on his day," and almost every country from that time to this has recognized more or less solemnly a yearly jubilee so obvious. The Egyptians from the earliest times attached a great importance to the day, and even the hour of their birth, and the birthday of the King was honoured with extraordinary rejoicings, by the suspension of all business, and the giving of public banquets. It is expressly recorded that this was one of these occasions which Pharaoh celebrated by giving a great feast to all his servants, by reinstating the chief butler, and hanging the chief baker. When Herod's birthday was kept, it was as a matter of course; and curiously enough his hilarity, like that of the Egyptian despot, showed itself in an act of murderous caprice. In later times the Emperors of the world, to whom extravagant liberality was as necessary a policy as parsimony is to some of their successors, adopted with eagerness so excellent an excuse for a national *fête* day. The Natalitia Games, at which Adrian is said to have exhibited a thousand wild beasts, were rigorously expected at the hand of each succeeding Cæsar, and their celebration served not only as a direct bribe to the sordid populace, but for a display of personal devotion to the august entertainer.

There are thus precedents of respectable antiquity for a custom which the Western nations have adopted with a fair amount of enthusiasm. Christianity has suppressed the little altar of green turf, the incense, and the prayers; and the place of the departed genius has not been filled, as it might, by the airy and fantastic form of an attendant spirit. On a rather unkind soil, beneath a sullen sky, a nation little inclined to picturesque displays has discarded ruthlessly the garlands of flowers; and of all the tasteful paraphernalia of a classic birthday there remains little or nothing but the libations of wine, which, by an irreverent but, perhaps, practical perversion, we pour down our own throats instead of into the sacred flame. A people so dry and so demonstrative as the English could not, indeed, be expected to make much fuss over so sentimental an affair. On one occasion only is the anniversary honoured with anything like a *fête*—when the son and heir of a landed proprietor comes of age—and the only reason for this is to be found in the old feudal custom, which obliged the lord of the fee to knight his son on attaining twenty-one, and compelled the tenants to pay good round sums in the shape of aids to defray the consequent expense. It required no great spirit of liberality to feast the vassals and retainers when the haunches and sirloins, the new coats and suits of armour, were provided at the costs and charges of the invited guest. But in France every birthday of every householder is a sort of coming of age.

The smallest farmer or retired shopkeeper is as well entitled to his *fête* day as the most aristocratic *rentier*, and the cakes and sugar-plums of the *bourgeois* are enjoyed with as much gusto in their humble way as the fireworks and champagne breakfast at the chateau. The Napoleons, with true Imperialistic instincts, adopted and adapted to modern habits the Natalitia Games, and during the Third Empire the birthdays of the Emperor and the Empress became national holidays, upon which the populace was studiously trained to shout for their modern "Panem et Circenses." On the fall of the Third

Napoleon, and more especially after his death, it was only natural that the *fête* should be transferred to the birthday of him who might one day be Napoléon IV.; and the half-sad, half-hopeful homage which, in the shape of bouquets and addresses, will to-morrow be presented at Cluslehurst, is a faint reflex of the splendid rejoicings which once marked the 15th. of August.

Birthdays are still celebrated in a lukewarm and half-hearted manner in many English families. As a rule this is little more than the formal and somewhat meaningless compliment of an after-dinner toast, for the purpose of which a choice bottle is produced, no matter exactly from what place. In order households it is the custom to present some more or less trifling gift. Generally the present is eminently ill chosen, and the utmost powers of hypocrisy boasted by the recipient are taxed to enable him to acknowledge it with becoming gratitude. When then the family is large the pockets of the members of it are severely taxed, as well as their sentiments of affection, and almost the only birthday gifts which are given with good grace are those deposited as hostages with wealthy maiden aunts. Altogether, birthday generosity is a little too high a flight for our unromantic instincts, and the most successful style of natalitia festival in this practical new world is that in which the person principally interested, being of a sane body and mind, gives a select and genial dinner to the most friendly of his friends.

*Give Your Girls an Allowance.*—Where it is necessary to study economy in every way, and fathers complain of the frequent demands made upon their purses by their daughters, it is best for both parties that an allowance should be agreed on, and regularly paid every quarter. A Girl is thus taught the value of money, and she learns how to spend it; she is led to exercise her judgment and taste, and to restrict herself in one respect in order to indulge herself in another. Without an allowance, young persons cannot know the pleasure of denying themselves what might seem very reasonable and proper, for the sake of bestowing the sum thus saved in charity. There is no generosity in making presents to our friends, no benevolence in giving to the poor, if we are merely the distributors of another person's bounty, and have not one gratification the less ourselves. A feeling of responsibility grows out of the disbursement of a certain sum which we regard as our own.—*Housekeeper.*

*A Wife's Power.*—A good wife is a man's wisdom, strength, and courage, a bad one is confusion, weakness and despair. No condition is hopeless to a man where the wife possesses firmness, decision and economy. There is no outward propriety which can counteract indolence, extravagance at home. No spirit can long endure bad influence. Man is strong; but his heart is not adamant. He needs a tranquil home, and especially if he is an intelligent man, with a whole head, he needs its moral force in the conflict of life. To recover his composure, home must be a place of peace and comfort. There his soul renews its strength and goes forth with renewed vigor, to encounter the labor and troubles of life. But if at home he finds no rest, and there is met with bad temper, jealousy and gloom, or assailed with complaints and censure, hope vanishes, and he sinks into despair.

*Truthfulness to Children.*—A parent, unlike a poet, is not born—he is made. There are certain things which he has at once to learn, or he will have no more influence over his child than if he were a common stranger. To gain obedience you must first set yourself to deserve it. Whatever you promise the little one, however small the thing may seem to you, and whatever trouble it costs you, perform it. Never let the doubt once enter into that innocent mind that you say what you do not mean, or will not act up to what you say. Make as few prohibitory laws as you possibly can, but once made keep them. In what is granted, as in what is denied, compel yourself, however weary, or worried, or impatient, to administer always even-handed justice.

—"Education does not commence with the alphabet. It begins with a mother's look, with a father's nod of approbation or a sign of reproof, with a sister's gentle pressure of the hand, or a brother's act of forbearance, with handfuls of flowers in green and daisy meadows, with birds' nests admired but not touched, with creeping ants and almost imperceptible emmets, with humming bees and glass beehives, with pleasant walks in shady lanes, and with thoughts directed in sweet and kindly tones, and words matured to acts of benevolence, to deeds of virtue, and to the source of all good, to God himself."