

For Husbands Only.

We hate the man who is brutal—who uses his power to insult, maltreat or tyrannize over those who are powerless to retaliate. Whether it be a Nero gloating over the miseries of his victims, or a Jeffries bullying the witnesses in the courts of justice, or a teacher flogging some innocent children or a teamster thrashing his overloaded horses, or only a thoughtless boy teasing a smaller companion or one of his little pets, when we see the thing we lose patience, even as did Lincoln when he saw the slave-torture in the southern marketplace, or as did Mrs. Browning when she saw the children at work in the factories and mines of Britain. Above all, do we hate the thing if we see it in a strong, able-bodied man, when the object of his oppression and cruelty is his own wife. Nor are we thinking of the wives of the semi-civilized races that have come to make their homes with us. With them woman is as yet but a slave—a docile servant and a sorry drudge. But we are thinking of those women—good and true, faithful and kind, scattered up and down this broad land—farmers' wives, if you will—who are toiling, toiling, toiling, day in and day out, living in fear and sometimes in terror, hoping against hope, and anxiously waiting for release from a burden that is too great to bear, all because they are tied to brutal, unfeeling husbands—who are no husbands at all, but rather greedy, selfish, cruel taskmasters, who have lost all sense of honor, and who are incapable of either pity or gratitude. Are the terms too harsh? Then let us call it by a milder term—criminal thoughtlessness.

BEFORE AND AFTER.

In the old school-house debates a favorite diversion was to contrast the pleasures of anticipation with those of realization. There are not a few wives who could illuminate a discussion of this nature with sketches from personal experience. When a young man of passable appearance and good manner and owner of a choice homestead gives his attentions to a young lady, picturing the possibilities in store for her as mistress of his home, it is no wonder if she is lured by the prospects. But when a few years later, after she has wrought early and late and is no nearer a home than she was when she entered the little shack which was to be a temporary shelter, when she sees money going into barns and stables and stock, when she sees new acres added year by year, and new responsibilities thus placed upon her, as cook, as housekeeper and as mother, when she sees the wrinkles growing deeper and more numerous, and the dresses growing shabbier and more antiquated, when, above all, she finds herself cut off from all human friendships, including that of her husband, and when she thinks that in spite of her work, her worry, and her devotion, there is no consideration for her needs and comforts, and no hope but that of a future more depressing than the past—well, it is not surprising if she grows despondent, and becomes callous and resentful.

A PRONOUNCED TYPE.

These words are suggested by many letters that have come to us. We shall not say that the complaint is general. Probably, on the whole, the wife in the Western home is treated as kindly as the wives in other lands; but there are exceptional cases and we hope that this page will be brought to the notice of any husbands who are in the class described in the following letter:

"I was very much impressed by Winulla's letter. She tells the truth when she says that the farmer's wife has a monotonous life, and sometimes we try to break up the monotony by going to town with 'Dear John.' What a privilege! Some morning when you have bread set and a lot of work planned for the day, he will say at breakfast, 'I think that I will go to town to-day. I want to get some repairs for the binder. Do you want to go?' First you think, 'No! Then you say yes! And he says, 'You will have to hurry, because I want to get away pretty soon.' You mildly suggest that he

milk one cow to help you a little, to which he consents with a growl. You milk the other and feed the calves and chickens and hurry to get things cleared away. Just as soon as you begin to snatch your clothes off the hooks, he comes in. 'Get me a clean shirt and some socks.' You stop and get the articles and then hurry to be ready in time. The result is that he drives up before you are quite ready. So you slam your four-year-old hat on sideways, tie a veil over your weather-beaten face and straggling locks and you are ready for the road. Pretty soon a person, looking a little like the young man who used to come for you in a nice, shining buggy on Sunday afternoons a few years ago and was never crowded for room, looks at you sideways and says, 'Are you sitting over as far as you can?' This buggy seems awful narrow, I must say. You sit over till your ribs grate against the buggy top. You must be good; you are being taken to town. (So is the horse.)

"After you get to town and get out of the rig—a tumbled heap—he stops and says, 'Do you want to get anything? Have you any money?' You say, 'No! where would I get it?' He plunges his hand into his trousers pocket and hands you a fist full of change—three or four dollars. With that and the eggs you get what you can, and do without a lot of things you need, and would love to get, if you had the money, after working hard for a whole year. You don't see 'Dear John' again till you meet him at the hotel for dinner. After that you get rested a little and get home about dusk—to be met by a chorus of bawling cows, bleating calves and squealing pigs, all demanding immediate attention. You have to hustle out of your glad rags and first get supper for 'darling John,' swallow a cup of tea, and go out and milk, feed calves, and do a lot of other things, while he feeds the horses and pigs and goes to bed. And you are up till eleven o'clock washing up and putting things away. You fall into bed at last, to waken in about five hours, to take up the burden of life again, and when you find two of your young turkeys in the well and several chickens missing with the hawks, you begin to think it were better that you had not gone to town.

"I have no children, I don't know how a woman with young children ever can get to town without help. I have worked on a homestead for seven years, and I have no more right to anything on the place than the horses in the barn. I think the farms in the West for women are a disgrace to a seemingly civilized country. It is a good thing that there is a law against knocking us in the head when we have out-lived our usefulness. I have seen farmers' wives laid out in satin-lined coffins with their poor, worn hands folded over a white satin shroud, who, when they were alive, could not get themselves white satin neckwear. Yes, girls, 'Darling John,' does change quite a bit after marriage, especially on a farm. It is every word true. Sincerely yours, Ann Jemima."

Now, this is pretty strong, and it is the more so since it is from one who is evidently a good housewife and earns her salt. It will be a good thing for all the "Dear Johns" in the country to read such a pitiful tale. Of course, there may be another side to the question, but we are not dealing with that just now.

ANOTHER PIECE OF TESTIMONY.

Here is an extract from another letter. What must we think of this? "We are told that it is the men who have the hard work, and, therefore, need the hired help, but I know all about that. Only a few days ago a neighbor came over to borrow a tooth for his binder. He was in an awful hurry. Yet these two men stood there talking politics for three-quarters-of-an-hour, while I milked the cows. And when they go to town it is the same thing, but we never get a chance to go visiting and are busy all the time. Yet because they sell the grain and handle all the money they think they are 'It.' They swell out as if they had done everything with their own hands, but they know that the hired man did most of it, and the women worked harder than any of them, although they don't happen to handle the stuff that sells. Mighty little would they have if the women were not there to keep things straight. They do the dirtiest, meanest work all the time, but they get small thanks, and as for money to spend—"

FAIR PLAY.

How much should a woman have to spend as she pleases? Surely the answer is very simple. In all big expenditures there should be mutual agreement. The buying of a new piece of land, the erection of a building, the purchase of a piano, or a piece of machinery, even the purchase of clothes and food—it is a good thing to consult on all these points, because it binds the husband and wife more closely to each other, and tends to eliminate all selfishness. Outside of this there is little need for quarreling, but certainly the wife should receive dollar for dollar as spending money. It is as reasonable for her to carry the purse and dole out nickels to her husband as for him to hand out chicken-feed on a Fair day or the day before Christmas.

But the money is a small thing after all. What a woman is entitled to is reverence, affection, and kindness. And the woman who gets these usually returns the same with interest. It is absolutely impossible for a man to be too kind and generous to his wife, and he cannot be too free with his words of appreciation. An exchange puts it well:

FLOWERS FOR THE LIVING.

"Flowers for the living, yes, and not flowers only, but all that flowers stand for, of grace, kindness, and sweet meaning. We fancy that if the dead could hear us, they would very often be astonished to find how noble we thought them, how full of loveliness and of every virtue, how great and profound had been our esteem. We never told them our opinion. We kept our admiration to ourselves. What a good thing it would be for us, every one, to make it our rule each day to say some complimentary word to our next of kin, to praise where now we are silent, to show our love where now we conceal it.

Flowers for the living, while they are here for us to love. Out with the stones that cumber too many a path. Let us make it smooth for toil-worn feet. Let the wife, the husband, the parent, the brother, the sister, the child, know that we care for them, that we prize them, that we have nothing else in the world so valuable as the sweet home love."

THE WAY OUT.

One of the finest stories we have heard for a long time is that of a couple who found themselves as they grew older becoming self-centred and selfish. He was lost in his pipe and his dreams of land and barns, she became discontented because she was neglected and because she had no companionship. One Sunday morning they frankly faced the situation. They agreed that they had no interest outside of themselves, and that it was even getting worse than this, for the husband was lost in himself and the wife was forced to be her own solace and her own centre of affection. Then they made the wisest of all possible resolves. They sent to the Children's Home and got a little girl. She became the centre of their interests. A new joy was added to their lives. They got out of self. The whole tone of their existence was altered. The added burden was a blessing. They entertained an angel unawares. And herein is a moral. The clean division of labor on a farm tends to sever the relations between husband and wife. The common interests are few unless there are children. Hence in the childless home the husband has a special responsibility, and for that matter so has the wife. It is very easy for them to forget one another. The only way in which a man will find his wife to be ever young is for him to treat her as a real companion. Where hearts are true to one another, wrinkles and grey hairs are never noticed, but where there is no friendship it is easily possible for all shortcomings to be magnified. It may safely be stated that where man and wife do not show more consideration for each other as years go by, he had better inquire if he is guilty of thoughtless neglect, and she should ask herself if she is as careful to please in all those things which make a husband's heart rejoice.