

A BACHELOR'S  
TALKS  
ABOUT **MARRIED** LIFE

REV. WILLIAM AIKMAN

# A BACHELOR'S TALKS

ABOUT

MARRIED LIFE AND THINGS ADJACENT.

BY

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"LIFE AT HOME," "MORAL POWER OF THE SEA," ETC.

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NEW YORK:

FOWLER & WELLS, PUBLISHERS,

753 BROADWAY.

1884.

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ss Charlotte Howe  
14 May 1943

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EDWARD O. JENKINS,  
PRINTER AND STEREOTYPYER,  
20 North William Street, New York.

TO  
ELIJAH PRICE BAKER, M.D.,  
OF AURORA, CAYUGA LAKE, N. Y.,  
WITHOUT WHOSE PROFESSIONAL SKILL  
AND AFFECTIONATE DEVOTION,  
IT WOULD PROBABLY  
NEVER HAVE HAD  
AN EXISTENCE,

This Book

IS

DEDICATED.

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## I.

### MY BROTHER'S PARLOR.

THE other evening I sat in my brother's house with his bright family around the centre-table in the parlor. My brother and his wife *use* their parlor. It has a wonderfully cozy look. The walls have pictures and engravings—not all paintings, nor any of them very costly, but all of them tasteful. He says that he can't afford to have many pictures, and certainly not many paintings, but whatever he does have must be good. So he pays a fair price for a good engraving, rather than the same for a pretentious painting, which after all is only a daub. The furniture of their parlor has a home-like and not a shop-like air. Have you never noticed how some parlors that you and I often see make you think of a furniture ware-room?—the articles are all so new and so primly fixed in their places, they seem to say to you, “Now, look

at us; are we not handsome? wouldn't you like to buy us? but be careful how you touch us!"

It is not so in my brother's house. Each separate chair (and they are of no uniform pattern), the small rocker, the big arm-chair, the low-seated high-back, the moderately-sized ones—not with rounded backs that cut you under each shoulder-blade, and let you through a great vacancy where there ought to be a support—all seem to smile on you and say, "Just put yourself on one of us; we will not groan nor creak nor break down; we will hold you nicely; and if you don't like us, there is our brother sofa that will be sure to make you comfortable."

They have a good deal of mahogany about them. They, my brother and his wife, say, "Mahogany is best. Those chairs" (they were her grandmother's, carved back and legs they have) "are mahogany. That is the wood to last. It is not like your shoddy black-walnut. It grows better by age, deepens its color, and lays out its grain as it grows old."

When, after supper, the family gather in the back parlor around the centre-table under the gaslight, with books and papers and games, the little one on the floor with blocks or cards, and you hear laughing and merry talk, the picture is a very pleasant one. At least it is so to me.

I am an old bachelor. It is nobody's business why I am. I love to get out of my den in my boarding-house and be with my brother's family at night. I am at home there. Phrenologists would say that in my mental make-up the organ of Inhabiteness must be strong. I had been thinking of the family life there, and almost as soon as I was seated with them, I laughingly said, "I propose to write at once some articles on a special topic, and what do you think it shall be about? A series of papers on home and the family, training of children, and all that!"

"Why, Uncle William!" exclaimed my niece, a blue-eyed girl of seventeen, "what do you know about home and children? And yet," she thoughtfully added, "I don't know but that you would be a first-rate writer on such topics, for you have a wonderful faculty of using your eyes."

"That is just it," I replied, "I do look and think, and I am not sure but that I am really more competent than a good many fathers and mothers to talk about such things; at all events, they can not turn on me and say, 'He don't follow his own teachings.' I am safe there. Then, you see, I can stand on one side, and, at least, give what I think are good theories.

“Now, for instance,” I added, “take just this scene to-night in your home! You know I like to be with you, but if your mother—my good little sister here—had kept this parlor shut up, or with the gas turned down dimly, and had sent you all to the basement, and made the dining-room the sitting-room; or had left you all to find some place where as best you could to spend the evening, I should not have been here at all. There is our friend Mrs. Primsey; she is a notable housekeeper, and she has everything so nice that she takes no comfort in anything about her house. Did you ever see her parlor lit up at night except on some special occasion? The family never sit in the parlor, and what is in it is evidently too good to be used. Now, I like what I see here. The carpet is not too costly to be walked on; your chairs are not too frail to be sat on, and (you need not be vain if I say it) you, children, are not too ill-bred to grace this, the best place in the house. Here, around this table, with your books, and your work, and your laugh, and your chat, that is what I like to see. I wish there were more parlors like yours. As I walk through the streets, I suspect from the dark windows that there are not many. So you see, my dears, a bachelor can talk about home.”

They all laughed, and my sister looked pleased, while her daughter—not the small, but the tall one—came round and kissed the little bare spot on my cheek which neither whisker nor mustache covered, and told me that however I might succeed, I was an appreciative uncle, and I might come there as often as I liked and say all the good things I could.





## II.

### HOMES.

**I**T is a very great mistake to suppose we bachelors do not know anything about home or children. Because I have not a wife and do not keep house and have no children that I can call my own, it by no means implies that I have not some very excellent ideas about wives and homes and children. Ah me! if I had not had some ideas, perhaps I might have had them all! But let that pass.

I have seen some homes, some children, and—you need not laugh—some wives, that have come somewhat up to my ideal. Not many, I admit; yet there are some that I know. I can not paint a picture, but I am sure that I know a well-painted one, when I see it, a good deal better than some whose business is to make pictures. I can tell what a home ought to be, though I have never set one up.

After all, when one comes to think of it, there are not many homes. There are, of course, innumerable places which go by the name of home, called so for want of a better designation, or because everybody calls the place where he eats and sleeps "home"; but when you come down to the real and sober fact, homes are comparatively scarce.

A home is a refuge-place from the storms, the fret and worry of life. It is a place where the husband comes as to a sanctuary, where smiles and loving words answer his smiles and loving greetings; it is a place where the wife reigns in her benignity and grace, not it may be the grace of outward beauty or cultivation, but of true womanhood, where she receives honor and love even as she gives them both; it is a place where children are happier than anywhere else in all the world, because there are the cheeriest words, the brightest looks, and the kindest acts. Such are not the majority of homes as we find them.

How does it happen that when you see a real home, a light, pleasant spot where every one seems to be happy, where if husband and wife have misunderstandings no one ever knows it, where children seem to be helpful of one another, where laughter and smiles are perpetual guests, why does it strike

one as peculiar and noticeable? Simply because there are so few of them.

I will not ask you to think of your own home. Let us indulge in the luxury of talking about our neighbors. There is Thornly's house. What are your ideas about his home? You see him go in at nightfall, looking used up by the wear of the day, and you see him come out of it as if there had been wear and tear instead of rest or peace for mind or body. Did you ever see Thornly's wife come to the door and stand watching him and waving a smile at him as he went away? Not exactly! Did you ever see Thornly's boys run down the street to get hold of his hand? Possibly you have seen them suddenly disappear as he came in sight.

If you could step in with Thornly and be there an invisible presence, I don't believe you would be wholly charmed with the look of things. Possibly the first words of Thornly are directed indefinitely, "What's all this noise about? I don't see why these children are always kicking up such a row." The said children take the hint and move out of the way, not thinking—for which they are pardonable—to say, "Good-evening," to their father. He soon "settles" them. The family sit down to the evening meal. Thornly feels tired and don't care

to talk; the children have something to say, but they learned long ago that father does not care to be bothered with their tales of school, nor to be asked questions about kites and balls. He has forgotten all he ever knew about them, or indeed that he ever had them. They, sensibly enough, keep still. On the whole they have, if not a bad, a very stupid time. The family is a company of animals, who feed and leave when they have had enough.

If the children can get out they go. Thornly finds occasion to stroll out, or if staying at home is in order, he takes a newspaper to read or doze over while Mrs. Thornly keeps the children from quarrelling. They do not know precisely what to do with themselves, so they mope round and are glad to go to bed, though they don't want to go, except to escape the dullness.

Now that is not a beautiful picture, but is it a very uncommon one? An honest confession would tell of more homes of that sort than of better ones. Are they real homes?





### III.

#### A HOME NOT LIKE HEAVEN.

I WAS riding to a funeral the other day, an autumnal day whose softened gleam on the tinted woods and whose chilly air were in harmony with the sorrowful errand we were on. By my side sat a widow whose life had been made very sad by repeated and heavy bereavements. As we had several miles to pass over before the cemetery could be reached, there was opportunity for the interchange of many thoughts. Some of hers made a deep impression upon me. I recall one of them.

We were talking about heaven, and especially about our recognition of friends and their probable present knowledge of us. Said she :

“I hope and I expect to see many that I love there, but I have a strange feeling in respect to my mother. I want to see her, and yet when I think of being with her and remaining in her company, I

have a sort of shrinking from it as if I did not care to be there. You know, sir," she added, "that my parents were Scotch, and that we had the old-fashioned training of a home in Scotland. My mother and father were so cold and so strict. All was law and duty. Why, I never had any idea of God as my heavenly Father till I was a woman grown; indeed, not until these later years. All my knowledge of Him from the teachings of my home was that of a stern and inexorable lawgiver, without a thought of sympathy or tenderness. And this passed into the discipline and the training of our home. We were taught to be obedient and moral and religious; the Bible, the catechism, the church were all made familiar to us; but around them and around our whole life there was thrown nothing of sweetness or tenderness. And so it came to pass that over our home there reigned an air of sternness and severity that was only repulsive while we were in it, and has nothing pleasant now in memory to give us. I think of my parents with love and respect, but over the love and respect there are no sweet or affectionate emotions. I find that the same feelings come up when I think of them in heaven. I would like to see them, to greet them, but not to be with them all the time and forever."

I listened to this with surprise. I had never heard just such things. I suppose the same sentiments have not often been expressed, although I doubt not very many have had them in their minds. It seemed to me then as I heard this lady speaking, and it seems to me now, inexpressibly sad. Here was a Christian home, hallowed by the family altar and made sacred by careful religious instruction, yet a home around which clung not one pleasant association, and which projected even into the anticipations of heaven an air of repulsiveness.

Was it an exceptional home? Did these parents leave behind them memories such as no other parents have ever left? I wish that I could think so; but I know of other homes and other parents of whom the same things might be said. They are homes from which all elements of tenderness and manifested affection have been left out. They are parents who never give a caress, from whose lips never comes a pet name or an intonation that speaks of fondness or love. I know of children now grown to manhood who look back to childhood, as connected-with home, without an emotion of pleasure. They can not remember ever to have been taken in the arms, ever to have been hugged or kissed, except in a formal way. If they ever

were, it was when they were too young now to remember it. I know, too, how they ceaselessly regret it; how they wish that, amid the scenes of those bygone years, there mingled some sweeter visions of father or mother. Instructions, prayers, duties they remember; but no tender sympathies, no smiles, no words of love. A world which to some is like a paradise, in memory, is to them only full of gloom, which they care not to think of.

Perhaps some parents who read this will stop for a moment and think. They will be certain that they have tried to be very faithful; that they have instructed and trained their children carefully; that they have tried to have them obedient and even religious; but they will also be just as certain that the element of tenderness they have left out of their home life. Law and duty have been always there; manifested affection has been always absent.

I do not know whether or not it is too late to make it different; but it will be very sorrowful if your children shall, as did my friend, think that heaven would be more attractive if they could be sure that you would not be always near them.



## IV.

### FRANK HOLMAN'S NEW HOME.

I HAVE just returned from a call on Frank Holman. Frank is one of our best clerks—a wide-awake, able young fellow, on whom we depend for intelligent and steady work. A year or two ago we were a little afraid that New York would be too much for him in the way of temptation; but when we understood that he was pretty firmly held by the attractions of a young lady up-town, we were satisfied that he was safe. I never feel very anxious about a young man who shows a fondness for virtuous ladies' society.

Frank consulted me, a while since, in a half apologetic way—not in the words, but in the manner—about his contemplated marriage. I have an idea that he was slightly afraid that I would think that he was about to do an imprudent thing. He was evi-

dently quite relieved when I replied, cheerily, "I am glad of it, Frank, you are wise in this matter."

I noticed, especially after my answer, a sort of confidence in his tone, as he begged me to come and see him when in his new home. He evidently imagined that what I would find there would be what I would approve, and would make me express my satisfaction even more emphatically.

Now, since I have seen the wife and the home, I am of the opinion that the boy had good grounds for his belief. In temperament and mental development, they appeared to be admirably adapted to each other, and, in marrying, they have each made a happy choice. He has, I am sure, done a wise thing. I wish that I had done as well when I was as young as he.

I confess, however, that I was a little surprised when he spoke to me of his intended marriage. Holman's salary is not large, and I did not suppose that a young man of his characteristics— aspiring, energetic, and active—would care to marry so soon. I had, therefore, considerable curiosity to see what would be the style of his housekeeping. I was all the more curious as I knew Fanny, his wife, to be of a family, if not wealthy, yet of excellent position and means. With her tastes, education, refinement, and connec-

tions, I did not see precisely how they would manage housekeeping on what I knew Frank's means to be.

I walked home with him this afternoon. His house is not very far up-town, and certainly in not a very fashionable street, but both house and street are neat and quiet and respectable.

He took me at once up-stairs, as he said, with a smile, "You see, I don't hire the whole of this house; that would hardly do for me, you know." That banished any misgivings I may have had. If Frank's wife was willing to live in half of a house, the rest would be easy.

He ushered me into a neat little parlor that had a look of welcome in it, even if a cheery, joyous voice and sudden kiss had not met him as he opened the door. As I saw the young wife, with the glow of fulfilled expectation on her face, her trim figure so tastefully yet plainly arrayed, with just a little blush on her cheek, as if she had been caught naughtily kissing her husband before somebody, I envied him then and there, and thought that it did not require so very much courage, after all, to go to housekeeping, when one was sure of all that on every evening.

Frank had an errand out. He made it, I sus-

pected, that I might have an opportunity of seeing what his wife was. When he was by, she had been inclined largely to leave the conversation to him.

I had known Fanny before, and we soon fell into a lively conversation which she made to go in the direction of their new home.

“Now, I know, Mr. Elwood,” she said, archly, “that you had just a little curiosity to see how we managed this matter of housekeeping. I will not make you confess, and I don't blame you a bit for being curious about it. I imagine, too, that when Frank told you he was married, that you thought him an imprudent young man. I don't wonder at that either; though, wise as you are, you were, this once, mistaken. You see, Frank and I talked it all over, during many an evening and on many a walk. He was willing, so he said, to wait. But I knew that it was a very impatient sort of willingness, and, as for myself, I was not willing at all. We often said to each other, ‘Life is not very long at the best, and is very uncertain. We do not know how long we shall be spared to each other. It may be that a very few years or even months will cover it all for us. Why should we spend so much of it in mere waiting, which, after all, is sometimes

dreary enough?' So we determined to end the waiting."

"But, Mrs. Fanny," I said, "how is it that you had courage to begin in this way? Your rooms are pretty, and I can not tell you how much I am delighted with your home, but I know that you have been accustomed to things on a broader scale than this."

"Oh," she replied, "it did not require much courage; only a little common sense, and," she added quietly, "love. You know that it would have been all folly for us to think of living in the style of our parents. If that had been our idea, we would not have thought of marriage for many a year. But we thought that it would be wise, at least, to begin where they began, and not where they left off. They did not begin in a brown-stone front. Frank's salary would not afford us a whole house, so we took this nice half of one. It did seem a little strange at first, and I would rather, of course, be alone; but it seemed best not to go out of the city, and here we are. Don't you think this a pretty parlor? Our other rooms are just as pretty in their way. You shall stay to dinner, and I will show you how nicely some of our wedding presents look on the table."

So she ran on till Frank came in. Perhaps I will tell hereafter a little of what this young wife said about the housekeeping, but, whether I do or not, I came away from Frank Holman's house satisfied that he had done a wise thing in marrying that noble wife of his, and in marrying when he did.





## V.

### MRS. FRANK HOLMAN'S HOUSEKEEPING.—I.

I DID not intend to take dinner with Frank Holman when I went home with him the other day, but there was no refusing Mrs. Holman's quiet taking it for granted that I would remain. "You will take dinner with us; you shall see some of the pretty things of our wedding on the table," she said, and there was an air in it that settled the matter.

I had been a little curious to see how the young wife would accept the bringing home by her husband, of a friend just before dinner. It is within my observation that if you wish to test a woman's amiability and equanimity, contrive to go home with her husband unexpectedly, and time it so that you shall arrive with him about ten minutes before dinner. Then observe how his wife receives him. Of course she will not say anything disagree-

able, but quietly see whether her face flushes or not, whether she forgets to kiss him, whether she grows nervous and begins to bustle around. If you notice any of these things you may be tolerably sure that there will be a breeze when you are gone, and a "I think you might let me know when you are going to bring home company to dinner."

I am happy to say that Mrs. Frank Holman bore well this test. She was quiet and self-possessed, and evidently felt satisfied that all was right. I think that Frank went out at her hint to order the ice-cream that made our dessert ; but, if so, it must have been given in some cabalistic way that I did not understand, while she was making the acquaintance, which I had with her as a girl, ripen at once into a friendship of a wife for her husband's friend.

We went into their little dining-room, where a small round table, covered with the neatest and whitest service, welcomed us. As we sat around it, we three—I, a sort of father-friend, and they two children with smiles that spoke the happiness of two young lives just in its full—it was but the expression of what was in our hearts as we bowed our heads with brief words of thanks to God. We could not but bless the heavenly Father for the good of that hour. Indeed, I do not see how a

young husband and wife, whose hopes God has crowned with fruition, can bear not to thank Him together in prayer.

I could not help saying to Mrs. Holman, "You must have been unusually fortunate in securing, at the outset, so admirable a cook—her excellent products praise her."

"There! how mistaken you are," she triumphantly exclaimed; "my girl is very young, and, I must whisper it, very raw; you know that it would not exactly comport with our establishment to have a 'confessed cook,' as mother's Dinah calls herself. That sort of article is expensive. I had to content myself with a low-priced one."

"But some one has used brain-work; some one has known how to do it, and I am of the opinion that your own experience was not world-wide in the cooking department."

"That is true," she said, laughingly, "we did not do much of that work at home."

"Where, then, did you learn?"

"Oh, that is not so difficult, after all. Do you see that book on the window-sill? That is my kitchen literature, which I study diligently. Then I use something in here," and she tapped lightly her white forehead; "so it is all very easy. A

good cook-book and some brains are all one wants ; and then, with a willing and not too stupid servant, all comes out well.

“ I have time now,” she went on in her captivating way, while Frank looked on with considerably more than content in his face, “ for these things. I don't practice or play much now ; we have no room ”—it was said with a significant laugh—“ for a piano ; it would fill that parlor so that we could not move around. Some of these days, when we have grown out of these snug quarters, perhaps it will come. And then I don't have quite so much shopping to do now, nor so many calls to make, nor so many parties to attend as before our marriage. Frank comes home tired, often, and when I have gotten him in his slippers, we are too indolent to go out again. I am afraid we shall grow unsocial by and by, for, somehow, we foolishly think that our little home is the nicest place we know of. A call or so a week, with our church meetings, ordinarily does for us. We do not give large parties ; our rooms are not quite saloon-like enough for that. Indeed, Mr. Elwood,” she said, with a playful tone, and yet with meaning hidden in it, “ we live within our means. I don't intend that Frank shall always be a clerk, even with so kind an employer

as you. By and by we intend to have a business and a home of our own," and there was a mock importance, but with it a look that proclaimed the woman true and noble in the words. She added:

"So, expensive concerts, carriages, suppers, and all that, are now out of our line. Indeed, we don't feel the need of them."

But I will not tell you all that young wife said. She said enough to make me think, as I looked upon her stately figure, so full of youthful life, and in her face, beaming with sweetness and sympathetic with character, that Frank Holman had found that treasure which the good book says is "above rubies."





## VI.

### MRS. FRANK HOLMAN'S HOUSEKEEPING.—II.

I KNOW that you want to hear how Mrs. Frank Holman's housekeeping comes on, now that the novelty and the poetry of a new beginning and the halo of "love's young dream" have drifted off.

You will remember that I said that Frank was one of our clerks, on the whole the best in our establishment, and his income was made up wholly of the salary which he earns by his industry and ability. His wife is the daughter of wealthy parents, and all her life she had been accustomed to luxury, at least to the gratification of every reasonable want. It was a surprise to the most of their friends when they married. Everybody expected that they would wait till Frank was established in business. Everybody was still more surprised when they not only were married, but went to house-

keeping in the modest home they took for themselves. The expectation was that "the old folks" on either side would set them up in, if not a large, at least handsome establishment, and that the young couple would begin their married life in somewhat the style to which they had been accustomed in their former homes.

When that was not done, and when Frank and his wife neither had a house given them nor took apartments in a boarding-house, but selected a quiet street, hired half of a neat house, and set up house-keeping in a very quiet way, there were not only a good many eyebrows elevated, but a good many heads shaken and a volume of expressions of doubt and surprise published.

After the conversation that I had with Mrs. Frank Holman, I knew that it would all be well. I was certain that the good sense and the affection that had led them to make at once a home for themselves, to build a nest with their own hands, would make it only sweet and beautiful. The intelligence and energy of the wife I was sure would make up for all her inexperience; her cheerfulness and affection would make all the cares light.

So I have not been at all surprised that whenever I have gone into their home I have found the

same perpetual spring air of comfort and grace reigning. The rooms that I was permitted to see—and Mrs. Frank would compel me to look at them all—displayed the same neatness and beauty after months, that they did at the beginning; except that, as I noticed, pictures and ornaments, inexpensive, indeed, but selected with a refined taste, were from time to time taking little nooks and corners and pieces of bare wall into possession, and making them beautiful. The young wife was always the same sprightly, well-dressed, ready-to-welcome girl that she was at the beginning. If, as once or twice it occurred, I chanced to come in at an unexpected moment in the morning, she never kept me waiting. It would not be long before her quick step would be heard on the stair, and she would come with her own sunny air and smile and—you may be surprised that I should notice such a matter—not in a faded or greasy silk dress, nor in a fine one suddenly donned for the occasion, and which she had delayed to slip on, but in a neat and nicely fitting calico, which made her look, to me, exceedingly fresh and charming.

I think I know why, but somehow a pretty calico dress on a trim form, and, indeed, on any woman's form, has for me a peculiar charm. I should not,

of course, like to see it in a parlor at a reception, or as if it were intended for state occasions, but in the working hours of home I do not know of anything more attractive.

Perhaps the girls will not care much for what an old fellow—but you don't know how old I am; younger than you perhaps think—like me, thinks; but if they want to wear a certain indescribable and *taking* charm in the eyes of that particular young man whose good opinion they somehow just a little care for, let them allow themselves on some morning to be *surprised* in well-selected and tastefully-made-up calico. If its clean freshness, its bright, cheerful colors do not attract, and if its well-fitting folds as they clasp the waist do not suggest a more than half-formed wish to cover them with a bent arm, why, then that particular young man is not made of the stuff that I think he ought to be. I do not say that I have any such ideas. I only say that I think that *he* would have them. At all events I always thought that Mrs. Holman looked very sweet and attractive in her morning calico, and did not wonder at all that she never kept me waiting for her appearance. Indeed I should not wonder if she knew just how well she

looked. I half suspect that her husband gives her the good-bye kiss in the morning with quite as much if not more satisfaction, as his arm clasps the calico dress of the morning, than when it touches a little more daintily the more pretentious dress on coming home at night.





## VII.

### MRS. FRANK HOLMAN'S HOUSEKEEPING.—III.

SOME added cares and heavier expenses have lately come to them, and I have had a little curiosity to know whether housekeeping was the same easy, pleasant thing that Mrs. Holman had hoped it would be soon after her married days begun.

I asked her how it was—whether the expenses were not greater than she anticipated, and whether she did not find its care irksome and disagreeable.

“Well,” she replied, “as to the expenses, one thing was fixed at the beginning: we set out to live within our means. I knew what Frank’s income was and would probably be for some time to come, and so knew where the limit of expenditure must be planted. We determined not only not to be in debt, but every year, if our lives and health were spared, to save something from our income as

well as conscientiously to give away for benevolent purposes a part of it.

“It did not take long to discover that care was needed. I had never been accustomed to buy anything except in the dry-goods, the shoe, and the hat stores, and so all the market and the grocery business was very new to me. Frank had no time to attend to those matters, and, after going out with him a few mornings to the market, I found that I could do the business better and cheaper than he. A gentleman can give neither the time nor the care which I felt were necessary in our case. So I took that matter on myself. I made my own purchases. It did not take very long to learn that part of housekeeping. I do it at a regular hour, and it is soon despatched.

“I said that we found that to make the expenses come within the proper bounds, needed care. We had both been accustomed to keeping accounts of our income and expenditures. Frank, of course, did it naturally as a business man; and my mother, one of the most methodical of women, with all her easy ways, always taught us girls to do the same. She meted out to us week by week our allowance, and we were expected to keep an account of how it was expended. So, when the housekeeping be-

gan, it was a great deal easier than not to set down in our expense-book what had been paid out. As we, from the first, determined to pay for everything as it was bought, and to have no outstanding bills or running accounts, it was tolerably easy to make the entries. Yet, you would have been amused if you could have seen us more than once—yes, a good many times—with serious, perplexed faces, poring over our little book, and trying to find out where all the money had gone. Frank would be sure, although he hardly dared assert it, that he had not lost any money; I felt sure that I could account for all that I had had, and yet a large amount had most unaccountably departed—so large, that we both felt almost certain that it had not legitimately gone. We have again and again searched our purses and pocket-books and counted our balances, to make sure that by some accident a stray five-dollars had not hidden itself away. Then we would go over the week and ‘think up’ what we had bought.

“‘Oh, I forgot to set down that’; ‘Didn’t you put that bill in the collection-box for missions last Sunday, and forget to set it down?’ or something like those would be our mutual accusations and convictions, and we always found, when all was

hunted up and duly entered, that the missing funds were always accounted for. Yet I verily believe, indeed I know, that if we had not kept our expense-book, we would either have grown careless or else we would have fretted ourselves under what we would have thought the certainty that the missing money had been lost or stolen. Indeed, more than once a suspicion crossed our minds that our servant had been guilty. You may imagine how guilty we felt at the suspicion when we discovered that no money at all had been lost, but that only our carelessness had been at fault.

“We soon learned that money, when one is keeping house, has a most wonderful and mysterious fashion of making way with itself; that a pocket-book or portmonnaie, however well you may clasp it, somehow or other will let a prodigious amount go out of its little folds without your knowing it—that is, if you don't keep watch most carefully over it. My little expense-book has been a great help to me, a sort of black-and-tan terrier to bark at the right moment—at least to give me notice and keep me well aware of what was going on in the establishment.

“We soon learned, however, by the accounts which we kept, just what was about our average

expenses, or what they ought to be, and we resolutely forced them down to the proper place. The first few weeks I acknowledge we behaved rather badly, and we came out somewhat behind the sum we had fixed for that period. That was the origin of all that hunting for what we thought was lost funds. But when we found that we two were responsible for the getting away of the dollars, we looked over the accounts and discovered where the least necessary expenditure was, and avoided that spot the next time."

"Well," I interrupted, "how did that sort of thing seem? I suppose that it was a new sort of experience to you both. Frank in his young bachelorhood was pretty free with his money, and I don't believe that you ever felt the need of very dreadful economy."

She laughed, and went on :

"Oh, I don't say that it seemed particularly nice, but it was necessary, and so on the whole it was good."

She said some more things worth repeating, but I will not tell them in this talk.



## VIII.

### MRS. FRANK HOLMAN'S HOUSEKEEPING.—IV.

**W**HILE we were engaged in our conversation, in which I was much interested about the success of her housekeeping, her servant announced the dinner, and almost at the same moment Frank came into the room. The young folks evidently were both punctual people. The dinner did not wait for Frank, and Frank did not wait for the dinner. I imagined that this was one of those quiet ways that the wife and husband had of keeping each other's tempers in good order, and that Mrs. Holman was at the bottom of it all.

She has a quiet method of doing things that clearly makes all go along smoothly as well as efficiently. She seems to take the housekeeping easily, indeed she says that she likes it and does not find it at all troublesome.

She has a servant. I suppose that Frank must

have thought that I might think them extravagant in keeping—for their small household—so expensive an article. I had no such thought. He said, however:

“There is just one thing that I resolved upon when we went to housekeeping, and that was my wife should not be worn down with drudgery, to which she has never been accustomed, and to which her strength is unequal. So I insisted from the beginning that my wife should provide herself with a servant. I considered it best and wisest to economize, if it should be necessary, at other points, and be extravagant, if so it should be, at this. You see,” he added, “I did not want that bloom to go off from Fanny’s face any sooner than was necessary. She has kept it pretty well, you notice.”

“But,” I answered, “I had been in doubt how you were going to make all come out square, as I know that your income is not what the most of young people in your position deem absolutely necessary to keep house upon.”

“I overheard,” he said, “my wife telling you somewhat how she orders the matter. If she were not here, and if I were not afraid of making her blush, I would tell you some things about her management that she has not told to you. After all,

my bachelor friends contrive to spend on their lone selves pretty much the same amount as I do upon my little household. I understand it precisely, for I have had their experience.

“When I was an unmarried man I had some habits that made expenditures, and my position made others absolutely necessary that are quite avoided now. My cigars used to make quite a respectable item, for it was not simply those that I used myself, but those that every friendly man who smokes must provide for his smoking acquaintances that made the sum. Then, this young lady opposite cost me something in other days. We had operas and concerts to go to and parties to attend. You are pretty well aware that nowadays and in the city it is not a very small or a light matter for a young man to take a young lady friend to a concert. It is not that he himself must be got up in style, but he would not dare to propose a walk or a ride in an omnibus or the cars. Indeed, he could hardly do so. The dress which his lady friend wears on such an occasion might be forever spoiled by one such ride, even were it not that every eye in the conveyance would be fixed curiously upon her. He must call for her in a carriage appropriate to the occasion. That carriage must return at the

hour when the affair is over. It must wait for them at the saloon where the supper—at least, the oysters or the cream—are taken. No respectable young man could think of conveying the lady home without some refreshments, and some young ladies are not at all modest in their calls, or moderate in their partakings on such occasions. So by the time the lady, larger or smaller, is safely gotten home, there has been an aperture made in the pocket-book that can be very easily recognized next day by this privileged young man. That was the way with me many a time. I liked it, did not complain of it, though I confess that it did not come entirely easy, and could not be repeated as often as I would have wished.

“But,” he added, “we have not those things to do now. We go to the concerts and the oratorios when we wish, but then, as we are husband and wife, we do as we please, and we take what conveyance we please. The after-supper we do not usually find necessary. And, more than all, we don't go very often, for we find this cozy home about the best place to stay in at night. I come home often rather tired, and, when dinner is over and I am comfortably in my slippers, with Fanny not far off, we are too lazy to go out. Somehow our friends

have gotten the idea that our parlor is a tolerably pleasant place, and we are not left many evenings to ourselves—none certainly more than we want. I find, take it altogether, that our expenditures are not so very much more than when I had no wife or baby to provide for.

“I am afraid,” he said, looking up laughingly to his wife, “that Fanny has had some trouble to get me in my present habits, for she has a good many times, when I have been about to launch out in the old style, had to say to me in that peculiar taking way she has, ‘Do you think, Frank, you had better?’ But so it is. I don’t take any of the credit to myself in the matter.”

As we sat at that pleasant table and chatted the hour away I wished that some young people that I know, who have been waiting wearily for years till they were well enough off to marry, had been with us. I imagine the bright home, and the bright philosophy of it, would have been a new revelation to them.





## IX.

### MRS. HOLMAN'S BABY.

**I** HAVE just been to see Mrs. Frank Holman's baby. Frank, some weeks ago, with a gratification and pride which greatly pleased me, told me that a little boy had made his appearance in their house. As I am very apt to find out the babies among my friends, I took the first proper moment to go to their home to see this one, in whom I could not but be deeply interested.

Just as I should have expected, this new baby-boy has come to them as a great joy. I have known many parents to look upon the advent of a child as simply an unmeasured calamity, to be spoken of only with vexation or sorrow. I have had young fathers almost apologize for the fact that they were compelled to say that a new-comer was in their home. It was not so with Frank Hol-

man. He spoke of his baby with an unassumed dignity, a subdued gratitude and glowing satisfaction that made a jest all out of place, and almost compelled my hearty congratulations, while it lifted my esteem for him into respect and admiration.

It was so with his wife. I admired her before. She was bright and pretty. But now, with the glow of pride and joy upon her face as she held her baby before me, she was more beautiful than I had ever seen her. Clearly this gift which nestled in her arms and upon which she gazed with supreme fondness, was not esteemed a misfortune or a sorrow.

She did not ask me if I did not think the baby a pretty one, she had too much of good sense and good taste for that, even if she had the idea that it was beautiful. Neither did I say that it was. I have been put in very uncomfortable circumstances by proud young mothers insisting by their questions that I should say what I did not think was at all true, holding before me a sorry specimen of a baby, and demanding that I should say that it was an angel in beauty. I suppose they have called me, more than once, a crusty old bachelor because I declined the invitation.

I did not say that Mrs. Holman's baby was pretty,

though I am sure that I would be more likely to see hers in its fairest light than almost any one else's. I did not think that it was beautiful, new babies never are so to me. Give them time and they will be. I want always to wait till the little red face has grown white, and the eyes have expanded into the radiance that shows the soul within. I love to see them, I have a high respect for them. I can even hold them for a moment or two. There, you need not laugh at that ; I persist that I do understand how to hold them, and by a cunning insertion of my big hand under their necks, to keep their heads from dropping off—but I do not think them pretty.

Mrs. Holman thought so too, for she said gayly yet feelingly, "I don't want you to say that he is beautiful. I don't think he is, but I knew that you would cordially give me these congratulations and good wishes, that I appreciate so very much."

"I could not help doing so," I said ; "you have in your arms the brightest and best gift that God gives to mortals, and it is just what I expected from you when I see that you think it so."

In a subdued tone she said : "I do indeed think so. I half tremble sometimes as I look upon my

baby. I can scarcely believe that he is mine, the gift seems so great and so precious. I know that in this little form there is for me a world of care, perhaps of sorrow, for he may not be left always to me ; but he is immortal, he has been bought by the Saviour, he has been given to me. I accept the gift with unbounded joy. God help me to be a good mother to my boy !”

“You will be, my child. The true heart that welcomed and the thoughtful soul that valued, make certain all the rest that a mother ought to be.”

“I thank you, and all the more feelingly since I have only now recovered from a call that I have a few moments since had from my schoolmate, Mrs. Frivilton, whom you know. I should not have cared for her evident indifference to my baby, for, in my folly, I had brought him into the room with me. She scarcely stopped to look at him, did not wait to ask a question or hear a word, but at once exclaimed, ‘So you have a baby to tie you at home. I am really sorry for you. That is an end, my dear, of all your good times out with Frank ; that little tyrant will hold you now.’ So she rattled on, and in my surprise and vexation I hardly

knew what to say. But I managed to reply that I did not think it a misfortune; that, indeed, this little one that she said was to end my pleasure was the brightest and best thing, next to my husband, that had ever come to my life; that I thought that she was the one to be condoled with. She laughed at what she called my prosy way of looking at things, and said that I was always an old-fashioned piece, and so we ceased to talk of baby any more. When she went away, and I looked down into this little fellow's face and thought of all that he is, all that he may be, that he is one of Christ's little ones and will be one day in glory with Him, that he has been given me, my feelings of vexation turned into pity for my friend."

"I am glad," I replied, "that you said just those things to Mrs. Frivilton. I am acquainted with her, and am sometimes in her house. It has not the cheery feel of yours, and its stillness is not pleasant to me. I miss the sound of small feet and the voices of boys and girls. Yours will have music that hers can not have. Not one of her beautiful pieces of furniture unscratched by careless boys will compare with your baby's cradle. I think that when she comes home at midnight, she will hardly

be able to look down on any treasure like that which lies all rosy and sleeping there. I guess that what you see there will make up for being tied sometimes at home !”

“ I guess so, I guess so,” she said, as she laid the baby, now fast asleep, from her arms.





## X.

### OBEDIENT BABIES.

“ **W**HY, now, Uncle William, you don’t mean that, do you? You are not so absurd as to talk about making a baby obey you?” So said my lively young sister-in-law—not my brother John’s wife, she knows all about these things—as she held her six months’ old lovingly in her arms. “You do not intend to say that I am to begin my family government—oh, I am half afraid of the word—right away with this little pussy, whom I have nestled up to me now?”

“Well,” I answered, “my dear, it does look at first glance rather absurd; but I suppose that you intend to have some government in your household, and just a little, at least, of family training, don’t you?”

“Why, yes; you know I do. What sort of a family would it be if it had neither training nor government?”

“About what time, then, do you propose to begin the government and to start the training?”

“I have not fixed the time yet,” she replied, looking up to me with half surprise, as if my question had started a new thought; and then added, “but I suppose both ought to begin just as soon as a child is able to understand what you want.”

“How soon is that?” I asked; and I was pretty sure what the answer would be, for my little sister-in-law is bright and intelligent, and has a baby which, like all young mothers, she fully appreciates as being a child remarkably forward and knowing. “Your baby, I believe, is about six months old. He is, of course, too young to show many signs of intelligence. You can hardly make him understand anything yet.”

Her eye looked quickly into mine, and just a little flush was in her face as she said, “You do not know how bright he is. He shows intelligence every day, so much that sometimes I think that he knows all I say to him.”

“But you do not mean to tell me that he ever makes you think that he has any will of his own?”

“Yes, I guess so; he was not many days old when his father saw him crying passionately in my arms, and said, teasingly to me, ‘The baby has in-

herited his mother's temper and will.' I told him that that was a part of his paternal inheritance. However that was, we both concluded that it did not take long for a baby to give evidence of wanting to have his own way."

"But did you ever make him understand what you wanted him to do? He is too young for that, is he not?"

"You do the little fellow injustice again, Uncle William. I want you to understand that this baby knows more than you think." Then, catching my eye, she added, "I see what you are aiming at. Yes, he has shown me clearly that he can understand me. Yesterday I was struck with it. I wanted him to go out for an airing with his nurse, as he does every day. We were putting on his wrapper. He stood the leggings and the cloak pretty well, but when it came to the hood and the tying it under his fat chin, he rebelled. He turned his head from side to side, and when we insisted on his keeping still, and the strings being put under it, he kicked and set up one of his good cries, not of pain or uneasiness, but just a good, loud, passionate yell. You know, old bachelor as you are, what the difference is between the cry of pain and of passion from a baby."

“ Oh, yes, I know fully what it is, for I had a deep experience of it on the boat yesterday, as my reading was all disturbed by the frantic yells of a baby that insisted on scratching the face of a meek little girl at its side, and made known its displeasure at being hindered in the pleasant amusement by flouncings and cries that set the boat in an uproar. I know the difference.”

“ I thought that it was only wilfulness, and as he had done just so day after day before, kicking and crying till nurse and I were all in a perspiration, I resolved to try if the course of things could not be changed. So I stopped, looked at him sternly, tapped his chubby hand with my forefinger sharply, and said, ‘ Baby, hush ! Baby, be still ! ’ To our half wonder and half amusement, he looked at me for an instant with a sort of surprise, and as I repeated my command, suddenly ceased his crying, and kept perfectly still till hood and cloak were adjusted. This morning, when the going-out time came, I heard the beginning of the same outcry, but just as soon as he saw me at his side, and heard my voice telling him to hush, he kept as still as a mouse.”

“ I rather think, then, that he knew what you wanted, and that his will must give way to yours. Do you not think so ? ”

“It certainly looks very like that, but I had not philosophized about it.”

“You have, my dear, I think, made a discovery of infinite moment, if you take and act on all its meaning. You did not think it, certainly your baby did not know it, but you gave him yesterday his first idea of law. You began your family government. You taught him obedience to you, to yield his will to a higher, God-appointed will. You began not one moment too early. Probably that little incident, so casual and seemingly unimportant, will have a bearing on all his future existence. It surely will if you, as a wise mother, go forward in the same straight path.”





## XI.

### IN THE PLACE OF GOD.

**I** DID not tell all of my conversation with my young sister-in-law in my last talk—the one about “obedient babies.”

My remark that she had given her baby already his first great idea of law, and that what she had done, if she would but follow on in the same path, would have a bearing on all his future history, seemed to catch and hold her attention. Her baby-boy had fallen asleep on her bosom, and she was holding one of his fat hands to her mouth, half kissing, half covering it with her lips, while she looked dreamily in his face. After a moment or two of thoughtful silence she raised her eyes, and, with a strange look of mingled solemnity and wonder, said :

“Uncle William, you have startled me with a new and very solemn thought. You tell me that I

have begun to teach my baby to submit his will to a higher will, and have begun a reign of law for him. Did I understand you rightly?"

"Yes," I replied, "that is what I intended to say. Your will came in conflict with his will, and you, though you perhaps did not see it at the moment, taught him obedience to law when his hood was tied quietly under his chin."

"But I have just been thinking that if this be so, what a strange and even fearful position it puts me in. I must be a superior being who gives a law that he is bound to obey. Indeed, I hardly dare say what more it seems to me I am to him."

"What more do you mean?"

"Why, my baby does not, can not know any other being superior to me. If my will is his supreme law, then I must be in the place of God to him! He knows no other, can know no other God but me or his father. It gives me a strange emotion, half of terror, while I think or say it. Am I wrong?"

"No, my child, you are not wrong. I do not see how, thoughtful mother that you are, you can escape just that conclusion. There will be some months, possibly years, before your little one can have any idea of God, and during all this time his

parents must be in God's stead to him. He is to obey your authority, to love, while he obeys you, above and beyond all other beings. You stand in that relation to him by the simple fact of his birth. You will understand me, then, when I say that for the present you are to your baby God's vicegerent; you are, as you have said, in God's place to him."

"But, oh, what a responsibility it puts on me! I shudder at it. What ought I to be? How good, how wise, how even holy! If I am to be his law-giver, what ought I to be myself?"

There was a depth of emotion in the tones that surprised me, and as I saw the tears starting to her eyes that had a half-frightened look as they fixed themselves on mine, I thought I had never seen her look so beautiful, and I had a new conception of what it must be to be a parent.

"I do not think," I said, "that you look at it at all too seriously. It is the strange ordering of the Creator that it should be so, but so it is. Do you not think that there is some such meaning in the fact that the fifth commandment stands just where it does, midway among the ten? It is to show that next to God's the parental law is over the child. Thus you stand next to God, and, in these infantile years, for Him."

“Then you said that what I did when I made him obey me, would have a bearing perhaps on his whole history. I do not know that I understand precisely what you mean.”

“Your little boy has been born into a world, a universe of law. He will be, he is now under that law. He is God's creature, and so by his being he is a subject of God's law. If this little one whom you hold so lovingly is to be happy here in this world or in any world, he must be a loving and obedient subject of God. If he is rebellious or disobedient, he can not but be unhappy. Do you not see that clearly?”

“Oh, yes, it is very plain that no one can be happy under a law that he is rebelling against, but from which he can not escape.”

“Well, have you never thought that these baby years of your little one, when he knows no law but yours, may bear on his character when by and by he is old enough to understand his duty to God?”

“You mean that if I train him to obey me from the first, and have him form the habit of yielding to right authority, that he will by that habit of obedience be prepared to obey God?”

“That is just it. These baby hours shape the man's character and the eternal destiny.”

“ This opens a new world to me. It is almost a fearful thing to be a mother or a father, and that, not as regards the by and by when the babies are grown, but just now while they are so little. They know no other God but us. I know that I shall pray as I never have, that I may be what I ought to be as His representative. I will try to be gentle and even and firm and all-loving, so that he shall from this beginning learn that there is a law over him, but that it is good and blessed, as well as inexorable law.”

She said this in a meditative way, as if she was almost unconscious that I was there, and then rose and laid the baby gently in his cradle. I am sure that a prayer wrapped him closer than the white covering that was tucked round his little form.





## XII.

### FRANK HOLMAN'S FAMILY WORSHIP.

**I** HAVE never told you about the family worship in Frank Holman's home. To me it is very beautiful.

I have a very sunny feeling toward Frank's household. He was one of the young men who grew up in our establishment, and, when he consulted me about his early marriage on a small salary, I advised him not to delay it, but to take the sweet girl of his choice into such a home as he could provide her. I had no fears of the result, and the years as they have passed have made me more than satisfied that my bachelor advice was good. The years have given them the inevitable cares and sorrows, but they have been also years of perpetual comfort and joy.

A little family has grown up around them, and,

more than once as we have sat together, they have been good enough to tell me of their gladness that I encouraged them to make a venture which has been so full of blessing. Christian themselves of a bright cheery character, they have made from the beginning a Christian family, and the family worship has been the centre of its life. As they have told me, they began their married life in prayer, and from the first the family altar was set up. Its incense has not ceased to send up its fragrant column to God. It has been a privilege, very sweet to me, often to be with them at the evening sacrifice.

They have their family worship early in the evening, usually as soon as possible after Frank comes home at night from his business. They tell me that it sometimes is inconvenient, and occasionally is interrupted, but these occasions are so comparatively rare that they do not seriously trouble them. Old friends understand the habits of the household, and expect to find them engaged at that hour, and, as I have had occasion to know, so far from feeling disappointed, have rather sought the opportunity of being present at a scene full of touching meaning.

Frank and his wife always sit side by side. I have been present at the family worship in other

households, where this seemed to be made of no account; but as soon as Frank takes the Bible or hymn-book in his hand and seats himself for the service, Fanny takes her place by his side. I have never asked them why, but I understand it well. They have an instinct that at this hour, when the idea of family life comes peculiarly into visible form, the husband and wife should be close by the side of each other.

The children—there are three of them now—take their places on either side, and they nestle as close as possible to father and mother. In other families I have seen them scattered over the room and at a distance, but not here. My eyes have sometimes filled as I have looked upon the picture of that family group—a group indeed, when little Willie (named after me) was resting his curly head upon his father's knee, and little Mary (named after my brother John's wife) close by her mother's side and slyly holding her hand, was looking intently into her father's face. They are both uproarious little folks—Willie brimful of fun and frolic, making things rather lively at times, and Mary, her father's "Tomboy," as he delights to call her, is not far behind her brother in childlike noise and play. But when family worship comes

they sit in a quietness which I confess has surprised me.

I asked Fanny how this came about—how it was that these little folks at just this one hour seemed so transformed.

“I do not know,” she said, “except it be that they have never had any other idea than that when we take our places for this service they are to be reverently quiet.”

“I notice,” said I, “that you always have the baby in your own arms at family worship, even when the nurse is in the room.”

“Oh, yes, I always do when it is at all possible. We like to have the family as close together as possible, and you know that this little fellow makes a considerable part of the family.”

“He is a restless baby usually; does he never disturb your devotions?”

“Very seldom. I may say never when he is well. It is very curious to see how very early the fact that he must be quiet at this time seems to fix itself in a baby's mind. I can not tell you why, but almost at once they seem to know that this hour is different from every other hour of the day, and they adapt themselves to it long before they can at all understand its meaning.”

“Do you take the babies when they are very young in your own arms at the family worship?”

“Always, and almost as soon as I myself am able to sit by my husband’s side. I suppose, indeed, that that is the secret of it all—the children have never known anything else than to be still and attentive at this time.”

I did not need to ask any other questions. I saw it all. When the faculty of Veneration is exercised in the parents, that of the children is awakened just as those of sorrow or mirth are instinctively made active in the young nature. This is the way, by example, to “Train up a child” with the sure promise of the desired result.

“Ah,” I thought, “wise little wife and mother! how far-reaching and how true that intuition of thine! Would that more mothers had caught a little of its inspiration!”





### XIII.

#### THE DEAD BABE.

**J**OHAN HOLMAN and his young wife have been in trouble of late. Their baby is dead. Their home is so sweet and pleasant a place that I am often there, and so when the great sorrow darkened their dwelling they sent for me. I was, however (for the report had reached me), on my way when the messenger met me.

I always shrink when going to a home in trouble. I have a dread of entering where I know my heart will be wrung. Yet I never yield to the feeling, but go at once, as one goes out into the black night at the call of a friend in distress. I would think meanly of myself were I to hesitate to go.

They met me at the door. John threw his arms around my neck, leaned his head heavily on my shoulder, and sobbed like a child. I folded and

caressed him. I know how manly a man John is, and he was more manly then in his sorrow than ever before. A less noble and sensitive soul would have thought of himself, and, in his self-thought, would have restrained his feelings; but, in the all-confidence of his friendship, he took me to his heart, and came more deeply than ever into mine.

John's wife met me calmly and wrung my hand without a word. The woman seemed stronger than the man. But her wan, pale face, her swollen eyelids, her half-neglected hair, and the look of intense sorrow that cried from her blue eyes, told the unmeasured grief that was in her heart.

They took me into their own room and toward the crib that was standing by the side of their bed. Through the slender railing around the sides of the crib I could see the outline of the little form as it lay half defined and half hid under the snowy folds of the covering. The side railing was raised, and in its place. I do not know why they had put it up, for the danger that the boy in his restlessness might fall to the floor was gone forever. He was sleeping too deeply now for that.

They said nothing, but we went to the side of the crib and stood there; they with their arms clasped round each other, I with mine over them

both. It was very still and seemed cold, though it was a summer's day without.

Then the mother very gently raised the sheet from the little face and laid it softly below the dimpled hands that rested by the side of one another on the breast. The blue eyes, sunken just a little, gave their tint to the lids that lay over them; the soft, white forehead; the hair that was smoothed from it and lay in curls by its side on the pillow; the smile—half sad, half joyous—that lingered round the mouth, were all there. But our boy was gone.

We did not speak; we only stood and looked till the white form faded away in the mist of our tears. We did not attempt to go away. By and by the father and mother—nestling side by side to each other—were bending over the crib and gazing into the face of the dead with long, dreamy, wistful looks.

The deep silence must be broken, and, as I was the one who was standing on the outer edge of the sorrow, it was for me first to speak. Did you ever notice how the words of the Bible seem just what you want at such a moment? They have an un-earthliness about them, and seem midway between the human and the divine; so that while you use them they are not your words at all, only God's

words which come from another place than this world. So the words of the Lord Jesus came up, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." I softly repeated them, adding, "and he has gone to Him."

Then came deep sobs, and the tears fell like rain-drops.

"Yes," said John, "those were the words that came to us when we watched his ebbing life. He was breathing heavily, and the strange cloud was over his face, so that we knew that his end was near. It was nearly one o'clock in the day. The city was very still. We seemed to be hearing the Lord saying, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me.' 'And now he is going,' we whispered one to the other, as we sat alone with our boy. Just then the clocks struck one. There was a long-drawn breath, and then all was still. Our darling was gone away. We knelt by the side of the crib, and then and there gave thanks to God for the peaceful departure and the blessed hope that was in it. We told the Master how glad we had been over the gift of our boy—how we had given him from his first breath to God. How we prayed for grace and help to bear this our first and deepest sorrow! It is very deep. A little while ago I came in the door from

the street, and as I saw the long white ribbon with the black that bound it, my heart in its agony called his name till it broke with disappointment, because it got no answer. But it is well we know that it is well with the child."

So John talked, and I did not interrupt him. We lingered there by the side of the crib and spoke of the nearness of Heaven and its reality—more real and near than ever before to them. We spoke of Christ's love for little children, and how He is the same unforgetful Saviour that He was when He was on earth, and how safe the boy was with Him. We talked till it seemed as if the little form before us had grown angelic. We seemed to forget almost that it was there at all, since the boy was so safe and happy with Christ our Lord.

We spoke of God's wisdom and goodness. We did not attempt to explain the bereavement—the explanation lay too far out of our sight; we did not attempt to picture to ourselves any possible sorrow or trouble in our boy's life, or say that had he lived he might have gone astray. We only tried to grasp the hand of the heavenly Father in the dark, and to say, "He knows all. He loves us, and He has done it. It must be, and it is well."

We did not sit down. We lingered by the crib till God and Heaven seemed very near. Then at last I folded back the sheet—it seemed better for me to do it—over the little hands and face, and we went away; not all sorrowful, but with a sort of gladness in our hearts.





## XIV.

### ABOUT THE BABY GONE.

OUR conversation at the crib where John Holman's little boy lay dead, was in great contrast with what I have heard on similar occasions. No one could mistake the intense grief of these young parents. Could you have seen their fondness when the baby was alive and well, or watched the intense interest with which they regarded any movement, you would not have had any doubt as to the place which their boy held in their hearts.

But when once the fact of their child's death revealed itself to them, and the unmeasured desolation opened before them, they did not for a moment murmur or despond. The pale, weary look, the silence of their step about the room, the tear that would start whenever the name of the child was mentioned, told how heavy was the stroke that

had fallen upon them and how sweeping was the bereavement.

I said "when the name of the child was mentioned." I have known other parents who neither would themselves speak nor allow others to use the name of the departed. They seemed to put that name of the lost in the same category with the names that only awaken shame or resentment or pain, or as if there were a feeling of wrong that they had suffered in the departure which they could not bear to have suggested.

It was not so with John Holman and his wife. The name of the child was often on their lips, and that without a suggestion of bitterness.

I was struck with what appeared to me the Christian way in which they regarded their sorrow in the loss of their child. They did not attempt to explain to themselves why it was that God had taken him. Said John to me the last time I was at his house: "Our friend Tillson was here yesterday, and was exceedingly kind and sympathetic. But we can not, wife and I, enter into the thoughts which he suggested in reference to our bereavement. They were not unusual or new. He said that there were greater griefs than the loss of a little child; that it must always be a matter of

uncertainty what the future history of any child would be ; that this little one might, had he grown to be a man, have had a life of sorrow, and especially might have been led away by temptation into a life of sin ; might have brought disgrace and sorrow into our hearts, and make this early death to have been infinitely more desirable.

“ I can not see it so, and can not take any substantial comfort from such thoughts. In our pictures of our child’s life we have a different scene before us. From his first breath we gave him to God. We shall never forget how, when the danger was past and our child lay by his mother’s side, a new-born babe, we prayed and rendered thanks to God while we gave the boy, our heavenly Father’s best gift, back to Him. Then and there we consecrated him to God, and a hundred times since, the dedication has been repeated. This comforts us now ; God has taken His own.

“ We believe in God’s great covenant with His people, and this baby was a child of the covenant. We can not think or imagine that he would have grown up a wandering and guilty man, dishonoring us and damaging the world, so that it would have been well had he never lived. It is easier and far sweeter to imagine and to believe that, had our

boy lived, he would have been early renewed by the Holy Spirit ; that he would have grown to be a good man, and happy because good ; that his life would have been a comfort and a blessing to us, and a blessing and a treasure to the world. This, much more than the other, seems to us to be the true expectation of faith.

“ Somehow all such considerations seem to me to be very inadequate at such a time as this, they do not go to the bottom of our sorrow or help it at all. Our hearts cry out for something better than this. I have been saying to myself, ‘ Lead me to the rock that is higher than I,’ and these refuges which are suggested seem no higher than I am ; they are poor creature supports, and we want something better.

“ We have found it better and best to just fall back on the thought that our heavenly Father is in our sorrow. He knows all about us, and especially about our little boy. He loves us and He loved him, and we are entirely sure that He would do only just what is kindest and best. We do not see, and we do not and can not know any hour of the future. So we do not try to explain anything, we do not try to imagine anything. We rest here : He knows all, and has done wisely and well.

“ We do not perplex ourselves with what might

have been had our boy lived ; we gladly leave him in the very hands that we gave him to at the hour of his birth. And we know that he is safe. There are no other hands to which we would commit him. We asked God to mark out his life. We would not have dared to mark it out for him, even had we been able, and now it does not seem either wise or right for us to be doubting or all despondent over the way in which his life has gone. The wisest and the best being in the universe, our dearest and best friend, has done it, and we do not want to go back of that. It seems sufficient."

So my friend talked on. His wife would add now and then a sentence full of a woman's insight and tenderness. As they spoke and told me of this rest of faith in God, their faces took on a sweet and heavenly calm, and while every feature seemed tearfully sad, there was something there that made you think of smiles, just as I seem to see sunshine behind those clouds that float before my window on this rainy day as I write.





## XV.

### THE NEWLY-MARRIED PRAYING TOGETHER.

A WEDDING which I attended a few years ago, has been lately recalled to me in a most pleasant way. I always enjoy mingling in scenes that are so joyous and usually so full of promise. If bachelors do not make principals they are not mercilessly shut out as guests.

The couple were young, had known each other long, and there was as much certainty of their happiness as could well be looked for in a world where happiness is reached and held by so frail a tenure.

They were neither of them professors of religion, and this was the only thing that threw even the faintest shadow over their future. Two persons that love the Saviour and love each other, have a double pledge of comfort and joy in their married life.

I thought of that when I greeted Fred Alston and his bride. It happened that, when I was giving them my congratulations, as they stood under the marriage-bell made of flowers, I was the only one, at the moment, near them. As I grasped their hands—after I had kissed the bride—a privilege that my relations to her allowed—and held them in mine, I said, “To-night you must pray together before you sleep.” They both looked at me in half surprise, while I added, “It has a deep meaning in it. You will be glad, by and by, that I said it.”

Just then some one came up and I retired.

After their marriage they removed from the city, and I did not see them again for several years. Lately, however, I was in the distant city where they have since resided, and took pains to find them, and spent a delightful evening with them.

I happened to come to their house just at night-fall and took supper with them. A pleasant season it was. The house seemed cosy and home-like, and the picture of wife and children, as we sat at the table, will not soon leave me.

As we rose from the table Fred said to me, “We usually have our family worship after tea. We are sometimes interrupted, but not usually; and we always take it for granted that our friends will be

glad to join in what is, to us, a pleasant and a sacred service."

This was said, not in any apologetic way, but merely as a sort of introduction to a new topic of thought.

I was not aware of the fact that my young friends were Christian people till then, although the atmosphere of their home had suggested it.

We went from the table to their sitting-room. The father and mother took their places beside one another, their little boy rested his head on his mother's knee, while the baby nestled in her arms. We sang, after a short Scripture-reading, a simple evening hymn, and, at his request, I led in the prayer. It was a very simple service, but very sweet and touching to me.

After it was over, I expressed my pleasure in being permitted to mingle in their family devotions.

"Do you know," said Fred, "that we are largely indebted to you for our family altar?"

"No," I replied, "yet it would be very precious to me could I think that I had any influence in bringing about one of the things which, to me, makes your home appear very beautiful."

"But you had. Do you remember what you

said to us when, on our wedding-night, you congratulated us?"

"I think that I do. I told you to pray together, did I not?"

"Yes, you did. You said, 'Begin to-night to pray together,' and you added, as you turned away, 'You will be glad, by and by, if you do.'"

"Well, have you been glad? Did it seem a strange thing to say?"

"We were surprised. The minister had not said it, no one else had suggested it, and for the moment we wondered that you should say it, as you knew that neither of us professed to be a Christian. But we have been glad ever since."

"Then you did as I suggested?"

"We will tell you. When the excitement of the wedding was over, the company all gone, and we were alone in our room, then, above all the pleasant words of congratulation that had been spoken, yours, 'Pray together to-night,' came up with a strange meaning. At first we did not speak of them, but as we sat together side by side with clasped hands we seemed to hear them, and almost repeated them aloud. We thought of and spoke of the past, our hopes and our fears—fears that we should never see this hour, so full of consummated

joy; fears that were all banished and hopes that were all realized. Our hearts were full, and it did seem so appropriate that, almost without thinking what we were doing, we knelt with arms round each other. I tried to pray, and Mary tried to pray, and we both wept together as we asked God's blessing and thanked Him. We think that it was the turning-point in our lives."

"Yes," added his wife, "we have always prayed together since. Our family worship followed naturally, and, indeed, all our Christian life has grown out of it. We can never be too grateful to you that you said those few words to us on our wedding-night. It was easy then to pray together. Perhaps had we not begun then we would never have done it. At least it would have been very much harder. Then it seemed so natural, as if all our hearts demanded it."

All this was said with radiant faces and glistening eyes, and mine, too, grew dim while I listened.





## XVI.

### AFTER THE HONEYMOON.

**M**Y nephew and niece, young husband and wife, are in trouble. They may get out of it. I think that they will; but if they do, it will require a good deal of care, forbearance, and magnanimity from them both.

The niece is my brother John's eldest daughter Mary, and her husband is Edward Talcott. They have been neighbors, and have known each other since almost childhood, and have been in love for years with each other. They were married about eight months ago, and they are now seeing some of those cloudy and dreary nights that, I believe, are apt to follow the honeymoon.

I suspected that all was not moving smoothly and pleasantly in their new home, but did not know that they would tell me of it. However, like all the other nephews and nieces, they seem to

look upon their bachelor uncle as one in whom they can confide. I suppose it is because they think he has no one to whom he naturally tells everything—a good man who has a good and discreet wife does, I take it—and so they talk to me about things that they tell no one else, perhaps not father and mother.

I was not surprised when my nephew Ed came to me a few days ago, and with a sad face told me that he was unhappy, and that his married life was not what he had expected it to be.

I say that I was not surprised, because when I was last at their snug little house, the atmosphere of it was not just the atmosphere that I would like to breathe. The young couple were polite to each other—they were too well-bred to be uncourteous—but there was an undefinable coldness abroad. Coldness, you know, is absence of warmth, and that was just the state of things there. It was not anything specially that they said to each other, but rather what they did not say; not what they looked, but what they did not look toward each other. They did not have much to do with each other. This was so marked and so clear to me that I do not know but that I should have spoken of it, had I found an opportunity and had not Ed come to me.

He came, and I was quite prepared for what he had to say. Indeed, I helped him to begin.

“Nephew Ed,” said I, “married life does not flow in as smooth a channel as you thought, does it?”

He looked for a moment in surprise, but seeing by my eye that I had a meaning more than the words seemed to imply, his face flushed, and, with a little tremble in his voice, he said :

“No, Uncle William ; I am sad and disappointed.”

“Why, my dear boy, what is the matter? Do you and Mary not get along well together?”

“No, we do not. I do not know what is the matter, but something is wrong, and a cloud is over our home. I do not know when it will be lifted away.”

“If there are clouds there you must get some sunny influences to lift them. You must not permit them to hang in your sky.”

“I know that ; but I do not know what will let the sunshine in or lift the clouds higher and out of the way.”

“But what kind of clouds are they?”

“I would not, Uncle William, say a word to any one except you. But you have known us both

since we were babies, and you also know how I love Mary, and that I could give my life for her happiness."

As Ed spoke the tears were in his eyes.

"That, my boy, is just the reason that I permit you to say a word to me about the matter. I think you too much of a man and a gentleman to talk abroad of such things. But what is the matter?"

"I can not well tell you. But our old love of so many years seems to have almost died out. Mary does not look at me nor speak to me as she did a while ago and before we were married. She is silent and almost moody. She does not talk with the frankness and confidence of the first weeks of our marriage. She seems irritable, and sometimes does not answer when I speak to her. When I come home she does not seem to have anything to say, and when she replies it is with the fewest possible words, and the words are sometimes sharp, and do not seem like hers at all. She seems offended at me, and not to care whether I am with her or not. But I can not, indeed, put it all in words, and I am half ashamed to speak of it even to you."

"Ed, the story you tell is not a very harrowing one. It might be worse."

“No, Uncle William, I see that it does not seem much when I put it in words; but still I am very wretched about it, and it hangs like a leaden weight on my heart.”

“I am very glad that it does, and I am very glad, too, that you are so unhappy about it. You must not consider that I deem it a small thing. It is a very great thing, and your whole future happiness as husband and wife depends on how you act just at this time. Your experience is not unusual or exceptional. Other young married people have had the same. But they do not all come out of it as I hope you will.”

“What can I do? I am sure that I am willing to do anything that will remove the difficulty.”

“Let us see what you have done, and then we may be able to say what you had better do by and by. Have you conducted yourself toward Mary since, exactly as you did before you were married? Have you been as gentle and as attentive and as demonstrative in your affection? Have you given the many little attentions that you used to give?”

“I do not know that I have. Perhaps not. I suppose that it is because we now seem so intimate. No; I have not been as particular in my attentions as I was when we were only engaged.”

“ But was it not just as important that you should be? Do you think that because you are closer together than ever before, that you need not show your affection as fully? Have you been just as tender as you ought to be? I recall an incident. When I met you on your wedding tour you perpetrated a rough joke on your wife, and you spoke in half contempt of her simplicity. I saw her lip quiver and tears come to her eyes, and I felt like castigating you and kissing her. Perhaps you did not notice it. But it was wrong, and I should not wonder if you have done a good many things like that while you, at the same time, have never meant any harm. Yet there was harm. I recall it now only that you may understand what I mean. Perhaps you have been in this and other ways careless of Mary's feelings; at least, not quite as tender as you used to be. You ought to have been more so. You took Mary away from her mother and sisters and from her father, whom she almost adores. Perhaps she has put you in comparison with him, and you know with what refinement of courtesy and affection he acts toward her mother. It became you to be more than usually careful. I do not say that it is so. I only hint the possibility of these mistakes. You have come home tired and full of

business thoughts, and possibly you have forgotten your old caresses. Perhaps when she has come to you with a little of the old fondling, it has seemed almost annoying to you."

At this last remark Ed's face flushed for an instant, but he did not say anything in reply except, in a sad tone, "Perhaps it is so, and I am to blame. At all events, it seems so to you, and you make it look so. I am glad that you do. I do not want you to blame Mary. I would have been angry if you had thrown the blame on her. I see that, without intending it, I have been making mistakes. I thank you for letting some light in upon me."

"That is just like you, my dear boy, and I think that it will come out all right in the end. There is a rift in the cloud."

Ed went out of my office, I am sure, with not quite so heavy a heart. I do not say what he will do. But as he is a whole-souled and real man, I can prophesy what will come to pass.





## XVII.

### A YOUNG WIFE'S TROUBLES.

I TOOK occasion on the afternoon of the day when Ed, my nephew, had his conversation with me about the troubles of his married life, to call on his wife Mary. I wished to see how the matter seemed to her.

She met me with the old greeting and the kiss which she has given me since her infancy, and which I value so much; but she did not seem as bright and joyous as I had been accustomed to see her. I did not hear her sing, as was her wont, when she left me for a few moments.

I thought that I would give her the same opportunity that I had given her husband.

"Come here, Mary," I said, "sit by my side. What is the matter? You do not seem happy; at least, not as happy as you did a while ago. Does married life go hard with you?"

She looked at me for a moment to see what I meant, and then she threw herself down by my side, put her head on my shoulder, and sobbed. I placed my arm around her and kissed her forehead as I pushed back her brown hair. In a moment or two she said, "O Uncle William, I am not happy! So disappointed!"

"Disappointed, Mary? disappointed at what? Not at married life, I hope?"

"Yes, yes, at married life; certainly, at my married life."

"I am sorry to hear you say that. But what has disappointed you so?"

"I can scarcely tell you; but this I know—Edward and I are not happy together. He does not seem the same. He does not appear to care for me, and I am afraid sometimes that I have lost my love for him. There is something between us keeping us apart. He does not talk to me as he used to talk; he does not act toward me as he did a while ago, he says things to me that are almost like scolding, if not quite that; it seems that just a little more and they would be fault-finding and re-proofs. I do not seem to be able to get near him as I used to do. Now, for a long time we have had little to say to each other, just as little as possible.

He does not seem to love me, and I do not seem to love him any more." And her bosom heaved with her emotion.

"That is all very sad, my child," said I, as I stroked her forehead and took her handkerchief to wipe the tears from her cheek, "but, after all, it appears to distress you a great deal."

"O uncle, I am very wretched about it."

"That is hopeful. That does not look as if all your love had gone. There is, I think, some little love left to care about."

She looked up and half smiled through her tears.

"I guess," said I, "that all is not lost yet, and if my little niece is wise, I am quite sure she can get her husband and herself from under the cloud. But I imagine that it would be well to find out how you got there. Have you not felt badly at some things which you have seen in the closer intimacies of married life? Edward does not seem just the same in his shirt-sleeves, unshaven and uncombed, as he did when, in your courtship times, he came to spend the evening with you. I was by your side, one day, when you saw him enter the boat-house from a rowing-match, with woolen shirt cut low in the neck and without any arms. I saw you look at him with what I thought almost a feeling

of disgust, at least as if you would be glad not to see him any longer in that garb than was "necessary."

Mary looked surprised, and said, "I did not think that any one saw how I felt. But I have always been afraid of your eyes."

"Well, my child, you have been compelled to see him a great many times of late in as sorry a plight, and I am sure that he has not looked beautiful. Do you not think that this may have taken a little of the romance out of your ideas, and unconsciously lowered your feeling of respect for your husband? And, then, you may have found out some habits that were disagreeable and that you did not know of. That has not helped matters."

"I will not say that it has not been so," said Mary, "though I do not think that Ed has any very bad habits. I would like him to change one or two a little."

"When he has spoken hastily have you not given as hasty a reply?"

"No; or not more than once or twice. I keep still."

"Yes, you keep still; but have you not kept your displeasure in mind, and repaid the annoyance by being very silent, and hardly making any an-

swers for a day or two, so as to let him see that you were displeased?"

"Yes, I have done just that."

"And," I replied, "I think that he has felt that more keenly by far than if you had answered back at once and gotten over it. I am certain that I should have felt it so. Now just let me guess. After thinking it over all day, and feeling more and more offended at something occurring in the morning, have you ever, when you have seen him coming toward the house, taken care to be away from the door, so as not to give him the usual kiss?"

She looked curiously at me, and I added:

"Possibly you have done this so often that you have gotten almost out of the habit of greeting him in that way, and it has seemed awkward to begin it again."

Mary did not say that it was not so, and I judged from her silence that I was not far from right.

"Possibly," I went on to say, "you may have thought that as he was not very demonstrative with you, you would not be with him, and so you do not take his hand, or put yours on his shoulder, or play with his hair, or do some other pleasant little things that were, a while ago, done by you unconsciously. Now you can scarcely do them without a feeling of

restraint, as if you were afraid to do them lest he should not enjoy them, or should be surprised at them."

"O Uncle William," Mary exclaimed, "do not go on. It has been so, till I am sad and weary. I long and I almost cry out, when I am alone, for something that I want and that seems to have gone away from me."

And she sobbed again on my shoulder.

"Did you ever," I asked, "think that Ed feels as badly about all this as you do?"

"I do not know. I have been waiting for him to speak about it. I think that if he feels as badly as I do he would not let it go on so."

"Would it not have been good in you to have yourself said something about it to him? Why have you waited for him? If you had sometime just thrown your arms around him and given him a few of those warm kisses that you know how to give, don't you think that the clouds would have been chased away?"

"Yes; but why does he not do so? I have wanted it and waited for it."

"And that is another way of saying that you have been permitting this pride of yours to keep you out of your husband's love, and to make your-

self very heartsore. Now," I added, "let your uncle say this to you. Do not be a foolish child any more. Do not let your pride stand in the way any longer. Show how magnanimous you are. Be quick to be the first to show your returning love and to bring sunshine to your own and to your husband's heart."

"I will try to do so," she said, with a determined and brighter look as I left her.

I am of the opinion that my nephew and niece will get out of their trouble before long.





## XVIII.

### THE CLOUDS GONE.

A FEW days after my conversation with my newly-married nephew and niece, Edward came into my office with smiling face and with his usual buoyancy of manner returned.

"I take it, Ed," said I, "from your looks, that the clouds are gone from your sky, and I might almost imagine that the honeymoon has come back again in its joyousness."

"Yes," Ed answered, "I hope that the clouds have rolled away never to return. Both Mary and I now think that we have been acting like two very foolish children. We will be wiser in the future. I can never be thankful enough to you for your timely counsel. I am frightened when I consider to what we were drifting."

"I saw, Ed, danger that you did not understand,

and if I had not known you both so well, and had not had such entire confidence in your affection for each other, I would have feared that your married life would be a failure, and only full of disappointment and misery."

"There was, uncle, disappointment and wretchedness while our estrangement lasted, enough for me to see that, were it protracted long, life could have been only a burden."

"More lives than you or I dream of are merely one long bondage, an endurance which is well-nigh intolerable. And yet there was a time when husband and wife really loved each other. But both were stubborn, both were unwilling to make acknowledgment of mistakes, and they allowed some small thing to part them, for only a little, as they perhaps thought, but it was forever. Once asunder, they drifted farther and farther away, till now, though they may be side by side in the body, they are a whole hemisphere apart. And the distance means wretchedness. All has gone out of their life but bondage and regret. I am glad, my boy, that in your case the danger has passed, and that the skies over you and your wife are blue again. May they never more be clouded!"

"They shall not," Ed said, "if I can prevent it ;

and I am sure that Mary will do more than I to keep the harm away."

My nephew did not tell me, and of course I did not ask, how the difficulty between this young couple was so quickly overcome. Yet, naturally, I was somewhat curious to know the effect of my conversations with them, for I could not help flattering myself with the idea that I had had some agency in the matter. My niece, Mary, however, very soon let me know all about it. A few days afterward when at her house she detained me, while she made me to sit by her side to hear her tell how happy she was, and how the care and the sorrow that were on her heart had gone. She was pleased to say that she regarded me as next to her father and mother, and that now she was more than ever before profoundly grateful to me for the service I had done her. For this reason, she said, she wished to tell me how the estrangement between her husband and herself had been removed.

"You did not," said she, "tell me that you had said anything to Ed about our trouble."

"Of course I did not," I answered, "and I did not tell him that I intended to speak to you about the matter. I knew that you were abundantly able to care for the whole difficulty yourselves. If I had

believed that you required some one to go between you, I should probably have shrunk from what would have seemed to me a hopeless and a thankless task. It was simply an electric spark that I sent between two bodies that were full of loving affinity for each other. But how was it that you came so quickly to a reconciliation?"

"After you left," Mary said, "I felt not only very sad, but very guilty. I also saw that I had been very foolish, for I had been mistrusting one that I knew loved me more than any other human being loved me. I saw that I had been permitting my pride—and a stupid pride it was—to stand between my husband's love and me. I went to my room, fell upon my knees, and told the Saviour that I was wicked, but repentant. I asked Him to help me to be a more tender, forgiving, forbearing, and loving wife in the time to come. I looked over the past of our life, saw the thousand evidences of Edward's love, and in it of God's goodness, and it seemed madness for me to let it slip away from me. I knew and I felt that all my happiness was bound up in his love, and I trembled at the danger of its loss, and any and every sacrifice that I could make seemed not to be thought of an instant in comparison with his confidence and affection. In

that light my pride seemed wicked, and the idea of sacrifice or self-denial vanished away. While I was sitting on the floor crying and longing to be at his side again, I heard his step at the door. I did not wait. I could not wait. I hardly knew what I was doing. The door was scarcely closed when my arms were around his neck, and I felt his around me, lifting me from the floor as in the olden time. We did not *say* anything; we sat down together and I, at least, had a good, long, and happy cry. Ed was kept busy in wiping the tears from my face, although he needed the service almost as much as I did myself. You will not think us foolish. No, the tears in your own good eyes tell me that we were even a wise husband and a wise wife."

"I suppose," I suggested, "that you had a good many explanations to make and ask for, and a good many things to speak of—things that had hurt each other's feelings?"

"No, you know that we did no such thing. We were both just too glad to get together again to say anything at all about the past. We did not make any explanations at all nor any apologies. I tried to do so, but Edward would not permit it. He took the blame all on himself, and stopped my words in his way by kissing my lips."

“That was,” I said, “I should suppose, an affectionate way of shutting a wife’s mouth, and, under the circumstances, the best thing to do.”

“We did, however,” Mary added, “make one promise, and it was this: that if ever again there should come a sign of estrangement, we would each try to be the first to take it out of the way.”

I came away from Mary’s house with the comfortable reflection that bachelor uncles are sometimes of use.





## XIX.

### THE INNER SHRINE.

**A**LTHOUGH the estrangement of my nephew and niece seems to have come to so happy a conclusion, I have had just a trace of misgiving about it, and that from what might at first sight appear a singular sentiment. I could, I know, easily have a sort of self-gratulatory feeling, from the fact that they both made a confidant of me and were willing to talk with me about their matrimonial difficulties. It is pleasant to be thought worthy of such confidence as this implies, and I confess that I am not so different from other people as not to have felt a good deal of gratification that these young people were willing to say as much as they did to me. But I still have been somewhat solicitous just at this point.

I think that married life makes an inner shrine for husband and wife. They alone minister at the

altar there. No stranger foot must tread that holy place. I am thoroughly convinced that it is a very dangerous thing for a wife or a husband to admit a third person into the sacred enclosure of their life even to ask or receive advice.

So I had a half feeling of shame, as if in some way I had been guilty of an impropriety, as if I had been where I ought not to have been found, and had heard things that I ought not to have heard—not exactly as if I had been eavesdropping, but as one might feel who has accidentally heard through a thin partition a conversation which was intended for no one but the two who were speaking in the freedom of, what they supposed, perfect seclusion. Yet I am clear in my conscience about the matter. Surely I did not seek to pry into or even to know anything about the private life of these two young people. They were, indeed, very dear to me, and I suspected that something was wrong, and that they were possibly at a critical point in their history; but I would never, from any motive of curiosity, have asked a question or have received a word of revelation from them.

If I had detected in either of them anything that looked like captiousness or fault-finding with the other, if I had noticed that either of them

desired to throw the blame of the estrangement on the other, I would have been indignant and would have refused to listen a moment to their story, sad or troubled though it might be. I would, on the spot, have kindly but sternly rebuked them. But what touched and deeply gratified me was the fact that not for a moment or by a single word did either Ed or Mary show that the other was considered in any way at fault. The feeling seemed to be with both that a calamity was upon them whose character they could not understand. Their natures had, in the years of their intimacy and affection, become attuned to a perfect harmony, and now they felt through every nerve the dreadful discord, but they could not tell on which cord the healing touch must be placed. They were like children lost from home, crying to get back again not only, but wondering what each had done and how they had become separated. It was dark, they were away from each other's side, and they were asking how their hands had gotten unclasped.

I saw, even had I been disposed to make it, that neither of them would have brooked an insinuation against the other. I do not forget the look of Ed when he said to me, in a way that for the moment threw into shadow the sorrow that was

pressing upon him and gave a flash to his eye, "I am glad that you do not blame my wife. I would have been, I think, indignant if you had." And so, too, the whole tenor of Mary's conversation with me was that of perfect confidence in her husband, a confidence which not even this estrangement had, for an instant, shaken. Seeing this very clearly, I felt safe and willing to come in the place which I esteemed so sacred, but which was solemnly and tenderly opened to me. I felt almost sure also that I was the only mortal that knew anything of their difficulties. I knew that Ed was one of those sons who had never ceased to reverence his mother or to think that she was of all women the wisest. I do not believe that he made even an exception of his wife. He probably esteemed her equally able, but without the experience of his mother, and so of course not yet by her side in wisdom. I did not think, however, that Ed had made his mother a confidant in this matter. So, too, in respect to my niece. She had been lifelong accustomed to speak with the utmost freedom of her most personal matters to her mother, and to seek her advice at every point, but yet I did not believe that, even in this perhaps her greatest trouble, she had told her mother of it.



## XX.

### THE INNER SHRINE PROTECTED.

AS I thought over the happily-ended estrangement of my nephew and niece, I was quite desirous to know whether either of them had sought for advice elsewhere or had made a confidant of any one but myself. I could not have been especially jealous of another's share in the confidence, though I should in that case have felt it no longer the beautiful and sacred trust that it was now to me. Its sacredness would have vanished, for I would have felt that the inner shrine had been profaned.

But I knew that so much depended on the feeling of absolute unity being maintained between them, that I wished to feel sure that neither had gone to another outside person for help.

You may ask why, if I felt so sure of my young friends, I should have been at any pains to make

myself more certain? Well, you know, that one likes to say, though it may be only to himself, "I told you so." Whatever the motive was, and however it may be interpreted, I determined to find out how the case stood.

When next I saw Ed, without any preliminaries I asked him, "Did you ever, Ed, speak to any one but me of the trouble that clouded your home a few days ago?"

"You can not, uncle," said he, "think that of me. It never occurred to me to tell the sorrow that was oppressing my heart to any human being. I did not think of saying anything even to you about it. I felt that here was something that I was to bear alone, and that no mortal could have anything to do with but myself. I had an instinctive shrinking, indeed a sort of indignant feeling, when I thought of any one coming between my wife and me, even though it might help us. It seemed as though that would invade the sanctity of our life."

"That is," I replied, "just as I supposed you would feel, and as every right-souled husband will feel. A true married life, it seems to me, is apart from all the world beside. They are wise who keep it so."

This settled the point as it regarded the husband; how was it in respect to the wife? I took an early opportunity of calling on my sister-in-law. Our conversation, as I expected, was not long in drifting toward the newly-married pair. The mother had much to tell me of her daughter's housekeeping, and, what was especially on her mind, how lonely at times Mary was, and what a trial it was to herself to have this eldest daughter away from home just as she was in the fulness of a mother's enjoyment of a daughter grown to be a woman. "Then," said she, "I am afraid that the cares of life, even though it be so beautiful and promising as that of my Mary's, have come too soon and press too heavily upon her. Perhaps we have permitted her to go away from us too soon. She seems, or she did for a while seem, to have lost her buoyancy of spirit. I feared that she was about to be ill or at least that something very sad was weighing upon her spirit. It has been different the last few days, and she seems like herself again—bright and happy. I do hope that she will have no returns of her melancholy looks. Perhaps it was only some of her old vaporings to which, even when a child, she was subject."

"I suppose," I replied, "that we must let her

indulge in the doubtful luxury of the blues, that we all occasionally take to ourselves, and let her work her own way out of them."

Having heard enough to set me at rest I permitted the conversation to flow in another direction, and came away satisfied that Mary's mother was in blissful ignorance of any trouble between the young people.

I saw Mary a little while afterward, and said playfully to her, "Mary, I suppose that you talked about the cloudy weather, which you had here, with your mother, and that she gave you plenty of sympathy and some excellent advice."

She looked up to me with a little flush on her face, but when she caught a laugh in my eye she said, "Uncle William, you know better! You know—I see it in your eye—that I did no such thing! It only came out of itself to you; and if I had not known you so well, and that you were so wise, and had no wife to talk it over with, and withal loved me so well, I would have bitten my tongue off rather than have said a word about it, even to you." And then her face became earnest, and her blue eye flashed as it looked into mine, and she almost passionately said, "Did I say anything, Uncle William, that sounded like a complaint when

I told you of my sorrow? Did I say one small word that blamed my husband or that made you think even for a moment that I doubted him, or did not love him as I did my life? Did I?"

The tears were in her eyes, and in mine too, as I put my arm around her and said, "No, no, my dear, not one word, not one word! I would have been amazed if you had. You spoke just like, what I knew you were—a noble woman and a true and loving wife."

"Oh, I am so glad that you say so to me! Glad, not that you call me noble—though that is not bad to hear—but because you say that I did not utter a word against my husband. My heart was very sore, and I have been afraid that some expression may have slipped from me, in my trouble, that would have given you an impression of that sort. If you were not as good as I know you are, and had not done us such an inestimable service, I could be almost ashamed that I had said anything to you. I did not intend to—I did not, did I?—say anything that looked like wishing any one to come between us."

I smiled at her earnestness and her iteration, and assured her that she had not said one word that

the good wife, which she was, ought not to have said.

I have no fear that my niece Mary will be one of those foolish wives who make the fatal mistake of telling their conjugal troubles abroad even to dearest friends.





## XXI.

### TAKING AND NOT GIVING.

**I**S it because I am an old bachelor that I have been thinking so much about my friend Rathbone since the evening which I last spent with him? Perhaps I should do just as he does had I been a husband, but that doesn't make it right or wise.

I went home with him a short time since after business hours, and spent part of the evening with him and his family. He and I are old friends, and I have been acquainted with his wife longer than he has known her. I half wish that I, instead of him, had gotten her for a wife. That is not "coveting," for I do not wish for her now.

She was one of those fragile girls whom we frequently see, never sick or requiring the physician's care, but whose whole organization—mental and physical—asks that they shall be tenderly watched over and sheltered well. They have frequently an

indomitable will—can bear, when it is demanded of them, much of toil and care; but, unless they receive what their whole nature demands of fostering affection, they wither and die.

She has, I notice, grown, of late, rapidly old. She has faded much faster, it seems to me, and looks more worn than she should at her time of life. She is bright—indeed, she could not be herself without being that; she speaks cheerily, and not a look betrays anything but satisfaction with her surroundings. Yet I thought I could see a shadow of weariness at times steal over her face.

Indeed, I am sure that Rathbone is not all that he ought to be to his wife. Instead of sheltering and supporting her, he leans heavily upon her. She, a clinging vine, reaches, or used to reach out for support; while he, a sturdy oak, demands that the slender stem and hanging branches should hold him up.

He has, undoubtedly, no other thought than that he is doing all that he can to make her life happy. He is kind and generous in his household, and has her well-being closely at heart, but he does not understand how much he extracts from her life to help his own. I shall talk to him about it. I do not know that he will understand me, or whether he

will be able to do any differently, but I will give him my ideas. He knows me too well to be offended.

This is what I noticed. When he came home he was silent and undemonstrative. I know that he had had a hard day in his business, and that he was weary, but there was no need of his showing it so plainly. He returned the greetings of his wife not warmly enough to suit me—I could have done it better—and then he threw himself on the lounge with a long sigh and an exclamation about his weariness. His wife expressed her concern and sympathy, while she sat down by his side till she was called away.

He and I are intimate enough to be silent if we so wish when we are with each other, and so I was not at all annoyed when, at the table, he permitted his wife and eldest daughter to do all the talking to me. He sat there evidently with the idea that they were to entertain me and him also. It was, clearly, no new procedure on his part, nor one surprising to them. He was accustomed to be ministered to, not only in the matter of food and drink, but of mental and spiritual nourishment. His wife was the chief reservoir from which it was drawn.

It was an effort to interest and amuse him, but it was made nicely and willingly. It cost, however.

The case was not altered when the meal was over. He did not attempt to interest or amuse them, or even to make any sympathetic inquiries about their affairs. He simply took all and gave nothing.

Now, to entertain a weary man, to rouse and rest him, is no small or light work. Rathbone gave just that task to his wife, and he gives a similar task to her every day, and all the time, and she has been accustomed to do it, and has done it willingly and kindly. I do not believe that she has ever thought much about it—her gentle and loving nature would not lead her into an analysis which should reflect on her husband—but I am certain that it has all made a vast and wasting expenditure of nervous and mental force.

I do not know what her day had been, but, with her family of children and her household, she can not but have a world of care. With her delicate organization, she can not but feel heavily the pressure. So I know that at the close of the day when I was there, she, as well as he, must have been mentally weary.

What right had her husband to throw all his weariness on her and ask that she should sustain and refresh him? He might—so I at least think—instead of sitting down and passively receiving all

from her, have tried to give in word and look something to her. But he did not. He simply took all.

I could not but imagine that I saw the life-power going out from her to him. It was not all imagination that saw it. There was life given and received.

I do not wonder that she has grown old. It is selfish in him never to have thought of it. He daily takes from her life to make up his own. If he does not cease it, he will by and by take it all away. A good many like him have done so.

His thoughtlessness in this matter has gone farther than merely upon the life of his wife. It has touched his children. A feeble mother can not have strong and healthy children, and I sometimes imagine that the vigor or feebleness may have relation to the mind quite as much as to the body of the mother. A mother of frail body may be the parent of even stalwart children, if she be mentally and spiritually elastic and strong. But one mentally and spiritually exhausted does not and can not give birth to rugged sons and daughters.





## XXII.

### POLITENESS IN THE HOME.

I HARDLY intend to put myself among that exceedingly respectable company made up of "gentlemen of the old school," but I should very gladly be thought to belong to it. I have had for a long time an unpleasant conviction that, in this all-driving age, while we are advancing in a great many different directions, we are retrograding in our manners. It has seemed to me that we are so busy and hurried, that we do not find time to attend to the finer amenities and courtesies of life. In what may be properly called our best society, there is too often a lack of that high-toned, gentlemanlike action common in other days.

I do not mean now our drawing-room manners—the manners of gentlemen and ladies when they are assembled for the very purpose of showing polite

attentions to one another—but rather the tone of ordinary intercourse in our daily routine life.

The manners of our boys and girls, our young men and young ladies, are justly criticised by foreigners. It is not easy to point out exactly the deficiency; it is one of those occult yet pervasive things that one feels better than he can describe. An instance, however, on the moment strikes me which will, in a partial way, suggest at least the idea. I happened a day or two since to be on the street at a point and just at the moment when a young man met his pastor—a man old enough to be his father, and whom, I doubt not, he, as every one else, respects. Now the office, the years, the character, all demanded the best and most courteous salutation. But this young man simply nodded his head, said “Good-morning, doctor,” and passed on. The doctor, who is a polite man, instinctively raised his hand as if for a salute, but the movement faded away into a slight gesture as he saw the nod of the young man, and, with a pleasant word of recognition tempered with a shadow of displeasure, he went on his way. It all occurred in an instant, but it gave me an unpleasant idea of the breeding of that young man. I was satisfied, too, that the doctor had received the same

sort of impression. I joined him in a moment or two, and, after a few commonplaces, he quietly remarked :

“Do you think, Mr. Elwood, that the manners of our young people are of as high a grade as they were when you and I were young?”

He made no allusion to what had just occurred, but I was certain that it was the occasion of his observation. I do not believe that he would have made it had my young friend politely touched his hat and respectfully saluted him.

The only place and the only way to make gentlemen and ladies is in the home and by the father's and mother's own politeness, first to each other, and then by a reign of courtesy in the whole family.

It is not every man that is polite to his wife. Many a husband speaks and acts toward his wife as if she, of all women, were the only one to whom he need not be civil. He addresses her and acts toward her in a way for which, if it were toward any other woman who had a natural protector, he would expect to be called rigorously to account. As she is his wife, he can be brutish with impunity. At this point the family training in politeness must begin.

My brother John and his wife do this thing, it seems to me, excellently well. They are not studiously, but naturally, polite to one another. I do not think that any one could ever think of them for a moment as cold or distant in their manners toward each other, but there is a refined courtesy between them that has grown so into a habit that it makes simply a part of their life. He waits upon her as in the early days, almost, of courtship; he rises to give her a seat when she enters the room, as in the olden time, and some one must be nearer and quicker if her handkerchief, dropped accidentally, is handed to her by any one else.

The silent influence of this is seen on all the children. I do not mean to hold them up as models of perfection—though I confess I have an admiration for my brother John's youngsters—but I think that they are, at least, as far as my observation extends, an unusually polite household, and their manners are noticed by others to have a sort of evenness and polish that is not everywhere seen. My impression is that it comes from the style of intercourse that they have always seen between their father and mother. Children imitate words and looks, but much more the general tone of the manners of those about them. Too many—I had al-

most said, the most of people—forget this. They would like their children to be gentlemen and ladies. They send them to dancing-school to learn manners, and sometimes wonder that they do not have more polish, but they overlook the place where the training is chiefly done. It is the home. If there is an atmosphere of courtesy, if little polite attentions between father and mother are common, if parents insist on them between brothers and sisters, all the rest will be easy; the children will grow naturally to be courteous and polite.





## XXIII.

### REPRODUCED CHARACTERISTICS.

**M**Y brother John's children have furnished me all along with what the scientists would call persistence of type. As I remember so well what he was when a boy, it is not difficult for me to recognize the origin of a good many things that I see in his children.

This morning, as I sat looking over the paper in John's sitting-room, I heard a whoop and a halloa and a crash on the stairs as Harry came down three steps at a time and landed with a jump on the mat below. He came down right side up, however, and with limbs all safe, ready to give me his "Good-morning."

As Harry passed out of the room I laid the paper down and closed my eyes. The noise and the boy had had a strange power over me. The years seemed to sweep backward, and I was in the old

home once more with brothers and sisters as they were in the bygone days. The shout and the leap had brought all back again: it was John making the house ring with boisterous uproar, and around the boy began to come the forms of father and mother, and the sister long gone away into the serene heavens, and I was with them, boy again. Strange, magic rod, to evoke such a vision!

While I was musing, my brother John and his wife came in, and I told them of the incident and of my reflections.

"I do not wonder at it," said John, "I very often see myself in the boys."

"And in the girls, too," added his wife. "I do not think that you can limit the transmitted qualities to the boys."

"Yes, I will admit that, my child (so John sometimes calls his wife, although she is only a couple of years younger than himself), "but I am compelled to add, that they have not wholly escaped those of their mother."

"I know it, I know it," was her reply, half-jestingly, half-sorrowfully given.

"But," I broke in, "you need not speak of the thing as if you both had handed down only the poorer or bad qualities; you have passed along to them a

good many—you need not blush while I say it—beautiful and lovable ones.”

“We thank you, brother William, for that ; but, sadly enough, the poorer and the bad characteristics seem to take the surest hold and show the sharpest definitions.”

“I have,” said John, “often had a sense of humiliation come over me as I have seen some disagreeable or unlovely trait showing itself, while I could see, all too plainly, whence it had been derived. I have sometimes even felt a half-reluctance to reprove the children for what I recognized so well as a too faithful reproduction of what could have been seen in me, and what I had, alas! too often unsuccessfully tried to overcome.”

“I am glad,” I answered, “that the discovery has not hindered your child-training. It was fair to give your children the result of your labor, even as they had, without your intention, inherited your difficulties.”

“Of course not. I have tried to give the boys and the girls the result of my dearly-purchased experience, and have wished—oh, how many times—that I could have them start off from the point I have reached and so take a long step ahead of where I am, after these long years of endeavor. But that

can not, sadly enough, be done. We can give the poor boys and girls a little help; but, after all, they must travel over the same painful path that we have trod so sorely."

"You are in that measurably true," I said; "but I think that you are, perhaps, too sweeping in your saying that your children must travel over all of the same road that you have toiled over. They do gain from you, and they do start at an advanced point. The labor you expended on your characters was not all lost. I can see that your less beautiful characteristics are not as clearly defined in them as they were in you. I can notice their outlines and sometimes a pretty definite filling up, but there is an improvement—speaking in the scientific way of nowadays—in the species."

"That," said John, "is encouraging. Perhaps in a half-dozen generations or so, if a careless or more than ordinarily bad pair should not happen to be interjected, the tribe may become a tolerably respectable one."

"But," said Mary, "is it not very sad that this thing must go on, and that our poor children must take what we give them by the very fact of our being their parents?"

"True," I replied, "but it is a part of the con-

stitution of things as God has made them, and all that fathers and mothers can do is to see and accept the facts while they order their life by them. It is the inevitable responsibility of parentage. If the young could only take a long look ahead there would probably be a greater diligence in the perfection of a good many characters."

This matter goes farther and begins sooner than most parents think.

I happened in upon my cousin Sarah lately at an unfortunate moment. She was not in her best fashion—something had worried her, and she did not have her usually sunny look. She was, I am sorry to say, fretful, and she complimented me enough to show her fretfulness. No, you need not smile and think that was sarcasm. I really meant what I said. If she had been less intimate or had felt less familiar with me, she would have been at greater pains to hide her uncomfortable feelings. As it was, she made me feel very much at home, and I did not love her a bit the less for it.

But, as I was saying, she was a little fretful, and it was very curious to notice how both the children—the one that was playing about the room, and especially the one in her arms—seemed to par-

take of her feelings, and how they gave a very excellent reproduction of them in her behavior. They were peevish and fretful too.

I believe that my coming in at the time did really mend matters, for I managed by the help of a stick of candy and a picture-card, to get things in better shape with the children. Then, as Sarah had been kind enough to make no stranger of me in the exhibition of her slightly unamiable condition, I took the liberty to talk to her somewhat after this fashion :

“Sarah, I believe in a subtle atmosphere which parents carry with them, a sort of emanation, that surrounds them and in which their children live. When children are as young as yours are, they are almost all the time in it ; and a baby, such as that one, is all enfolded in it as he is held so closely in your arms. The atmosphere there is full of the constituents with which you have loaded it. Did you not notice, I did, how wonderfully your baby seemed to be like yourself a few moments ago ? If I had not often seen it before I would have been surprised at it. Your own feelings seemed to find an exact expression in the little fellow's looks and actions. Perhaps you have not thought of that

before, but you will now and hereafter. The silent and unconscious life of a mother, her inward states of anger or petulance, her serenity and sweetness, are often manifoldly stronger than her words or her actions."





## XXIV.

### JUSTICE TO CHILDREN.

**M**Y feelings are all wounded and sore, and that not because any one has given me an unkind word or look. I only saw, a few moments ago, both of them given to a bright-looking boy, as I walked along the street. His father, so he seemed to me to be, was handing something from a cart on which he was standing, and just as I passed, with an ugly look, and a smarting word, struck the boy, a fine fellow of about fourteen years of age, with a coil of rope which was in his hand. I do not know what occasioned it; I saw simply the angry look on the father's face, and the surprised, half-angry, half-grieved, and, as he caught my eye, the half-ashamed look of the boy. The blow given was very little, but the tone and the words were very much. I was sure that then and there that father had laid away in store in his son's

memory something very sad and bitter. The sense of injustice and wrong done him—so I imagined I saw on his countenance—will live there perhaps many a year to come.

I may be all wrong about this particular case, but it has suggested what I think of often, and what I wish those who have boys and girls would think of more—being *just* with them.

Every child has more or less a keen sense of justice within him. He may not be able to tell you about it, but he knows. A boy will take a *deserved* punishment calmly, and will cherish no resentment afterward, while he will never cease to remember with anger one which he did not merit. He will forget the greater and severer punishment, while a very slight one will live in vivid recollection forever.

I sat lately with an old friend, and we happened to be talking about the training of boys, and the difficulties that fathers have in doing exactly the right thing with them. He spoke of his father, whom I had known so well and honored so much as to make it proper for him to say what he did. That father, long ago gone to heaven, was a man of more than ordinary nobility and excellence of Christian character, and had reared a large family

of sons to usefulness and honor. What affected me deeply, and impressed me profoundly, was this—that when this son, now past middle life, spoke of the family training, one incident seemed to separate itself from all the rest, and stand out in sharp definition; and, sadly enough, that one incident was painful. A thousand others, in his boyhood history, as it connected itself with his father, had passed away—this was abiding still.

After all it was a little thing, only this—his sister and he had a childish quarrel. She ran away to her mother, and falsely accused him of striking her a blow. When the father came in, the case was reported to him, with only the sister's version. His father, refusing to listen to anything he had to say, though backed by testimony of a cousin that stood by his side and witnessed to his innocence, hastily and angrily administered a castigation. As my friend told the story, his face flushed and his eye kindled, and he said, "Even now, after nearly fifty years, I can not think of it without my whole soul being nerved with indignation."

It was very sad and painful, for I loved, as he did, and revered his father. How, I thought, a sudden and inconsiderate act of injustice will live in memory and blot the fairest record, and cloud

the brightest scenes of the past ! What would we not both have given could that long-past scene be withdrawn from memory. But it stands.

The next time a sudden gust of anger at your boy blows over your spirit, and you are about to punish him—pause. Be sure that you are *just*. If you are not, beware. One brief minute, one hasty act, may hide as with a black cloud a thousand kindly things you have done. The blow which you give on the impulse of the moment, and because you are angry, may seem but little, and you may never think of it again, but it may make a vivid and bitter memory in all your child's future ; it may leave not a momentary mark behind on the flesh, but it shall make a wound in the soul which the years shall only heal, while the scar remains to grow red half a century to come.





## XXV.

### PROMISES TO CHILDREN BROKEN.

“**H**ARRY, you will have to lose your allowance for two or three weeks, to make up, partially at least, for that money you have just lost.” So said my brother’s wife in my hearing a few days since. If I had not been one of the family, and as much at home there as almost any one of its immediate members, my sister would not have made that remark to her boy. She is a mother of too good sense to give either unnecessary pain or wanton humiliation to one of her children by a reproof before a stranger. I have known parents to do that thing, but am satisfied that it was a very great mistake.

A parent ought to guard the self-respect of his child with exceeding care, and should do nothing which for a moment may wound it. The child has a reputation to keep, and no parent should thought-

lessly lower him in the opinion of others, and especially proclaim to his child that he has spoken disrespectfully of him. Respect your child, and regard well his reputation.

As I am felt to be one of the household, it did not seem at all out of place when my sister made the above remark to her son Harry. Harry is a good, intelligent boy, but he has one besetting fault—carelessness. He knows enough for a boy of his years, studies well, reads a good deal, but dreams too much. He forgets, and he makes mistakes when on his errands, so that he can not be implicitly relied upon when he has had some trust committed to him. You can not be sure that he will do it just right.

His mother and father have tried hard to break him of this habitual carelessness. Probably they will be in a measure successful, for Harry sees the fault, and I have no doubt tries to overcome it. The incident which called out his mother's penalty, was of the usual kind. Harry had been sent to the store to purchase something. He took the bill in his hand, and went whistling out of the house. After a while he came home, not whistling, but with a lugubrious face.

“What is the matter, Harry?”

“Why, mother, I went to the store, and got what you sent me for, but when I went to pay for it, the bill was gone.”

“Well, what did you do with it? I certainly gave it to you, and you had it in your hand when you left the room.”

“I know it. But when I got to the store it was gone. I met Tom Hanson on the corner, and we went together. He showed me his new base-ball. I think that I put the bill in my pocket when I took his ball in my hand.”

“Are you sure that you did?”

“No, ma'am. I think I did. But I have looked in all my pockets, and it isn't there.”

“Well, Harry, I am very sorry, but you know well that you have lost this money simply by your carelessness. It is the old story—you did not think about it, and it is gone. I am sure that you must, if ever you are to be of any use in this world, be broken of this inexcusable carelessness. I do not know of any better way than to make you feel the penalty somewhat in the line of your fault. I must tell your father to withhold your weekly allowance of money for the next two weeks.”

This, I know, was rather hard on the boy. His parents give their boys and girls a fixed sum week

by week for their spending money and benevolence. It is not a large sum, but enough. For Harry to have his regular income all cut off was a very grievous thing. I was not at all surprised, then, when he began to beg off. He knew well that it was of no use to get his mother to go back from her determination—and especially from her word—by any ordinary mode of attack, so he shrewdly made his approach on a side which he thought would be effective—the side of justice and truthfulness.

“Mother,” he said, “father promised me that allowance. He said that I should have it every week, and I have depended on it. I do not see how he can break his promise. You have always taught us to keep our word, even if we have promised something we would like to get off from.”

Harry's mother has a soft blue eye that, when its owner pleases, can make up into a keen searching look which her children can not well withstand. She had that look when she raised her eyes and fixed them on Harry's.

“Harry,” she said, “do you really think all that? You know well enough that those are only words; you *know* better than that. The keeping back your allowance is a punishment. Your doctrine, if carried out, would make any penalty impossible. A

thief must not be put into prison because the law has promised him protection, and to guard his liberty. You thought it all right the other day that we refused to take Gracie on her promised ride, because when I had left her all dressed and ready, and told her to sit still on the stoop till the wagon came, she deliberately went out and played in the mud and soiled her clothes, so that she was unfit to go. According to your words, I broke my promise then. Did I?"

"Well, I thought she ought to be left home."

"Do you remember how, when the Israelites came up to the borders of the promised land, the land which God said should be theirs and their children's, that they were all turned back, and made to die in the wilderness? Did God break His promise?"

"No, I suppose that He did not."

"Promises, Harry, are always given on conditions. When we—I mean your father and mother—make you and the other children promises, it is always understood that you are to deserve, by your goodness and obedience, what we have said you should have. If you are bad, or have committed a fault, it alters the whole case. You have broken the conditions, and so the promise falls away of it-

self. It won't do to give just alike to a good or faithful, and to a bad or careless boy. Do you think that it would?"

I knew pretty well—I could see it in the twinkle of his eye—that Harry did not believe his own argument, and he saw that his mother understood him. So he submitted to the inevitable, and went slowly out of the room. I hope that the lesson will be serviceable.





## XXVI.

“A HORSE, SIR, IS LIKE A CHILD.”

STANDING, a few days since, just outside the cabin of a ferry-boat on the Hudson, looking listlessly over the water through which we plowed our way, I heard at my side the movement of harness, and then a voice saying, in a playful tone, “Now, Kate, behave yourself.” I looked round, and saw that the words came from a pleasant-looking fellow, and were addressed to a bright-eyed, powerfully built horse, against whose shoulder he was leaning.

As he stood there, the horse would throw her head around, and, opening her mouth, would reach after him, while the young man would draw back, repeating the words which had drawn my attention to him, “Behave yourself, Kate.” In her ungainly way, the animal was sporting with her owner, and he was answering her playfulness.

“You seem,” said I to him, “to have an intelligent and playful horse, there.”

“Yes, sir, she knows all I say to her. I am accustomed to play with her; and as I am standing by her head, and touching her, she thinks that I wish to have some fun with her now. She will follow me at my call, and do anything I want her to do.”

“Have you owned her a long time?”

“Not very long, sir; about a year and a half. You see she is not a young horse. She is some twelve years old. But she can do more work, and more willingly, than any horse I ever owned, and, though I am a young man, I have owned a good many.”

“You did not, then, train her from the start to this gentleness and docility?”

“Well, sir, not exactly. Yet when I first bought that horse she was a very different beast. Why, sir, she was ugly and stubborn, and if you put a moderate load behind her, she would, likely as not, refuse to budge a step. But when I saw how she was handled by the man that owned her, I knew what was the matter. The owner was cross and ugly to her. He beat and banged about her, and hallooed angrily to her. That made the horse ugly. You

see, sir, a horse don't like that. If you are ugly to them they will be ugly to you. He could not make her move with the load of twenty-five hundred we had put on the dray. I said to him, 'Let me take the lines.' He gave them to me, and I went to the horse's head, patted her, and spoke softly and kindly for a few moments to her, and then told her to go on. Why, sir, she moved right off! Then we put on the dray a load of forty hundred, and I just said to her, 'Go on, Kate,' and at once she started, as if the load was nothing. You see, sir, a horse is like a child; he will be just what you are to him. The man that owned her said, in surprise, 'If she would only do as much as that for me, I would never let you have her.' He did not understand that you must be kind to an animal like her. When I am harnessing her, or when I come home with her, I romp with her, and she enjoys it. She will do anything for me."

I let him talk on. To a man who has a good horse, you can do no greater favor than to listen attentively and with interest while he tells you all about the qualities of the animal. You could cool off an angry man, if you could only get a chance to stroke the neck, and look admiringly at the flank of his horse. We soon reached the wharf, and

parted. We shall not meet again, but I shall remember one thing that he said, “You see, sir, horses are like children.” That remark showed insight.

I wish that a good many parents, some that I have seen, and whose words I hear in my walks, could learn just a little of what my acquaintance on the ferry-boat knew so well. “If you are ugly to them, they will be ugly to you, sir.” So he said, and he was right. “He banged about that horse, and spoke angrily to her, and it made her stubborn.” That was it. It was not wonderful.

It is so with children. Do you think that it is in human nature to be otherwise? Just remember. Were you ever called at sharply and angrily? Do you not remember just how the voice seemed to stir up all that was determined in you, and make you, almost in spite of yourself, stubborn and wilful?

When I hear how some mothers and fathers speak to their children, I am not surprised in the least that they are disobedient. I think that I would be so too. I could not help it. The only relief I could find would be in being ugly. The very tone of voice has something in it that rasps you that are older, while it tears into the sensitive nature of a child.

“ Oh, they get used to it,” some one says, “ and do not mind it.” There is what is very sad in that, if it is so. It can only be because your child has grown hard. The feelings must be callous, when harsh words do not wound or excite anger. You can make an infant lip quiver by the tone of voice. You must not forget that the cords are not broken. They will vibrate at your call in the aftertime.

You that have spoken roughly and often harshly to your children, try the gentler ways. Soften the voice. Let it have the melody of kindness and affection in it. There are little faces that will look up wonderingly, perhaps, at first, but the boys and girls will surprise you with their smiling obedience and manifested affection.





## XXVII.

### MR. FROWNELL'S BOYS.

PERHAPS it is not fair to make comparisons, but I can not help noticing the difference between my friend Frownell's way with his children and that of my brother John. My nephews and nieces are profoundly respectful to their father. I do not believe that any person ever overheard one of them speak of "the governor" or "the old man," and I never saw him enter the parlor or room where they were seated without some one of them rising and offering him a chair, especially if he happened to be seated in a specially comfortable one. Yet they seem to feel perfectly free with him—will laugh and joke with him, and go to him naturally as possible with everything and on every occasion, just as they would to their most intimate companion. They never seem to imagine that he will not be interested in them, and in what interests them.

And he evidently is. I have sometimes half wondered at and wholly admired the calmness and the smile with which he would lay aside his book or pen to give some advice on the way a mainsail should be cut for the boat one of his boys was building, or as to whether a certain fine glass "alley" should be advantageously traded off for an "agate," or to take hold and help arrange the sticks for a kite so that it should be well-shaped and strong.

I can see that it has created a bond between them—this interested intercourse—that is very endearing and powerful. The tallest of them, now almost grown to a man, never goes to bed without a good-night kiss, and I saw them exchange one for good-bye on the steamboat a short time since. I know, too, for I have been careful to make myself certain, that the father's word is a law for them. I have suspected that they even take a pride when away from home to have it known that they can not be induced to disobey him, or even do what he would not be likely to approve.

It is different with Frownell's boys. He is a kind and even indulgent father. He spends, I am sure, more money on them in dress, and even in presents, and certainly in pocket funds, than my brother does.

I do not believe that, as a general thing, he is particularly harsh with them. But he does not identify himself with them as my brother John does.

I do not remember ever to have seen him out for a walk with his boys, or but once or twice, and then they were walking hardly by his side, and not chatting with him, as I have seen John's boys chat as they laughingly kept close to him. I rather think that they would smile if some one were to suggest that they should take their father with them if they wanted to have a particularly good time.

If Frownell ever shot marbles, he could not do it now. I don't believe that he could tell a "comee" from an "alley," and to show one of the small boys how to hold the marble between the thumb and finger, so as to shoot straight and strongly, would be like writing the Iliad. I do not think that he could put the string over the six ends of a kite's sticks and prepare it for the paper to save his life. I have been in his house often, but I never heard him consulted about a bow, or the feathering of an arrow, or the trading of a penknife. His children do not depend on his advice for such things, and I suspect that it never enters their heads to seek it. If a day's fun is on hand—even if they

knew that he had leisure—I do not think they would count him in as one of the company.

It seems to me that he makes a mistake. He comes home, I am aware, tired, and possibly with the worry of the day on him, but he ought not to be, as I have seen him, annoyed by the play of the children, and when the little one ran up to him with a broken toy, he ought not to have told him to go to his brother to fix it. When I saw that, I thought I could tell why his children had so little to do with him.

That little fellow had not learned it fully yet. One of the older ones would not have thought of doing so. They were taught long ago that they need expect no aid there. But the little boy, in his simplicity, thought that father was just the one to go to. By and by—and it will not take very long—he too will not think of running to papa with a broken toy or for a piece of twine, and as the years go on he will not think of going to him for anything. He will just live with him, respect him, love him some, but will easily drift away from him.

It is all a dead loss now to him and to them, and, what is worse, it may, in the aftertime, be of incalculable injury to them. He is losing his hold on

them just at the point where it ought to be the strongest. He has not mingled his life with theirs. Their life has all along been a child's life, and he ought to have made himself a child with them, walking hand-in-hand in their child-thoughts and child-cares and perplexities. They have them, but I will not talk about that now.

It is bad in its indications when one's children feel fretted and restrained from talk or play when their father is near them. I am afraid that it is too late now, at least with the older boys, but I wish that Frownell would try to call up his boyhood again, and, through the boy-life lived over again, get closer to his children.





## XXVIII.

### IN THE COUNTRY WITH THE BOYS.

**W**E have had a good time, my nephews and I. They are—I mean my brother's family—all together in the country. John and his wife do not believe in leaving the children at home in the city while they themselves go away for a vacation, nor do they, when they can help it, send the children off alone or scatter them around.

This year they have taken board among the hills at a farm-house, and father, mother, and children are all boys and girls together. I have been out to see and spend a few days with them.

We had, as I said, a good time—no dressing for dinner, no standing on ceremony, no effort to appear well before strangers—indeed, no hotel or watering-place life at all. We arrayed ourselves for comfort. We boys, when necessary, tucked our pants into the tops of our boots, regardless of the

æsthetics of dress; we hung our coats over our arms; we donned woolen shirts and hard-looking hats, and came home, after a heavy day's work, over the hills and through the woods, tired and soiled and torn, but jolly. We boated, we waded, we lay on shady banks, we ate our lunches under the trees. Those boys—what quantities of bread and beef and cake they could stow away! If you want to see one that can eat, that can demolish fabulous piles of bread and butter, or anything else that comes handy, look at a well-grown and growing boy. It will do you good—it does me—to look and wonder where it all goes to. But it does go, and goes to the right spot for muscle and bone and brain. Save me from the boys and girls that eat little! Give me the girls and boys that devour much! Mountain air and long walks did not make the appetite smaller, and the fat, brown faces and sturdy limbs showed how good were their results.

The boys and girls kept their father and me going all the time. They said it was no fun to go without us. If I sat down to a book at night there was no rest the first part of the evening—it did not take a late hour to send the young folks to bed—till we had made up our plans for the next day.

“Uncle William,” would be the word, “we’re off

to-morrow for a long tramp. Sam will take his gun, and Will and I our rods. You can take your gun or rod, as you please, and father his. Now you need not say, 'No, we will tire you!' you need not say that; you know well enough that father and you can outwalk us all. You're 'lazy'! Well, we'll stir you up. You must go. We always have a good time when you are along."

So you see there was never any resisting the young rascals, and we always had to promise them.

Then there was perpetually other work to do, and help, and opinions to be given.

"Uncle, what sized shot shall we take? Don't you think squirrel-shot about the thing? What do you think about these hooks? Will this line be strong enough?"

The girls, too, would be on hand.

"Uncle William, look at these arrows; do they want new tips? See this target! Haven't we used up this canvas covering pretty well? The straw back is good enough, however. There's where Jossie made her best shot. That is my best. You see that the bows and arrows which you gave us have done good service. We will soon have to show you, as the boys do, the muscles on our arms."

So they kept us busy, and I have not often been

happier. It makes my heart grow full—and indeed my eyes, too, sometimes—to see how these children take me and their father into their plays. They do not seem to think that I am so very much older than they. They have always been so. They talk about their small affairs with me, they consult me about their games, ask me to help them about their kites, to set up croquet arches and targets, to show them how to clean their guns, and generally they seem to think me not only posted on all these things, but entirely ready to help them at any time. So I am.

Sometimes they do break in upon me when I would rather be let alone; but, after all, I do not know but even that is a proof of their entire confidence and faith in me. They are so sure that I sympathize with them that they are not afraid to trouble me.

It is just so with their father. I notice that they are never happier than when he says that he can go out with them, or can give them a day, as he and I just now have. When I am on hand he refers them to me; when I am not he is the general and trusted oracle about balls and bats and kites and marbles—though he and I are rather rusty on marbles, the boys have so many new games nowadays. He and

I knew all about these things when we were boys, and we have never forgotten them, and his children do not seem ever to think that we have ceased to remember, but expect us to go right in with them. I can see the power of all this on the children. It makes men and women of them. I am certain the person does not exist that could persuade one of them deliberately to do what they knew that their father would not approve.

And he is sure of them. I am accustomed to it, but I can not but be struck at times with the entire certainty with which he rests on their obedience when they are away from him. The idea of disobedience seems never to suggest itself to him or them. John has an admirable way with his boys.





## XXIX.

### ON POLITENESS TO THE BOYS.

I HAVE just been reading a newspaper article by an Englishman on the manners of some American children that he unfortunately encountered in his travels. They greatly disturbed his equanimity by their rudeness. They pushed past him, jostling him as they went by; rushed, in their play, between him and the gentleman with whom he was conversing. They talked loudly, and did a variety of improper things, all of which I condemn. I agree with him in his displeasure, and in his comments on the family training that these things seemed to evince. I confess that he was all right, and I have not one word of apology to offer for the cubbish behavior of the boys. I say "cubbish," because that is just the word that I want. It is very descriptive of a good many boys that I wot

of. Somehow, whenever I see them, I naturally have the word "cub" present itself. But I have been thinking of late that there may be at least a partial procuring cause of these disagreeable manners in the way in which boys are often treated.

How few people are absolutely polite to boys. Take an incident at the last concert that I attended as an example. A well-dressed boy was sitting in an eligible seat in front of me. He had come early, and secured it by being on hand some time before the music began, and was evidently comfortable in his place. By and by a gentleman—so he appeared by his dress—accompanied by a couple of ladies—so they seemed, judged by the same token—came in and up to the row of seats where my young friend was sitting. Scarcely looking in the face of the boy, the man motioned him to move down. As the boy did not move at once, I heard him say, "Move along, boy!" The little fellow hesitated a moment, but seeing the ladies, and evidently understanding that the odds were too many for resistance, did as he was bidden, and pushed himself along. The gentleman—so I call him still—deliberately took his place, the ladies planted themselves by his side, but neither the one nor the other gave a look or a word of acknowledgment or thanks

to the boy whom they so unceremoniously had thrust aside.

I looked at the transaction, and in my bluntness I had almost spoken out my indignation. I did not speak, however, what I thought. I thought this: Just suppose, for an instant, that that thing had been done to me! What would I have done? What would I have said? Would that man have thought of doing so to another man? What sort of reply would he probably have received? How safe would he have felt himself to be? But, as it was only a boy, he considered himself entirely right and perfectly secure. He insulted him, and was outrageously rude in his insult, and all without a thought that he was either rude or insulting. It was only a boy!

You and I have seen things like that very often. They are not at all uncommon. Do you imagine that they are calculated to promote excessive courtesy in the boys? Do you think that my young unknown friend of the concert-room had his sense of politeness remarkably built up and strengthened by that incident?

I came in, at evening, with my acquaintance Busquin, to take tea with him. We bachelors can rove around easily. One of his boys was sitting in

an arm-chair, from which he did not rise. His father did not notice him, but introduced me to his wife. As he came to where the boy was sitting, he gave him a slight push and said, "Get up." The boy did so, and moved off into the other room.

My brother John would have done that thing differently. I had the contrast in my mind in a moment. He would have presented the stranger to his wife, of course, but would just as carefully have brought forward the boy and as formally introduced him. John's boy would not have kept his seat, but on the moment of the stranger's entrance would have risen, expecting to be made acquainted with him. The difference in the manners of the boys was exactly the difference in the manners of the fathers. I am quite sure that had Busquin been accustomed to treat his boy politely, the boy would have acted politely to his friend. If it had been a man sitting there, he would probably have felt that he insulted him by ignoring his presence, and especially by unceremoniously ousting him from his seat. But as it was only a boy it did not matter!

My brother John is a polite man, and I notice it nowhere more clearly than in his own family. His

boys never seem to think of not offering him the most comfortable seat, should one of them happen to be in it, and he never takes it without an acknowledgment in either word or look. When he asks them to wait on him—he often does it, says that he does it with a purpose, because they ought to be in the habit of attending to his wants and wishes—it is always with a pleasant tone and with a gentle “Thank you,” as the service is rendered.

It is my opinion that if grown people would be more deferential and polite to the boys, the boys would be more polite and deferential to the grown people. But things are done and said to them, which, if said or done to men, would receive a fierce word and perhaps a fierce blow in return.

When next you are about to speak rudely or do some impolite thing to a boy, bethink yourself. Do not train him in that way. Act toward him as a gentleman should. You will find more gentlemen among the boys than you think.





### XXX.

“IF WE HAD ONLY KNOWN.”

OUR friend Tillson has had a great sorrow come upon him, in the death of their oldest daughter. She completed her school-days last June, graduating with the highest honors of her class. She was a hard student, not especially brilliant, indeed, I sometimes thought, being not above mediocrity. But she had one crowning faculty--the faculty of perseverance and hard work; and so made up for some possible deficiency in power by the care and the labor which she resolutely put forth.

I have noticed that these are just the kind of students who are the most apt to break down by hard study. They are engines of small power pushed beyond their capacity. The naturally quick and active reach results of study by short

and comparatively easy stages ; others have to toil wearily to reach the same point. They have put forth perhaps twice the mental strain and have suffered twice the mental exhaustion that their more favored sisters or brothers have used and endured.

Parents and teachers both very often commit a fatal blunder just at this point. They look at the attainments of the pupil, see that they are not especially excellent, perhaps only ordinary in their character. There are no evidences, at least no result of especial power, and, without thought, they take for granted that there has been only moderate power put forth. Yet the actual fact may be that both the mind and body have been taxed to their utmost capacity and often up to the point of irreparable injury.

It frequently happens that these mediocre students stand at the head of their classes ; they have, by the mere force of dogged perseverance, actual hard work, and by a multitude of hours devoted to study, pushed themselves to the front and in advance of others whose natural abilities are far above theirs.

But the aftertime makes a revelation. If they have not broken down midway in the course, the

honors of commencement-day are the only honors that they ever enjoy. They sink back to their natural level, because the unnatural exertions can not be forever kept up, and the broader field of life does not present the same opportunity for routine work to tell. But what more frequently happens, they are compelled to suspend their studies before they are half completed, and they never resume them. Or if they have been fortunate enough to be able to endure to the end, the vacation that succeeds the final term often becomes a vacation that lasts the rest of their lives. The stimulus and excitement of school or college over, the occasion of mental strain past, there comes a sudden collapse. The country jaunt, the travel of summer days do not seem to recuperate or build up as friends were sure they would. If it is a young man, he is thin and haggard, and has a head whose chief function seems to be to ache. The doctors say that books must be laid aside. Indeed he needs no such prescription, for the fierce pains that follow mental exertion and the weary lassitude that abides with him compel him to avoid them. If it is a girl, the spine sensitive through its whole extent, wrists that are so weak that she does not care to lift a book, head that throbs with agony if only

a moderate effort be made or a mild excitement be endured, digestion that lacks all power of assimilation, all combine to place her in the invalid's chair if they do not prostrate her on an invalid's bed.

More than this has come to Mr. Tillson's daughter. She was not well as the term drew to its end, and under other circumstances would perhaps have rested from study. But the examinations were at hand, and her teachers were naturally proud of her attainments and anxious that she should appear to the best advantage and take the position which indeed belonged to her. So she worked on, though it was more difficult than ever before to work and demanded more hours of study. She took them from recreation and from sleep—hardly *took* them from sleep, for sleep was not easy—and toiled, counting the days and the hours when the dreadful necessity should be over.

On commencement-day she appeared exceedingly well. She was not emaciated, her complexion was fair and her cheeks ruddy, and both her appearance and her acquirements called out expressions of delight from her friends.

Her father and mother, beaming with delight, were congratulated, and they took her smiling to her home.

A few days after the excitement of the journey and the welcome of sisters and brothers were over, the inevitable reaction set in. The flush of commencement-day had left her face and a weary look had taken its place. She complained of being tired, "so tired all the time." A week only had gone, when a slight fever set in, and she kept her room and waited the physician's coming.

When he came out of her chamber his face wore a grave look, and to the anxious inquiries of father and mother, which would not be put aside, he said simply that he feared Laura had symptoms of typhoid fever and would need the best care that could be given. And then came days and nights of watching and tearful anxiety on the part of friends, of restlessness and decline on the part of Laura.

It was not long before the end was at hand. The disease without a pause passed rapidly and inexorably through its stages until the sufferer went away from earth.

I do not know, certainly I would not say that any one is to be blamed for this result. If with what they know now the whole course of this dear girl's education were to be arranged for, undoubtedly a different result would be reached. An extra year

of time would have carried her safely through her course of study. Her family had had no experience to guide them, and knew nothing of the fatal process that was going on. Perhaps, however, it may warn some other household. The hope that it may be the occasion of my talking about it.





## XXXI.

### ON SAYING "NO" TO CHILDREN.

**D**ID you ever think how much children have to suffer in having their wills crossed, and in being compelled all the time either to give up something or to do something that they do not wish to do?

The most of people are so in the habit of considering that the only proper thing that a little boy or girl has to do is to "give up" to those who are older, that they never think of what it costs the child. I wonder if you ever did?

Because one is compelled to yield at every point his wishes and to do it all the time, does not alter his opinion materially or his feeling about it. On the contrary, if his spirit is not all broken, it is all the harder to bear because it is so continuous.

Just suppose that you had some one—no, perhaps three or four persons—over you all day long,

to whom you were compelled to go, and whose permission you must ask in respect to pretty much all you wish to do. Suppose that you were as likely—indeed, a little more likely than not—to be refused, or told to wait, or required to do something else. Suppose that these two or three or more people, who, after all, you did not think knew very much more than you, should be meeting you at every turn and telling you to stop, or be still, or to lay aside your work or book, and, on the instant, do what they wanted you to do, and which, as likely as not, you felt no interest in. Suppose that they were to speak rudely to you or harshly or impolitely, as if you had no feelings or did not care in what way you were addressed. Suppose that this should go on all day, from the time you got up in the morning till you went to bed at night. Would you not consider the day rather long—would you not at times grow restive and nervous and possibly get out of patience?

Yet just consider it. That is exactly what some boys and girls have to go through all the time. I do not say that it so in your home, but you know a good many homes where such is the history of the day as far as the children are concerned. You will not be offended, I hope, if I should seem to

imply that I have noticed somewhat this state of things in your house when I have been with you.

You tell me that it is right and good for children to yield their wishes to the wishes of those who are older. I grant it in general. I believe in implicit and unquestioning obedience of children to parents. But because a thing to be done may in general be right and proper, does that make it all entirely easy and agreeable? Do you find it so?

You say that father and mother and aunts and older brothers and sisters all know more than smaller folks. But these smaller people do not think so. They indeed often feel as if they knew about things a great deal better. They certainly know what they want and what they do not want to do. They may be mistaken, just as you often are, but they think so and feel so, and it is just as hard to be crossed in their desires as it is for you, and it costs them just as much, often a great deal more of suffering.

Tommy comes running in from school, all out of breath in his eagerness and excitement, and calls out:

“Mother, can't I take my sled and go to the hill and coast?”

You look up and say:

"Why didn't you shake the snow off from your shoes before you came in? There, you have wet all the carpet!"

"Oh, excuse me, I didn't think. Mother, can't I go?"

"Why, Tommy, I want you to go to the store and get me some muslin."

Now you do not want it to-day, possibly you may to-morrow afternoon. The boy suspects it, and, with a disappointed look, says:

"But, mother, won't it do when I come from school to-morrow?"

"My child"—you say it with a solemn air—"I want you to go when I wish you to go, and not when you think best."

"But, mother, the boys are all going to the hill this afternoon and they want me to go with them. There they go now!"

"You can go almost any day to the hill. I want you to obey me now."

You say it with a sort of sacred air and a feeling that you have done an excellent parental duty. But you have not. You think that the look which your boy has on his face betokens a bad spirit; you sigh because he is not a better boy. He goes away half tearful, half sullen, and all unhappy. You

think it exceedingly bad in him to feel and act so, but you give not a thought to what you have done and all the unnecessary pain you have inflicted. I do not know how important that errand was. I believe that another time would have done exactly as well, but I do know that you ought to have hesitated long or had a very powerful reason for giving him a disappointment so great. You thought that he looked undutiful and you felt grieved. I think that his look should have touched you and made you feel remorseful and guilty. You gave your boy sorrow that a mother should have carefully spared him.

Your little daughter (Mary, I will call her), as you sat at your work a day or two ago, came to you in her bright, eager way and said :

“ Oh, mamma, won't you get my tea-set for me ? ”

You were very busy, and, without looking up, you said :

“ Not now ; go and play with your doll. ”

“ But, mamma, Susie and I want to play tea now ; won't you ? ”

“ My child, ” you said emphatically, “ you can play tea some other time. Get your dolls now. ”

You did not speak harshly. You had an idea that you did a wise and motherly thing in insisting

on being obeyed. The little maid's eyes filled and she went sorrowfully away. You causelessly added one sad afternoon to your child's life. You should not have done it.

Now, these are only two small examples of what are occurring all the while in almost every household. Perhaps you have not thought much of it before, but I want you to stop when you have read this and think over the matter.

Try to reckon up the number of occasions during almost any day that your little ones have been crossed and thwarted and denied. I do not mean in things really important, but in matters where it could not have made any material difference to have permitted them to have had their wishes. The number is greater than you would have supposed.

To bring the matter home, just imagine that your husband, or some one else with less right, had said "No" to you a dozen times to-day, and a dozen times you had been compelled to give up and not have your way—in what state of mind would you have been to-night? I imagine that your looks would not be all sunny. When I think how many, many times, day by day, these little ones are denied needlessly—how many times they are forced to surrender their wishes, I pity them. When I see how

parents who love their children will yet wantonly and thoughtlessly inflict pain and make sorrow by refusals that are all unnecessary, I grow indignant. Surely some fathers and mothers are cruel, while they consider themselves all kindness and love.





## XXXII.

### CHILDREN'S "BLUES."

“**W**HAT! children have the ‘blues’!” cries out some one as his eye falls upon my talk; “children are never low-spirited, they are always buoyant and happy; they do not have any cares and anxieties.”

But all my young friends know the exact opposite of that. When my little nephew came into the house with his face swollen with weeping and with great sobs (which he could not prevent) moving his whole frame, I saw only, what I knew well before, how great a child's sorrow is.

It was over a favorite ball which he had lost. His father had that morning had the shoemaker put the cover in perfect order, and the favorite ball was better than when new. But, alas! a few moments before I saw him, an unfortunate stroke of the bat had sent it he knew not where. The ball

was gone, he was sure forever, and his grief was profound and touching.

I put my arm around him and got him to wash his eyes and his face. Then I said :

“We will go out and see if we can't find that ball.”

So we did. We went to the spot. He told me where he stood when he struck the ball, which way it went, and how it rolled. I examined the little hill down which it went, and, after a careful calculation, I told him to put his hand under the pile of lumber in a little hollow behind a log and feel if it were not there. He lay down on the ground, reached in, and then, with a sudden cry of joy, he started up, both hands clasped over the ball. As I looked at his face and heard his exclamations of gladness the tears started to my eyes. It was out of the depths of sorrow into a paradise of delight. It was a crushed heart suddenly made glad. Some people would not have understood it. The boys and girls and Uncle William knew all about it.

But sometimes children feel sorrowful when they do not know why they are so. Sometimes my little nephew—he of the ball—comes to his mother and lays his head on her shoulder.

“What is the matter, Frankie?” she asks.

"I do not know," he replies, "but I feel so sad."

When I have heard of that I pity Frankie, while I understand precisely how it is with him. He has the "blues." I do not know what causes it, but I know what it is. I felt just so at times when I was a little boy, and I have never forgotten the sadness. Perhaps it is nervousness. Children have nerves as well as grown people, and they can be set all in a quiver just as well as those of older people. Older folks know what it is at times to have a sort of shadow creeping over their spirits they hardly know why, and children come occasionally into the same shadows.

Frankie's mother understands him. It is a very happy thing for him that she does. She knows just what is the matter, and so she soothes and turns his attention away from himself to some book or play, or she sits down by him with his hand in hers, while, with her low voice in his ear, he falls asleep.

Some mothers would not or could not be so wise. They have nerves that are never unstrung, and that never quiver at all under the touch of some almost unrecognized influence. They do not know anything about these shadows of which I speak, and so they could never have the faintest idea of what Frankie was feeling or suffering. They would pos-

sibly scold him, laugh at him for being so foolish, turn him off by himself to get over the feeling as well as he could, and the child would be compelled to carry the burden alone, with the bitter consciousness added to it that no one understood him. One feels very lonely when he knows that he is not understood.

It is wonderful what finely and even exquisitely strung children come from very coarsely-made parents. The law of like coming from like does not seem to hold in their case. The children seem to have originated in a wholly different sphere. The one has sensibilities that are moved by the slightest touch, like æolian strings played upon by an evening breeze, while the other are granite rocks over which a hurricane may sweep and leave no trace behind it. Such children are deeply to be pitied, for they must inevitably live more or less a lonely life. Brothers and sisters may be around them, father and mother may be near them, but the world they live in, the sights and the sounds, the thoughts and the feelings are so different, that they are largely in solitude though with them all.

To such a child it would be an immeasurable boon if some one with sympathies quick enough to understand and tact enough to help were near. A

burden would be lifted off the little heart and a shadowed life be made bright. If, however—and sadly enough this very often happens—no such friend is at hand, the little one carries the burden alone, and by and by retires within himself to brood and be silent if not fretful. He grows up moody and reticent, and, too frequently, with energies that are repressed and a life weakened and unsuccessful because it has had so little sunshine in it.





### XXXIII.

#### THE SPIRIT'S TOUCH.

I WAS speaking about children being low-spirited, melancholy, without being able to give any reason for it, except that they sometimes feel sad; they do not know why. Grown people are not able very often to analyze their feelings or explain their different states of mind, and it is not at all wonderful that children can not. Sometimes, however, a new experience will explain an old one, and if one can only use his after-knowledge of himself to make clear what was not plain in a former time, he has done himself an excellent service, and, especially, he will be able to help some one else in similar circumstances. I feel so about these child-experiences of which I have been talking.

When I was a little boy about six years old, I remember to have had these melancholy feelings. I did not understand them then, but I think that now

I know what they were. The time and the place and the circumstances are as vivid as if they were of yesterday. I had been to church and had come home. What I had heard in church I do not know, I probably could not have told had I been asked, but I came home with my little heart troubled and sad. I remember taking my sister's hand and clinging to it as we walked through the hall, and how I wished that she would say something to help me. I could not have told her what I wished, and I doubt now whether she understood at all what I needed, but I think that I see and know now. God's Holy Spirit was moving upon my heart, holding it awake and drawing it to Him. An unexplained but real consciousness of sinfulness and need was troubling me.

Then was the time to have told me of Jesus and His love; how He came to save the sinful; how He took little children in His arms; how He smiled upon and how He loved them; how He now looks tenderly and lovingly down upon them, and is ready to take them in His arms. Perhaps then I would have learned what I learned some eight years afterward of His forgiving love.

Oftener than we think, the Holy Spirit is moving upon the hearts of the children who sit and

who walk by our side. These clouds that seem to come over their spirits, which we suppose, if we notice them at all, are only vapors, perhaps simply some bodily derangement, and need to be dispelled by pictures or play, are perhaps the troubled feelings that come out of a consciousness, unexplained and not understood by themselves, of unforgiveness and a need of God's manifested love.

If we were only in sympathy deep and true enough with the movements of God's Spirit, we would recognize more often than we do the occasion, sometimes a supreme one in the child's life, and by a timely exhibition of the Saviour's love, bring the little one a knowledge of Him that should be everlasting life.

If we only knew how often are these opportunities which have all promise in them, we perhaps would be astonished at their frequency. Perhaps many a mother who prays and longs and weeps for the conversion of her son, whom she sees rising into manhood with no hope in Christ, had she but understood the feelings and the experiences of that boy when he was accustomed to come and lean upon her shoulder or lay his head in her lap with a look of sadness on his little face, she might have carried him into Christ's arms and made all

the years from then till now full to him of Jesus' love. But perhaps she herself was not then as spiritually awake as now; perhaps she herself was so far out of sympathy with the movements of the Holy Spirit that she could not see the meaning of the troubled brow, or know anything about the feelings of this little one over whom the Saviour was so lovingly bending. So she did not see, and so she lost a golden moment which had she improved would have saved her heart many an ache, and her boy many a sin and sorrow.

We have every reason to believe that the Spirit of God is peculiarly near to childhood, and draws the little ones to Him. The sadness is, that, in their earthliness, parents understand this so seldom.

Perhaps this talk of mine will fall under the eye of some mother or father who has a child with some such experiences as I have tried to indicate. Such children will be found in many a home. Watch for the supreme time—a sweet and blessed and hopeful time! You may never see another like it. Watch with a loving eye your little ones, and be ready to help them to Christ, the Lord who waits for them and is very near. You will need an illumined eye to see the touch of His hand on your child's heart. If you are worldly and

spiritually indifferent you will be sure to make a mistake. Perhaps you need to draw near to God yourself, that your own heart may be softened to feel, that your own eye may be opened to see. When once they are touched and enlightened they may have all blessedness in them for the boy or girl over whom you yearn and pray.





## XXXIV.

### CHILDREN'S JOINING THE CHURCH.

**M**Y nephew Tommy has been talking to me about "joining," so he expresses it, "the church."

He is about ten years of age, and some people look upon that as, by far, too early to make a public "profession of religion."

But it does not seem so to me. I do not believe that the little lambs of the flock ought to be kept out of the fold until they have grown to be sheep, great and strong, and only then taken in and to be cared for. I do not believe that they can be taken care of outside the fold any better than older people can. The church was made for little ones. It is a family, and I think that a family is only one in name where there are no children. The Lord made His visible church a household, a family, and it is

not a beautiful family if the little ones are not there to mingle and share its joys and its work. The members of the family of God are there to help each other and make each other strong to do work for Him. I can not see why these little ones ought not to have all the benefits that the church can possibly give them for strength and for work. They certainly need all the teaching and all the aid that the church can give them, whether in her word or her ordinances, and it is depriving these little ones of an immense benefit when they are kept away from the Lord's table, and taught to think of themselves as having no right there.

My little nephew, several years ago, seemed entirely unable to understand why he could not partake of the sacrament with the rest. He sat always on the communion seasons beside his mother, and would ask for a piece of the bread which she took, and he would have drunk of the cup, too, if he could have had it. "I love the Saviour," he would say to his mother. "I want to serve Him and do what He wants me to do. Why can't I have the bread and wine if they are to show that we love Him?"

The answer which his mother made was unsatisfactory, and so, to satisfy him, she was accustomed

to break off a piece of the bread which she had taken and give it to him. It seemed to me like feeding the children with the crumbs from the Master's table. I ask why should this boy, that gives every evidence of being one of Christ's little ones, not be permitted to sit at the table itself?

I suppose that it all depends on just that—the evidence of the child's being one of Christ's little ones. I am sure that just as soon—and I care not how early that may be—as a child gives evidence of being a child of God, no one on earth has a right to keep him from the Lord's table. I should grow indignant were I to hear any one say that the simple age, fewness of years, was a good reason for excluding a child from the benefits of the table of the Saviour. I should as soon think of keeping the child from the household board, because he has not yet become a bearded man.

The difficulty, however, lies in the evidence which is sought for. And just here I think a great mistake is made and a great wrong is committed. A good many people, a good many parents, are far more exacting and scrupulous about the evidences of their children's piety than they are about the evidences of their own religion.

They themselves can be hasty in temper and say

and do ugly things, they can be even neglectful of religious duties at times, and they do not doubt their own piety, but they are very much in doubt of the piety of their little children if they happen sometimes to get angry and show petulance, or if they speak improperly, though they may, in fact, be a good deal more prayerful than the parents themselves.

Now, it seems to me that we ought not to ask any more from these children than we ask from ourselves; and we should not use a rule for them that we are not willing to have applied to us.

A child can be, and ought to be, only a child-Christian. I, at least, do not want him, even if he could be, an old-man Christian. It is to me a very unnatural and even repulsive sight—a little old man or a little old woman in the garb of childhood, even though the child gives the best evidence of being a Christian. If the child's religion has made the boy less a boy than he was before, then it is not a good kind of religion. If it keeps him from playing marbles, or flying kites, or using the shinny-stick, it needs changing. If it keeps him from whistling or shouting on occasion, if it makes him dull and solemn, and all the while talking preaching talk, there is something out of order in it.

As it seems to me, a boy's religion ought to make him a more obedient boy, ought to keep him from cheating at his marbles, keep him from quarrelling with his companions, make him kind and forgiving, even if he does get angry at times, but it ought not to take all the boy out of him.

I am glad to see that it has been so with my nephew Tom. He is conscientious to the last degree. I have noticed that no argument seems to have at all the weight with him to keep him from doing a thing, as to be told, "It is not right." He has said to me again and again, when he has been asking me about something he wanted to do, "If it isn't right I won't do it." He is prayerful. His mother tells me that his prayers, as he kneels at her knee, are very touching at times in their simplicity and child-like confidence. All his tastes are toward religious things.

Yet he is a regular boy. He will get "mad," as he says, "a fellow can't help it," though he is sorry for it and glad to "make up" again; he delights in balls and kites, and he is very hard on caps and the knees of his pants; but when he sits in my lap and we talk about the Bible and the Saviour, I am sure that my boy-nephew is a child of God, and I am

very glad that he is just the whole boy that he is. I should feel very badly if he were not.

So I am sure that he ought to be taken into the communion of the church. And after he is in it, no one must ask him to be anything but a boy.





## XXXV.

THE FIRST "NO!" IS THE THING.

**M**Y nephew Tom is a boy now about twelve years of age, and he has improved his water-privileges when he has been in the country, so that he is a very beautiful swimmer. I take a little pride in his swimming, for I taught him how to do it. I am delighted as I see his long, graceful stroke, now with arms and body and legs in a straight line darting forward, now with broad sweep of arms and swing of legs that seem to move themselves beneath the surface. When teaching him I told him to watch the frogs and swim as nearly like them as possible. If any one wishes to see swimming that would be perfection in a human being, let him observe a frog as he makes his dive into the water and then note his stroke as he glides away. Tom has caught the motion, and he is the most froglike swimmer that I ever saw.

Tom's father and mother were anxious that he

should know how to swim. His mother herself, I must say, does not like the water, and swimming would be out of the question for her if it could not be acquired on dry land; but, like a sensible woman, she has done what she could to have her boys and girls learn the art. As soon as they have become old enough to learn she has offered them rewards to make them at home in the water.

The family is in the country now beside a beautiful lake. The inducements for the boys to be in the water are very many. And what fun is there to a boy, like the fun of a good swim on a summer's day! The danger is that the boys will do too much of it. So it is that Tom has had restrictions placed upon him in the matter. In the very hot days, when the water is warm, I believe the rule for him is only once a day; when the weather is cooler he must not go into the water so often.

My grown-up readers may think this all a simple thing—to “go in swimming only once a day, when a fellow's hot and the day is hot”; but Tom knows, and all my boy readers know that the limitation is one that demands all a boy's courage and constancy to abide by. I am happy to say that my nephew Tom has been faithful to the restriction, though sorely tempted at times.

He was telling me yesterday his experience in the matter. He said that, in the first of the season, the boys were very persistent in their persuasions for him to swim with them oftener than he was permitted to go. "Come, Tom," they would say, "we are all going in."

"No," Tom would answer, "I can not; father does not wish me to go in more than once a day."

"But he won't know anything about it; come along."

"That don't make any difference. I'm not going." And he would turn away. That sort of conversation occurred several times. "But," said Tom to me, "they do not ask me any more now, for they know it is of no use, and they let me alone."

I commended Tom, of course, on his obedience and resolution, but I took it as an opportunity to impress on him a great lesson of life, one that he was learning in this very experience of his—that the first step of resistance to temptation is the one that costs the most and which once taken makes all the rest easy. If Tom's companions had seen the slightest hesitation on his part they would have plied him with double earnestness and with probable success. If Tom had complied *once* with their solicitations, they would have made easy work at

any other time, and Tom would have found it almost impossible to resist. But having tried it two or three times and found him immovable, they rested upon the fact that the thing could not be done, and ceased attempting it. They soon took it as a settled thing, and as a *matter of course*, that Tom would not disobey his father in this thing of frequent swimming, and now they do not think even to urge the invitation.

Every boy or girl is subject to temptations of one sort or another from companions. Some one may tell me that boys and girls ought not to have playmates or friends who will tempt them. Well, then, you must take them out of the world. I think, and Tom's father and mother think, that it is better for a boy or girl to be fortified with good principles than to be made weak by a vain attempt to shield them wholly from the enticements of evil. The great thing is for a boy to meet a temptation boldly, frankly, and at once with a "No!" which has a meaning in it. Some boys will say "No," but it is in such a half-hearted way that the tempter knows that it means a half "Yes." This simply gives an invitation for a repetition of the solicitation and makes almost certain, too, the yielding. But a "No!" that is enforced by tone and look

that tell that the word has its own true meaning, settles largely the matter; or if it does not settle it, makes it certain that if the temptation comes again it will be weaker and he will be stronger. The first "No!" is the great thing.





## XXXVI.

### BOSSING IT.

**T**HINGS do not always go on with perfect smoothness in my brother John's house. It is a pretty well regulated family, and the brothers and sisters, for the most part, agree beautifully with one another, but now and then there comes a jar.

I happened to see such a one a few days ago. It was on Sabbath afternoon. I usually try to spend the latter part of the afternoon on Sabbath-days with John's family. I enjoy most profoundly the quiet cheerfulness of the house. There is nothing sombre about it; the children do not seem, as I have seen in other homes, worn out with ennui and fretful because they have been restrained all the day long. They have been to church, all, down almost to the baby; the most of them have been to the Sabbath-school; and in the afternoon they evidently enjoy being together with Sabbath-school

books and papers, little Frank on the floor with the *Christian Weekly* of the Tract Society spread out before him, calling aloud on any one that will listen for explanations of the pictures, the singing of the Sabbath-school hymns, and the Bible stories, and "Pilgrim's Progress," and the cheerful talk of the hour. I like to be among them and enjoy it with them.

I was just coming in at the door when I saw little Frank sobbing and in a passion of tears. "Why," I cried out, "what is the matter with this little boy?" Between anger and grief he could hardly speak, but he managed among the sobs to tell me that a moment or two before Tom had taken him by the arm and had dragged him into the house. "I only wanted to go down to the corner and meet mamma and papa! I told him so! and he would not let go! and then he pinched my arm and hurt me, and pulled me in the house!" was his summing up.

Now I am careful what I say to the boys; but they know me so well that I can talk very freely with them. They take it for granted that I have a right to do it. So Tom did not take it amiss as I turned and said, "How is this, Tom? that is a hard story little Frank tells about you."

Tom looked a little ashamed, but frankly replied, "Mother don't let him go out on the street on Sunday, and he hadn't his hat on, and he wouldn't come in when I told him to. So I only took hold of his arm to make him come in."

I did not pursue the investigation, as it was not my business to regulate matters in the household. I took Frank in my lap and got him to tell me what they had been doing in the infant-class. He soon was deeply engaged in telling me how the boy next to him pushed his missionary penny in a crack in the seat and couldn't get it out again. He would once in a while give a long breath and a sob, that was like the memory of a great grief; but he soon was smiling again.

After supper Tom and I walked out together, and we talked the affair of the afternoon over. I, of course, had said nothing about it to any one. I said something like this to Tom :

"I suppose that you thought that you were doing right to drag Frank in the house, but I want you to put yourself in the same place. You feel strong and able pretty well to take care of yourself. But suppose that you had been standing on the stoop and a large, tall, and strong man, as much bigger than you, as you are than Frank, had said

to you, in about the same tone and way in which you spoke to him, 'Come in right away!' and when you did not feel inclined to do it, all the less because you did not think he had any right to command, and you did not move, he had come to you, seized your arm, pinched it tightly, and had given you a great jerk into the hall which sent you reeling and almost on your back, how would you have felt? Would not the insult, the injury, have seemed almost too great to be borne? Would you not have been almost beside yourself with anger and the bitter sense of wrong?

"Yet that was just what you did to Frankie. You are so much bigger and stronger than he, that he could not resist you; but I think that you can imagine how he felt. You need not wonder that I found him in such a passion of tears. You would have cried too with unutterable indignation if you had been in his place.

"Now, my boy," I added, "I want you to think of this when you are about to do something of that sort again. Remember that one of the last insults that a man can give another is to lay his hand in anger on him. There is something in the touch that is like fire in the soul. A little child feels it so. You are strong, you feel yourself to be so, but

you must hereafter be too manly to show it on your little brothers and sisters. I know that you did not hurt him. When he said that you did, although he did not understand it, he meant that the hurt was a great deal more in his feelings than on his arm. That was very much harder to bear, and he could not bear it.

“I am very sure that if you had thought it all over you would not have done it.”

Tom is a boy of noble impulses, and he would be the very first to defend his little brother if he saw any one oppressing him. If he had seen another person doing just what he did to Frank he would have in a moment stepped in to protect him; but like many other big brothers and sisters, he did not see it in exactly the same light in his own case. There was a fair opportunity, and with a show of right, to “boss it” over this little one, and he improved it. The result was not beautiful.





## XXXVII.

### QUESTIONABLE BOOKS.

**M**Y brother John's eldest boy, grown now almost a young man, has a very cultivated taste in literary matters, and likes to dip into almost all sorts of books. The other day I saw in his hands a volume, one of a number by the same author, written by a woman—I am glad to say not an American woman—under a *nom de plume*, and grown familiar to a certain circle of readers. I will not give the curious title which the authoress has assumed, for I do not care to aid in the circulation of her wares. I have no familiarity with her books, but I have sufficient knowledge of them to say that they picture scenes and exhibit persons that the pure-minded would not care to know. They are read, and, by what peculiarity of taste I know not, admired by numerous readers, some of them among our cultivated people.

My nephew Sam had been reading the book, and as we sat alone we had a little talk over the matter, somewhat after this fashion :

“ Sam,” I said, “ have you read more than one of these books by —— ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied, “ I have read several of them.”

“ Well, what do you think of them ? Do you admire them ? ”

“ I do not know that I would like to say that I admire them, but they have a good deal of interest, and have some curious developments of character in them. Everybody talks about them.”

“ What do you think of the style of morality which they picture ? Is it of the most beautiful character ? ”

“ No,” he replied, smiling curiously, “ I should not commend her books precisely for their moral teachings. They would not make good pulpit readings.”

“ Are these books—and you know them a great deal better than I do, for you have read them, and I have not—not positively immoral ? Do they not delineate characters and detail incidents which are positively wicked ? Would you like your sister or mother to associate with such people as even the

heroes and heroines of the book you have in your hand ? ”

“ No, I can not say that I would. But there are a good many people who are pictured in fiction that we would not like to have in our families.”

“ That is very true. There are, as you say, such characters here, but how are they delineated and exhibited ? Are they made to seem repulsive ? or is there a sort of halo thrown round them, so that in spite of your better convictions you half admire them ? ”

“ Yes, I suppose that you are more than half right in that ; one does somehow feel a personal interest, if not admiration for them, as he follows their fortunes ; but I do not see any particular harm in that.”

“ There is the same harm and danger of harm in it, as there would be in a personal acquaintance and intimate contact with just such people in actual life. Indeed, you come, in some respects, in closer contact with them in the book than you would in real life. You are let into their secret thoughts and purposes, and ho'd a sort of communion with them that you would not be likely to have were they real flesh and blood. Just in proportion as they are powerfully delineated, just in that proportion are they brought in immediate contact with

you. Now, can that be anything but harmful, when they are bad as you know them to be? With such people you would be ashamed to be found, least of all to be thought to have them as confident companions."

"I had not thought of it in that light," he replied.

"Yet," I added, "it is a true light in which to view the matter. I do not say at all that you have been injured by the reading of ——'s books, for I know well how firm your principles are, and how you loathe anything that is base or immoral; yet, taking the matter on its general principles, you and I would say that such reading is not safe; certainly it is not conducive to strength and beauty and purity of character. If the delineation of immorality is such as to compel us to despise and revolt from it, so far the picture is, or may be, useful; but whenever it makes us smile, have a half admiration, or induces us to invent or follow plausible excuses for sin, then it can be only evil. Let me ask you just one question, Sam. Do you think that a perfectly pure woman wrote those books, I mean pure as you know your mother and sister to be?"

"I doubt it, uncle," he answered.

"Then," I replied, "I have no more to say on

that point, for I can leave it to your good sense. But there is one thing more, and perhaps more important about this matter that I wanted to speak of. Did you see Lucy, and, after her, Harry, looking over this book? I am glad that you had occasion to take it out of their hands, as you said, to take it back to the library."

"I was going to take it back, but I confess that I partly made that an excuse to get it away from them."

"Why did you want to get it away?"

"Because I did not think it was just the book for them to read. They are young, you know."

"That was right and thoughtful, but would it not have been better had they never seen or known of the book at all? How do you know that they did not happen to light, in the glances they took of the volume, on just the most objectionable part of the story, and that the few paragraphs that they read did not awaken a desire to read the whole?"

"It may have been so," he said, "although I should be sorry if it were."

"But," I replied, "there is danger in the mere presence of such books. Although many so-called literary people read them, yet you and I know that they are bad, and not fit for our homes. I confess

that the principal reason I had for having this conversation with you was this: Such books ought not to be brought into the house where young people are. Even if they do you no harm, have you any right to endanger the purity of thought and feeling of your brothers and sisters? Your father and mother, as you well know, labor and pray that their sons and daughters may grow up pure and good. Is it right for you to run even the risk of hindering or making fruitless their labor and their prayers? Yet the entrance, through you, into the house of one such book, may do an injury that years of care and parental watchfulness have vainly tried to prevent, and which nothing can undo. I am sure that your heart recoils from any such work."

"I thank you, uncle, for speaking to me about it. It was thoughtless in me. I do not think that I will ever offend in this way again."

I know Sam's nobility and good sense so well, that I am sure he will not ever give me occasion to have a similar talk with him.





## XXXVIII.

### THE YOUNGEST BOY.

**M**Y little nephew Fred has, I think, rather a hard time, on account of his being the youngest boy in the family. In my brother John's family there was a hiatus of a few years in the appearance of the children. After three or four girls and boys had been born in not very remote succession, there was an interval of some six or eight years, during which no baby blessed the household. Then Fred appeared, a wide-awake, restless baby, and, as time has gone on, a nervous and noisy boy.

When he was a baby he cured, I am afraid, for the time, the love of the children for babies. The girls wished that he had been a nice little girl, and the boys, all but one of them, wished so too. And then the baby had to be attended to in the odd intervals when mother or nurse was busy, and it was not always exactly agreeable to leave book or

play and wait upon the little fellow, whose demands were inexorable. So it came to pass that while the baby was the life of the household, the most important thing in it, yet he was a care to the children, and they were unanimous in their conclusion that babies were nice and well enough at times, but this one was enough for the present.

However, babyhood passed very quickly, and almost before any one thought of it, there was a boy in the place of the baby. And he was a boy that was always needing something to be done for him, or, what was perhaps far more frequent, he was always doing something that the older ones thought he ought not to be doing.

He would get into difficulties with other boys in the street, and the assistance of his "big brother" Ned was frequently called for. Now, no one must think that Ned complained of that. I am sure that, on the whole, he rather enjoyed going out and fighting his little brother's battles. I do not know that I ever saw him obey his mother with more enthusiastic alacrity than when, one day, his mother told him to "go and see about it," on Freddy's coming in and complaining that a big boy had taken his marbles away. He rushed out, and, acting under the unusual sanction (so he seemed

to regard it) of his mother, evidently took great delight in seizing the offender by the collar and running him down the street, with sundry administrations rearward. But while all this is so, and while every one in the house would take little Fred's part in difficulty, the way is not very smooth for him.

The older children are perpetually discovering that he does not do things just right. He does not take care of his clothes as he should; he is noisy and rude; he does not behave at the table in the most exemplary way; does impolite things, and, when company is by, sometimes comes out unexpectedly with a remark of awful character, such as a "terrible infant" will occasionally give forth. In short, the older boys and girls think that Fred is indulged entirely too much, and that his father and mother are not half as strict with him as they were with them. They more than hinted that to me the other day.

"Uncle William, don't you think that father, especially, allows Fred to do what he never would have suffered us to do?"

"Well," I replied, "possibly it may be so. I have noticed that affectionate and careful and, I think, wise parents, do soften down a little perhaps

as they get older, but you must remember that Fred has a harder time than you had."

"How so, uncle?" they asked.

"Why," I said gravely, "you know that he has a good many more to watch over and help bring him up than you had in your day."

"We do not understand you," they said.

"It is not hard, however, to see it," I replied. "You know that when you were of Fred's age you were all little folks together, and no one felt much older or bigger than the rest, and no one felt any responsibility for the behavior of the others. It is very different with Fred. He has his father, mother, two sisters, and two brothers to take care that he goes straight; six instead of two."

They smiled, as if a new idea had struck them, and I went on:

"It's a good deal harder to please six people than to please two, and six people can see, if they are on the watch, more things to be corrected than two people can, especially if four of them are young and sometimes nervously exacting."

"We had not thought of it in just that light before."

"I am sure of that; and what is rather amusing to me, I notice that you do not enjoy seeing the

little fellow punished. If I am not mistaken, you have been half angry when it has been done ; but yet you are somewhat of the opinion that your father and mother do not quite come up to the full measure of correct and judicious training for the boy. It is just as well, however, to give them credit for some experience. See how successful they have been in your cases—and remember, too, the particularly tough time that Fred has with so many to train him.”

A laugh that had, I thought, some thoughtfulness in it closed our conversation.





## XXXIX.

### TEASING.

**M**Y nephew Harry is a boy brimful of fun and life. He keeps things lively in the house, and there is usually some laughing to be done when he is around, but he has one trait which I wish was not quite so prominent.

He likes to tease, and he contrives to do it in some way almost all the time. Sometimes it is his elder brother, whom he annoys so much, that his presence becomes a nuisance. Sometimes it is his elder sister, whose good nature he imposes on till she half cries with vexation, but most commonly it is his younger brother. Fred is a fine little fellow, bright, but exceedingly sensitive, and so is peculiarly liable to be excited by anything that annoys or perplexes him.

The other day when I was at brother John's house, I found Freddy standing by his mother's knee, with traces of tears on his face, and a look of

trouble that touched me. When he went out his mother told me that it was the old story—Harry had been teasing the child till he was worried and nervous and had come crying to her for comfort. One thing which he had said and which she repeated made a deep impression on me.

I have brought it to bear on Harry. I hope for his good.

“Mother,” said Freddy, “I have lately been trying hard to control my temper.”

It was said so earnestly and sorrowfully that it brought tears to her eyes. It was a revelation of a battle that the little fellow was waging within his bosom.

A day or two after I had a talk with Harry, and it was somewhat after this fashion :

“Harry,” said I, “I wish that you had seen and felt what I did a little while ago.”

“What was it, uncle?”

“It was a bright little fellow, whom you love, standing beside his mother with tears in his eyes and a sad look on his face, and telling her of a trouble that he had and a fight that he was fighting.”

“Who was it?—Freddy? What had he been fighting about? What was the trouble?”

"Yes, it was Freddy, and I guess that you had a good deal to do with his trouble and his fight."

"How, uncle, could that be? I am sure that I wouldn't make him unhappy or spoil his fun."

"Well, perhaps you didn't intend it, but I am afraid you did both those things. Don't you remember, day before yesterday, when you were teasing him about his boat, making all sorts of fun of it, how angry he got, and finally went off crying to his mother?"

"Yes," said Harry, smiling, "I remember that, but I didn't intend to make him cry."

"But he did cry, and felt badly enough to put his head on his mother's shoulder and sob. But there was one thing which he said that I wish you had heard. It was this, 'Mother, I am trying to control my temper.' Can you imagine, Harry, why he said that just then?"

Harry looked a little embarrassed, but replied:

"I suppose he meant that I had been trying his temper."

"Yes, that was undoubtedly his meaning. But you say that you had been trying it. Was it trying to make it better?"

"Not much," said Harry, laughing.

"But don't you think it was a fine and brave

thing for little Freddy to do when he tried to get the better of his temper? And don't you think that it was a little—just a little mean and unkind in his big brother not to help him, but even to make it harder for him to do it?"

"I suppose it was. But I didn't think of that."

"I know that, and it is just the reason why I am talking to you about it. If you saw Freddy in trouble and oppressed by bigger boys on the street, you should be the first to turn in and help him. But any difficulty he might have there will not compare with what he has in his own bosom and in trying to make himself better. You ought to help, not hinder him there too."

"I only teased him for fun. I didn't think of hurting him."

"Just think a moment. Didn't the fun begin when he began to get angry, and didn't it become complete when he got so enraged that he kicked at you, and finally ran off crying to his mother?"

"Yes," said Harry, laughing, "I suppose so."

"And it was then, after his crying was over and under his mother's kiss and caress he had got calm again, that he said, 'I am trying to control my temper.'

"Now, Harry, you have been doing an ungener-

ous and even cruel thing. Here is a little fellow that wants to be a good boy—to be the Saviour's child, to get the better of the evil within—who prays in his childish way for it, and you, his brother who loves him, find your pleasure in pushing him back and down. Is that not sad and something to be ashamed of?"

Harry's eyes filled with tears, and I did not press for any answer. I only added :

"Harry, my boy, you are too good and noble to do willingly a mean thing. I am sure that you want to do all you can for your brother, and I know that you will hereafter help him. You will not try to get your pleasure out of his heart-struggles and out of his sorrow and tears."





## XL.

### SABBATH THE WORKINGMAN'S DAY.

**O**N my way to my office the other day I overtook a friend. I say "overtook," because usually no one overtakes me. I was brought up in New York, where people—at least, people that lived there when my home was in the city—learned to walk fast. It is said that you can always tell a New-Yorker by his gait, especially by the diagonal way in which he crosses the street. Many have been the walking-matches I have had with strangers up Broadway, and I can almost say as Cromwell said about his Ironsides, "They were never beaten at all." So it comes that I usually pass and am not passed. As I began to say, I overtook an old acquaintance of mine. He has been known to me as a hard-working, industrious mechanic, whose honest work, in these degenerate days, is a comfort. We fell at once into familiar conversation.

There had been lately in our town a good deal of discussion about the observance of the Sabbath. Some of our excellent German friends have been advocating the opening of saloons and places of amusement. What has made the matter just now a little more prominent has been the presence of a strolling band of musicians—a company of considerable reputation—who came to our place and advertised a “Sacred Concert.” They not only advertised, but, I am sorry to say, held it. As is usual with these honest and truthful people, they had, I understand, one selection from an Oratorio or something of the sort, and gave the music of an ordinary concert as a filling of the rest of the programme.

It was impudent as well as wicked to thrust themselves on a Sabbath-keeping community, outrage the sense of propriety of all good people, and, having put money in their pockets, to go on their way. But, unfortunately, they were permitted to do it—at least, were not interfered with.

My friend said to me:

“Do you not think that we are too strict in our usual ideas about the Sabbath? It seems to me that the workingman needs some recreation on Sunday. If you make it all a sacred day—shut up

every shop and store, close every place of amusement, and stop the railroads from running their usual trains—what chance has a workingman, such as I am, to get any recreation?”

“At first glance,” I replied, “your question seems to give its own answer. You would expect me to say, of course, that there should be no such restrictions; that, to give you the full benefit of the Sabbath, they ought to be all withdrawn. But are you sure that you have thought the matter all around?”

“I have,” he said, “thought about it a good deal, and it seems to me you church folks and rich folks do not consider our case in the right light.”

“Did you ever think,” I answered, “how long you would have any Sunday if it were not made a sacred day and kept so by law?”

“I do not know that I have,” he replied; “but I do not see the use of making it so sacred a day as it is made. Why not let those who wish to keep it keep it, and those who want to have some freedom on it have the freedom?”

“I might remind you,” I said, “that there would be no equal rights in that—that your freedom would take all ours away, but I will not. I only wish you to think of this: Suppose that the sacredness of the Sabbath were given up, the idea that God had com-

manded to keep it holy were abandoned, and it were left a merely optional thing whether it were to be observed or not, how long before you would be called upon to finish the job that you had been at work on all the week? You might demur, say that you wanted and needed the rest of Sunday; that you wished to be with your family at home. Do you think that it would make much impression on Mr. —— (I did not mention his name, but was quite well understood), or that he would give up the point?"

"No, I think he would say in his hard way, 'Well, if you do not choose to do my work as I want it and when I want it, I will get some one else.' As it is, he wanted me to do Sunday work a while ago, but I declined and told him that it was against the law to work on that day."

"Ah, so you called in the law of the Sabbath to protect you and secure your company for your family! Now, suppose that under the call of the saloon-keepers and the concert people and the railroads, that the day had been secularized and made like any other day, you could not have done that. You would have had to go to work. There would be many to take your place and your work if you had refused. Capital, you know, always in the end

rules labor. And capital often has no conscience and cares for neither God nor man. Your wishes or comfort would be of no account if gain seemed to be in advance. Your holiday would be gone.

“The Sabbath is the workingman’s holiday, and secured to him by the divine law. If any man should stand for it and keep it as a sacred day, it is the man that toils in the workshop. Let the barriers once be taken down, let it gradually be infringed upon by opened stores and theatres and concert-rooms till its sacredness is lost, the tyranny of capital would soon settle all the rest—the day as a day of repose and recreation would be gone. When the workingman joins hands with those who lower its sanctions, he strikes at his own home-life.”

“I never thought about it in that light,” he said as we parted.





## XLI.

### FAMILY BIRTHDAYS.

I LIKE anniversaries. It is sentimental. Of course it is, but as my brother John said the other day, "Our life is largely made up of sentiment." We were talking about living so far separated that we could see but little of each other. I had said that after all, a good deal of the feeling that made us shrink from it was sentimental.

John was right. Our happiness depends much on these merely sentimental things. Take that matter of being near your friends. I was, a while ago, going away to remain a long time far from the old associations. As I took leave of a friend he said to me, "I am sorry to have you go. It is true that we have not seen much of each other, but then I knew that you were here." There was much in that. There across the city is a friend whom you value, but you are very busy and he is very busy ;

you would like to see each other, but in the sad rush of things, the days and the months slip away, and you scarcely meet. Yet it is a comfort to know that you can get together, that he is there and not far away.

Some one will ask, "What good does it do either of you to be near if you do not meet each other? It is only a sentiment." A great deal of good, I answer. If it be only a sentiment, it is full of satisfaction; I would be uneasy and unhappy without it. Home-sickness is a sentiment, but men die of home-sickness; and if they do not die, its woe is unutterable.

So I cherish sentimental things, and make the most of them. If any marked event has occurred in my history, I keep its date, and with its annual recurrence try to call up the past scene.

I especially value anniversaries in the household. They always keep them at brother John's house. The sorrowful ones are not ignored or forgotten, but they are not kept in any open way. They are alluded to when they come. The other day, at the table, John said quietly and with a cloud of sadness throwing its shadow over his face, "To-day sixteen years ago Bessie died. She would have been eighteen years old now." Nothing more was said,

but I knew well that the day had brought its mournful memories to him and his wife, and that he chose not to have it pass without a recognition by the family, although the most of them were born after Bessie had gone away to heaven.

They make much of birthdays. Not one of them, even the baby's, is allowed to go by unnoticed. He himself does not, perhaps, take any especial interest in the occasion. This need not be greatly wondered at, seeing he has seen but one of them. But the rest of the children would not be at all satisfied, if, when his birthday had come, some memorial of it was not put in his hand, although it might be a small china-doll, which he at once thrusts into his mouth like a cannibal about to eat a baby up.

The calendar in the home is watched carefully. The red days are the birthdays, and everybody knows when they arrive. As each approaches in its order, adequate preparation for it is made. The money is saved carefully. It has grown to be a sort of instinct with the children, that if the presents made to each other or to father or mother do not come out of "one's own money" or are not the product of one's own skill, then they are of comparatively small account. I am sure that any of them would repudiate the idea of taking money

directly from father or even from mother to buy a present with it. I have known Harry to spend almost nothing on himself for weeks and then give all his savings for some present to be given on the birthday of one of his sisters.

Sometimes they all club together when they wish to present some gift more valuable than the means of any one alone can attain unto; but when the birthday comes, the happy one whose it is, finds that not one has forgotten it. I have known Tom or Fanny, who I am sorry to say are liable to put off attending to business, to be in a state of woful trouble on the morning of a birthday, because they had nothing prepared for the occasion. But by dint of borrowing or begging they have contrived before the day has gone to bring their offering of love.

The children lay themselves out on the coming of their father's or mother's birthday, and the parlor and sitting-room have a great many pretty things which have commemorated these days. Indeed, all over the house there are these memorials.

I do not know many houses where there are more tasteful and pretty things in almost every room. They are books, brackets, pictures, figures, mats, cushions, and many other things, none of

them very expensive, but all of them redolent of sweet memories and of love fixed in material form.

I think that the birthdays so carefully kept in John's house do much to bind the family together. I do not believe that either time or distance will wholly make these observances to cease ; and I am sure that neither will obliterate the fond affection which made them so precious. Perhaps when father and mother are gone, and brothers and sisters are scattered far from each other, the un-forgotten birthdays will hold them still together in spirit.





## XLII.

### THE AGED IN THE HOUSE.

**I** HAVE just come from the funeral of old Mr. Farwell. He has gone, full of years and infirmities, to a region where infirmities and years are alike unknown. He has passed out of loneliness and sombre retrospections into companionships, reunions, and conscious possessions. What a wonderful experience must that first awakening into a new life be to the very aged! Suddenly to feel that the thin limbs totter no more, the eyes are clouded no more, the head is bewildered no more, but that the lightness and spring of the far back time have come again, and the soul moves freely, unfettered by weariness or pain.

The old man looked wonderfully placid as he lay in his coffin. The family did wisely to array him at the last in that white woollen robe. It shrouded him, but it did not seem like a shroud, for there

was no glare about its whiteness to reflect and make vivid the pallor of the dead ; it rather absorbed the hue of death and made it seem no more deathlike. It seemed warmer, too, as if the form had not yet been given hopelessly over to the cold domain of death.

It was with this old man, as I have often noticed before. I never saw him look so young. The wrinkles seemed fewer and more smoothed out, the usual care-worn look was gone, and a gentle, shadowy smile was lingering over the face as if he were sleeping quietly, with a dream of childhood making the rest very sweet.

“ The still aspect where no trace of care  
Now lingered, all so shadowless and fair,  
And the deep silence, and the dreamless ease,  
The quiet of an unimagined peace,  
The holy calm, without or pulse or breath,  
Revealed the presence of benignest death,  
God's great white angel of the tranquil mien,  
That brooded there with shadowy wing serene.”

I could not but think that the lingering light upon the old face was the far-off reflection of the radiance into which he had gone.

I saw him not long ago in his daughter's house. His home has been there ever since his wife died, which was years since. It must be, now that he

has passed away, a very deep satisfaction to her and to her husband that they made the last days of the old man's life so comfortable. I will not say they made it happy, for that was impossible. You can smooth the pathway of age, you can lighten its burdens, but you can not wholly take off the one, nor make the other anything but weary. Besides, my old friend's native disposition was such that the shadows of age would be deeper than in the case of another differently constituted. When young, he was one of those who while not gloomy or sad, yet are naturally inclined to look on the dark side of things; and so when old age, with its forgetfulness of the present and its remembrances of the past, was upon him, he was oftener sad than happy. He had long ago passed into second childhood; and it was not a cheerful one. He had in it much of the fretfulness of a weary and sick child.

To those who watched over him he brought all, and much more than, the care of the most exacting of infants. He was a very young child, frequently with the wilfulness of unreasoning babyhood, but still an old man and father too. To meet and to cover such a case, demand a wise head and a loving heart. My friend's daughter and her husband did

meet and cover it well. I rejoice with them that they did, now that it is all over.

We stood together by the side of the coffin and spoke of the old man their father and my friend, and I partook of the deep satisfaction with which they said to me, "We tried to make his last days as peaceful as we could. You know that the afternoon of his life was cloudy and troubled, but it is a comfort now to feel that we spared nothing to make it light."

"And your father," I replied, "appreciated it all. I remember the moisture in his eye and the tremble in his voice as he said to me a while since, 'Ah, sir, they are very kind to the old man. Old age is lonely, and I know that I am troublesome, but my daughter loves me, and they make this evening of my life happy. Her husband is a true son to me.'"

We had some more interchange of thought and feeling beside the still form of the old man. I went away thinking how different have been the feelings of many a son and daughter as they have gazed on the still face of father or mother and have wished that by-gone years could be recalled, that neglects and unkindnesses in the returnless past might be atoned for or forgotten.



## XLIII.

### HOW MR. FARWELL'S DAUGHTER FELT.

I WAS speaking of our conversation as we stood in the room where old Mr. Farwell was lying in his last sleep. His daughter and her husband, in whose house had been his home, were with me. They showed no sign of deep grief, but a quiet tear at times falling from her eye told that a daughter's heart was full of fond memories as she looked on the face of the dead. If she had shown any violent emotions of grief it would have been simply repulsive to me. Perhaps I am wrong, but it always seems to me, when I see great outbursts of grief over the aged dead, that the emotion is either affected or thoughtless — assumed because it is deemed appropriate and necessary to the occasion, or else the result of very superficial thinking.

The aged dead! why should we greatly mourn for them? We shall miss the revered form, we

shall miss the care which we loved to give them—but why mourn them? For them it is far better. The weariness, the decrepitude, the loneliness and sorrow of old age have passed forever away; and, if dead in Christ, they will ere long be clothed with perennial youth and beauty. For them life had nothing more, or but little more, than endurance. All that is really good for them is in the past. “I live now in the past,” said one, old but loved, to me, a while ago. And that past is more mournful than joyous. The shadows are more than the sunshine that rest upon it. How could it be otherwise? However bright and beautiful the bygone scene, the words “Gone away” will call up the mist to cover it as you gaze. And, to the aged, all has gone away.

For yourself, death has made and can make but little change in your feelings toward them. Your heart, if it be true, clings to them, but all your best thoughts and fondest emotions have their origin in far back and long past times and scenes. Memory makes you love. Your love lives on its memories, and death has only completed all. While the aged were with you, the present was evermore asserting itself; now they have gone, memory reigns alone. There is nothing to overcome in your mind. The

sadness and the weakness have passed away, and the strength and the gladness of the olden time, when father and mother were young and you looked up all confidently to them, are back again. It is better now with them and with you. You both are done with age, and have gone back to better and stronger and happier hours. You may, then, stand by the aged dead solemnly, but with a quiet, peaceful satisfaction softening and transforming your grief.

So we stood. I knew that daughter and son had been true and faithful to the dead, and so I knew that not a reproachful thought disturbed the hour. The last months of the old man's life had been comfortless to him and full of care to them. He was not happy, as some old persons are, but sadly querulous. So complete was the second childhood, that he would be amused with a toy; but at the same time exhibit all the perversity of a wilful and spoiled child. He needed to be watched perpetually, dressed and cared for like a child, yet without the winning ways and attractive beauty of childhood. Only high-toned love and recognized and welcomed duty could have made daughter or son equal to it. My friends had been, as I well knew. They had their reward.

Now, as memory summoned the long past and the daughter saw herself sitting on her father's knee and thought that it was strong enough for her and mother and brothers as many as could get upon it, or on his shoulder shouting at the height and the safety; or, as she saw herself in her crib and he bending over her with that earnest and smiling look; as she saw herself walking in later years proudly holding his arm, sometimes thinking how strong it felt under her touch; as she saw these and a hundred other scenes pass before her, all the care and the toil seemed but little, even as the infirmities and the tottering weakness seemed dreamy. Love—the unthinking love of childhood, the deeper and more conscious love of riper years, love now all-hallowed by self-denying service—swelled in flood-tide within. I understood it all as she gently and half-dreamily spoke of it:

“It seems but yesterday that I was a little girl in his arms or on his lap; only just now that I walked by his side. I remember when he first gave me his arm on the street. It was as if he had suddenly lifted me into womanhood. How gentle, how thoughtful he was! Well do I remember how I contrasted him with other fathers.”

So she spoke, and I tearfully but smilingly list-

ened. When she bent over and imprinted one long kiss on the wrinkled brow and turned with us away, I do not know which was speaking clearest in her face—joy or sorrow, love or grief; I only know that both were there, and I followed her out, thinking:—

“Happy daughter, no neglect or unkindness reproaches you now; all your toil and care are repaid. You have rounded up the love and duty of maiden life, which you gave freely to him when he was your strength and pride, with the unfaltering care and self-sacrifice which you as freely gave him in your riper years when he looked to you for solace and protection. Happy are you above many at such an hour! You have richly and rightly earned similar devotion, equal care, and blessed memory.”





## XLIV.

### THE SIN RETURNED.

**W**E buried the old man to-day. I knew him well, and for many years; and, when the earth closed over his grave, I turned away with a solemn satisfaction. There are some deaths which make sighs of relief. This was one of them. It was a sad life closed, and friends could not but be glad that it was over.

There were other things that made it sad, but the saddest of all, and what threw the deepest shadows over it, was the conduct of one of his own children. He not only neglected him, but was unkind to him. In his difficulties—for misfortunes had stripped him of his property—the son took none of his burdens, left him in his old age to carry them alone, made him to feel with grinding force the bitterness of his dependence for the shelter which he gave him. When the old man grew

sick and helpless, he was cruel in his cold heartlessness, and was scarcely willing to look upon his face when he was dying. The father passed away with a lonely sense that he was forsaken of his son whose love ought to have held him in its embrace forever.

I knew the mournful history, and I grew indignant as I thought it over. But there came with the reflections a sense of awe. I saw in it all, as if in a mirror, a long-passed time, a vivid scene, of which this was only a reproduction. We saw that this was just the way in which he treated his own father. There was something tragic, with its impressiveness, in the exactness with which his conduct had been reproduced after the lapse of half a century. The parent whom he cruelly neglected had been sleeping in the grave for fifty years, and the scenes of sorrow, the tears of disappointment that he shed in his old age had passed out of the memory of all but two or three of us; but we had been awe-struck as we saw them reappearing in the person of this old man, who, fifty years before, was in his early manhood. He had lived long enough to see it all come back to his own life, to feel the shafts of ingratitude enter his own bosom, to heave the same bitter sighs, and to shed the same scalding tears. I do not know that he ever recalled what

he did to his father; possibly it may have gone from his recollection. It had not, I am sure, from the memory of God.

I say *possibly* it may have passed out of his mind, but it is not probable. Those things do not die out of memory. They may pass into silence and hide themselves for a while in the darkness of the past, but there comes a time when they calmly awake, walk forward with piercing eye and menacing finger, and stand beside a man and will not away. This old man could not but have recognized the startling resemblance in what his son was doing to that which he did in the bygone time; the reproduction was too fearfully accurate. What were the bitter regrets, what the unavailing remorse, I know not; but I would not have had them for a world.

But there is nothing new or strange in this story. It is the old story—old as the history of families and of the race. I expected it all before it came. Long, long before that son grew up, in the times when a little boy, this father was lavishing love and care upon him, I looked forward to the time when he would repay the dreadful past and smite as his father had smitten. I had read the Bible too well, and I had too clear a conception of what the filial relation demanded, and too full a view of

the retribution which treads fast upon filial crime, not to be sure that sooner or later the doom would come. I was not surprised when I saw it. I would have been amazed if it had not appeared. If there is anything certain in human life, it is this: a child will reap the exact harvest which he caused his parent to gather. If he made tears and heart-breaks, his eye shall weep and his heart shall break, and from the same cause. I know of nothing where the retribution is so strangely similar to the thing which it avenges. It seems sometimes to me as if while God may forgive the sin on repentance, that He will not stop the inexorable step of punishment.

I hope that no reader of this has ever been guilty of systematic or continued neglect or unkindness to father or mother. If you have, I pray for you that they may have not yet gone beyond the reach of your repentance or your prayer for forgiveness. If they have, then I fear for your future. May God save you from some bitter things in it. The love that you give to the child in your arms to-day will hardly guard you from the return of woe that he shall give you by and by.

If ever, boys and girls, you are tempted to a sin-

gle act of ingratitude, to speak a harsh word, to do even a small act of unkindness to your father or mother, remember that the future has nothing so sure as retribution for it. You may escape some other things, but you shall hardly escape this.





## XLV.

### GRANDPARENTS.—I.

ONE of my older friends is Mr. Southlean. He and his wife have passed beyond middle life, and the children who once made the home beautiful have gone away and are making other homes, all except the only daughter. She is married, and lives at home with her husband and little boy.

It was a serious question with the daughter and her husband whether it were wise for them to make their home in her father's house; but the old home seemed desolate, with every child gone, and the wishes of father and mother were so strong, that on their marriage they took their abode with them, and it has been full of comfort ever since to both of the little families.

I am often with them, for I most carefully guard these friendships of the olden time—they slip away so rapidly and the circle narrows so fast—and am

greatly interested at the phases of family life which I see there. We old bachelors can be observant and philosophical, seeing no one can return our observations upon ourselves with an uncomfortable, "Physician, heal thyself."

It is delightful to notice the intense pleasure that these grandparents take in that little boy, now some four years old. To me it is a picture of rare beauty when I see the little fellow who has climbed on the grandfather's lap and now is kneeling in front of him, with two dimpled hands in the iron-gray whiskers, and now and then a kiss suddenly dashed in on forehead or lips. I do not wonder that the eye of the grandfather follows the little fellow fondly, or that he listens to his prattle sometimes and does not hear what I am saying.

"Ah," said he to me as he saw my interest and heard me express my pleasure, "that little fellow opens another volume of family life to me and Mrs. Southlean. We are father and mother again with a little boy, our own child, as dear as the children whose remembered forms and voices hallow and make sweet the long-gone years. We love him as if he were our own. And what is pleasant to think of, we have all the delight and comfort without any of the cares of those other days. Then and with

our own children we had pleasure that was intense, but it was mingled with a perpetually-present responsibility, a responsibility that was never intermitted night or day, responsibility for mental training, responsibility for moral training, responsibility for physical training. We rose in the morning with it, we lay down at night with it. So the care was interwoven with the pleasure. Now we have the pleasure only. These young parents have the care and the responsibility; we have the joy. We lie down at night, but we do not expect to be wakened at the turning of the child in his crib; if he is wakeful, we do not think of soothing him. We will be ready to see him in the morning, but father and mother must take care of the night. And then, too," he added, with a merry laugh, "when the child is troublesome we need not fret over it; we only need go into another room and leave mother or father to settle the matter. I do not know but we enjoy this boy more than we did his uncles when they were, like him, little fellows."

I have not a doubt that my friend is correct. They may not, indeed, actually love this child more than their own, but I am quite sure they take a more solid and comfortable pleasure in him. It would hardly convey the idea exactly to say that

the little fellow is a beautiful and profoundly interesting plaything, but that will at least shadow my meaning. I am glad that he is. It is a reward of faithful and loving service in the past. I do not know that a son or daughter could better reward a father's and mother's love and care than by presenting them with an armful of love and care, all embodied in a little child who nestles his face against their cheek and says, "Grandma! grandpa! I love you!" Happy the grandparents and happy the parents who have such an experience.

I have been impressed almost as forcibly by the conduct and evident feeling of the young parents as by those of the older people. The characters of the grandfather and grandmother are, indeed, such as to claim respect and affection, but clearly these are cultivated with the greatest care in the grandchild. Of course, it is a source of pleasure to the young parents to see that their child is taken so entirely into the love of the grandparents, but I have been interested to see how this love is guarded. Clearly that little fellow has been taught that, except, possibly, father and mother, there are no persons in all the world quite so much to be revered and loved as grandpa and grandma. And how sedulously the quiet and comfort of the older

folks is protected. I have seen the little fellow, when, perhaps, after supper he began to grow uproarious or fretful, disappear with his mother from the room, and so quietly that one hardly knew just when he left it, and would not have noticed it except by the sudden quiet that had come over the place. For that little boy to be impudent or disrespectful to the old folks, would, I am sure, be impossible.

Another grandfather once said, with deep feeling, speaking of his daughter's children, "They always treat me with respect and affection." It had in it a volume of deep meaning, and the daughter, of whose children it was said, and who reported it to me, wears it as a jewel on her heart, now that the whitened head is in the grave.

I can see that the reverence and affection which this little fellow shows to these grandparents has a profound and tender meaning to them—it speaks of a twofold love. It is bright, beautiful, and precious in itself; it whispers in the infantile prattle with immeasurable sweetness; but it is also an ever-present memorial of an older and fonder love out of which it is born. If son and daughter had not taught that love it could not have been there. So it is—the hug of those little arms, the kisses of

those little lips are the embodied remembrances of another far-away childhood, of love that has gone on and been deepening all the years, and now, in the afternoon of life, comes forward to imprint kisses and speak words of love again.





## XLVI.

### GRANDPARENTS.—II.

I DO not want any one to think of my friends Mr. and Mrs. Southlean as old people simply because they are grandparents. I have found that it does not take many years for a father and mother to reach that dignity. Indeed, it seems but last year that I saw them standing side by side and receiving congratulations as groom and bride. Their children, often as I have seen them, have been a perpetual surprise to me. A little while ago—so it seems—their eldest daughter was a fair-haired girl that sat upon my knee, and heard with parted lips a fairy story. Last night I saw her leading her little son to her father to get the good-night kiss, and I heard him call her “mother” as he skipped by her side toward the door. Yet, after all, it was not so long ago that she was small as he, not long ago since my old friends saw their bridal evening.

The Southleans have reached that middle time of life when the children have grown, are gone from home, and are making other homes, and they are left not with any evidence of age upon them, but still with the impression, not to be put away, that noon has passed and afternoon has come. The gray curls, brown in other days, that hang behind the wife's ears, and the grizzled beard of the husband, tell the story. They are old enough to have, and young enough to enjoy to the full, a grandchild, and they do enjoy him.

But after all, pleasant as it is for them to have the grandchild near them and with them, whenever they wish him, it is not without its difficulties and embarrassments for the young parents, and not only for them, but also for the little one.

Somebody must have the responsibility for the training of that boy. Somebody does have it. I do not think that my friends, the Southleans, have any doubt at all upon whom it rests, but I have my doubts whether they act with strict accuracy upon their convictions. If I were to ask them about this responsibility, I have no question that they would reply at once, "Why, his parents, of course; they only can do it, and they only have the charge."

Yet I have noticed that they sometimes speak about the little boy, and to him, as if there were after all a latent idea with them that the care and the work were theirs. I sat at their table the other day. The little fellow, generally a nicely-behaved child, was doing something, I do not remember and indeed did not see what, which called for reproof from his mother. Evidently, without thought, the grandmother said, "That will not do any hurt, let him do it." A shadow passed over the young mother's face, but she made no reply. A few moments after, however, she quietly excused herself, and the little boy left the table with her. When she had gone the grandmother said, "You see, Uncle William, that Nellie has rather strict notions about her boy. I really think that she is too hard upon the child."

I am a privileged man in that, as in my brother's household, and I felt at liberty to reply, "And is there no danger that you would be too easy with him? It strikes me that the error, if there be one, is quite as likely to lie by your side as by your daughter's."

"Oh," said she, "we never interfere with Nellie's training of the boy; we let his father and mother do just as they think best."

"Ah, but it seems to me," I said, "that just now there was a little interference when you answered Nellie's reproof with your 'Let him do it.'" She smiled, and I led the conversation in another direction, for I did not care to discuss the matter before the young father, who was present and who was keeping an entire silence.

After supper, Nellie's husband and I took an evening walk, at the very commencement of which, referring to the little incident at the table, he said to me, "Let me thank you for what you said to-night to my mother-in-law."

"But," said I, "I was half sorry that I spoke. I would not like to seem to meddle in the family affairs of even so familiar a home as yours. I could not help, however, making a reply to the observation which Mrs. Southlean addressed to me."

"I feel," said he, "that I can talk all my heart to you who are so near to us. It was a very little and insignificant thing that occurred to-night, but it is the suggestion, at least, of a really grave difficulty, which I fear may grow serious in time to come. These grandparents are, as you know, very dear to us. I honor and love them both as I honor and love my own father and mother. Nellie, as

well she may, idolizes them. We wish our little boy to feel toward them exactly as we do and to repay the love which they lavish upon him. But they are constantly, yet I am sure without any design, interfering with his mother and myself in our management of the boy. I know that we may be incompetent, but after all we are they who have the responsibility and upon whom all the care at last comes. They, in the goodness of their heart, shield and excuse him when we think that he should be reprov'd. It would not complicate matters so much if they were careful always to express their opinions with us alone; they unthinkingly speak in the presence of the child, and we are thus reduced to the alternative of permitting our boy to have his own way or of seeming to oppose and disregard the wishes of our own father and mother. We can not do the first, we can not permit our little son to be disobedient or form habits which our judgment condemns, and we do not wish to seem to ignore the wishes of his grandparents. We would not for a moment lower in his mind the reverential love which we have and which we wish him to grow into for them. What shall we do? I feel the difficulty to be so great that I have sometimes almost determined that we must leave the old

home, pleasant as it is, and gain a separate one of our own where we can have the management of our boy alone."

"But," I said, "the over-indulgence may not do any great harm, and will it not correct itself in time?"

"I fear not," said he, "for it is not all over-indulgence. I can see that, by and by, there will be an opposite difficulty. Sometimes now, when grandma and grandpa are nervous, the noise of the boy troubles them, or he does something that annoys them, and they have said to his mother, 'If he were my child, I would not permit that.' While it is said smilingly, we know that it has more than half a meaning.

"We fear that hereafter when Willie becomes more of a boy—and you know what that is—that he will receive commands from them, and possibly they may be such as we would not have given, and in the conflict of authority damage may come to all of us."

"Well," I replied, "I do not know what to say. I think you are right in your fears. If your father-in-law and your mother-in-law show the good sense that I am sure they have, and of which your little wife is so beautiful a result, all will come out well.

Be patient ; but be firm in doing your work of child-training for your boy under your own sense of responsibility, even if you should have to make another home. But this you will not do, for you will find that the grandparents will see all, and will help and not hinder you."





## XLVII.

### GRANDPARENTS ON THE BATTLE-FIELD.

THE little incident at the table of my friends the Southleans, like a great many other little things in human history, has evidently reached far in its influence; and while not pleasant at the moment, will have a happy bearing on that family's life.

Last night Mr. Southlean again brought the subject up of the relation of grandparents to their children. I am not surprised that the matter should dwell upon his mind. He made, as I happen to know, the training of his own children no merely haphazard business. He looked upon it as something to be conducted in accordance with some fixed and well-defined principles; and, naturally, when he thinks that he sees an underlying fact in the new relation of grandparent in which he finds himself, he adopts it with enthusiasm.

“Did you ever think,” he said to me, “why it is that the youngest child of a family is very often the most indulged person in it?”

“No,” I answered, “I do not remember ever to have sought for the reason. You seem to accept it as a fact that they are so indulged, and I suppose that the opinion would not have so general prevalence were there not some truth in it.”

“In most cases,” he said, “I take it, they are; though possibly not always to their injury. It follows, if I mistake not, from natural causes. You have heard me speak of the decay of will-power as life advances. As the youngest comes into the family circle latest, he is apt to get the advantage or the disadvantage, as the case may be, of this decay. I imagine that, at least in many cases, the indulgence which is so often harmful is not a matter of deliberate intention, but rather the unnoticed result of multiplied years of the parent. The conflicts which arise in the family training are avoided or suffered to pass into defeats for the present.”

“You seem,” I said, “by the style of your remarks, to make the family a sort of battle-ground, where fights go on and where victories or defeats are met.”

“Yes,” Mr. Southlean replied, “you hit the thing squarely. Sweet and blessed a place as the family is, it is a battle-field where great issues are fought out. And these issues are grander than have often been made upon battle-fields where thousands have bled and died—issues on which character, and, with that, immortal destinies in long succession have been decided. The mothers are usually the heroes in these all-comprehending contests.

“The point in a child’s history where his will comes in conflict with parental law and where the question is determined which shall be supreme, if we only could understand it, is one over which angels might well poise their wings while they watch it with profoundest interest.

“And such a contest taxes all the moral power of a thoughtful parent. Many a father or mother has seen it approach with deepest solicitude and solemn dread, and has come out from it trembling and exhausted, to hasten to some quiet place where, in a paroxysm of weeping, the nerves, all unstrung with the effort, could be relieved.”

“I see now,” I said, “what you mean when you say that only the comparatively young are really fitted for such scenes.”

“That is it,” he replied; “parents as they grow

older shrink from them. So it may easily happen that the youngest child may not have the very discipline that he needs, because the parent has not the energy and strength of purpose that would have met the case at an earlier time. And what may be true of the youngest child, becomes almost certain when a grandparent is in the place of commanding influence.

“These considerations have convinced me of the danger into which we grandparents run, when we lightly interfere with the prerogative which belongs only to the father or mother of the child.”

“I wish,” was my answer, “that all grandparents were able to take as rational a view of this matter as yourself.”

“The difficulty with the most of us,” he said, “is that we do not like to believe that we are not just as able as ever to command. So we often obtrude our advice, if not our actual interference. It were better for us quickly to accept the fact that time has kindly relieved us of a responsibility for which it has made us unfit.”

I left Mr. Southlean with a higher opinion of his wisdom and nobility of character than even that which I cherished before this conversation. I im-

agine that the young folks will only be aided and encouraged, and not annoyed or hindered in their child-training, because grandfather and grandmother are so near. There will be only sympathy and prayer and help at the right point from them.





## XLVIII.

### RESPONSIBILITY PUT ON THE INEXPERIENCED.

SINCE my walk with Mr. Southlean's son-in-law, and our conversation on the matter of the interference of the grandparents with their management of their little boy, I have been reflecting on the curious fact that the education of the race at a very critical period is committed, in the course of nature, which is the providence of God, to inexperienced people.

The whole life of a child depends largely upon its first three or four years. As a rule, these years are in the care of those who are entirely without any previous experience. Children are born to the young, and before middle life is reached the time of maternity has gone. The child comes under the charge of those who were themselves but children a very few years before, and who by the very nature of the case would seem unfitted for the task.

If merely human wisdom had ordered it, it would probably have been arranged differently. Perhaps philosophy and science would have reversed the order and made it so that only when middle life had been reached, and when ripened experience would promise the best results, then the time for parentage should come. But just the reverse is true. Children are given to the young—the old have lost the privilege. There are easily discerned physical reasons for it, but probably there are moral reasons also that explain it.

Soon after the occasion when I saw the conflict of authority between the grandmother and the daughter, Mr. Southlean and myself fell into a conversation on the subject of family government. I made the same observation that I have made above—that it was exceedingly strange, at first sight at least, that inexperienced persons should have charge of the child at perhaps its most important period of life.

Mr. Southlean said, "Since that evening when you suggested, in your significant way, a doubt whether we were not unwarrantably interfering with the training of our little grandchild, I have been reflecting on the matter, and have had some thoughts which are, to me at least, somewhat new.

It is true, as you have intimated, that the earliest years make the most important part of a child's life, and it is just as true that these years fall under the charge of those who were but recently children themselves. There must be some reason for this in the nature of things."

"Have you," I asked, "discovered anything in your own case that will give any explanation of the seeming incongruity?"

"I am not sure," he replied, "but I think that I have found at least a partial solution of the matter. Advancing years may give wider observation and a larger experience of affairs, but they do not necessarily bring with them the power to make use of these acquisitions. They may enable us to see more, but they do not usually help us to do more. Indeed, as the years go on, there is almost universally more or less of a decay of what I may call—for want of a better term—will-power. By this I mean the faculty of command—that which leads one easily to accept responsibilities and meet exigencies. As we grow older, we grow more cautious, and we instinctively shrink from making issues and fighting them through. You may call it indolence if you choose, but I am of the opinion that it belongs to the advance of life."

“But how does this bear on the matter before us?”

“In this way. The family where children are is a place of perpetually recurring responsibilities which must be met, and issues which are to be settled. They demand a power of body and an elasticity of mind adequate to meet them. I think that I see in myself a tendency quietly to avoid such issues, and I suspect that were they now to confront me, I should either not meet them or would take them up with reluctance. It was not so when my children were young around me. It was natural and easy to face them then. I see the thing repeated in these young parents. My daughter—young as she is, and with all her inexperience—is vastly better fitted to train that boy, to subdue his wayward will and firmly guide his life, than my wife would be. As you know how high an estimate I have of my wife’s wisdom, and as you have seen with what sweet skill she reared her children, you can understand the force of my remark. I recognize the fitness of things in the fact that parents when young, and because they are young, have given to them the care and the training for which they would seem so entirely unprepared.”

“So,” I said, “I take it, you intend, somewhat gracefully, to hand over hereafter the bringing up of your grandchildren to their parents?”

“Yes,” he laughingly said, “I and my wife are going to *try* to do it. We shall probably have some advice to give when it is asked for, but we propose to enjoy the little ones as they appear, all grateful for the love they give us—the reproduced love of twenty years ago. It is child-love reproduced. And how it is enlarged! It has all the mother’s affection that has held us so fondly for a score of years, and it embodies and makes living her love in bygone years.”





## XLIX.

### LITTLE COURTESIES.

**I**N the village where I have been of late we have a young lady for our acting postmistress. I have been interested in one little thing which she invariably does. I go to the wicket—so I may call the window with the numbered boxes round it—and I ask for my mail. She smiles, and in a moment or two lays my letters before me *with their addresses downward* and out of sight. If I had noticed it but once or twice I should have supposed that the placing of them in that position was accidental, but it is always done in just that way, and so I know that she has a design in it.

It is, I take it, a delicate way—perhaps all-unconscious on her part—of showing that she does not care to know, and does not know anything about my letters, except the bare fact that they are mine. It may be that she does not wish other people to

read the address upon them, but as the thing is invariable, I am sure I am right in my supposition—the innate and unconscious delicacy of our fair postmistress makes her do it. She does it because she is a lady.

It reminds me of what I once saw—and although it was years ago I have never forgotten it—on a metropolitan street. A lady walking in front of me on the crowded street dropped a letter on the sidewalk; it fell with its address upward. A gentleman immediately behind her took it up, and without looking at it, turned it over, and stepping to her side handed it to her, as he bowed, still with its address out of sight. The thing was done in an instant, but it was sufficient to declare that there was a true gentleman, an instinctive gentleman. The turning the letter over, without a glance at its address, made an emphatic declaration of the fact.

I received a letter a while ago on a matter that concerned my correspondent and not myself; it had a post-stamp enclosed. That did not arrest my attention—its enclosure was the merest courtesy or even decency—but it was attached to the letter by a small pin thrust through it. Here, too, it seemed to me, was exhibited the instinctive deli-

cacy of a gentlemanly man. He would not seem to have touched to his lips the stamp which he sent me.

I have a friend—he is “a gentleman of the old school”—who in sending a letter to a lady always seals it with wax and with his seal. He says, in an apologetic way, that he does not like to send anything to a lady that he has spit upon. He puts it rather strongly, but I apprehend that it is the outcome of the same sort of feeling that makes him invariably stand with his hat in hand when he talks to a lady on the street.

This latter habit of his, he tells me, he has been often tempted to abandon because the fair ones do not seem to be well bred enough to understand it, or to be well informed enough to know that they ought to request him to put it on his head. I am afraid that, in the most of cases, he is not far from right in his belief. It is more than probable that some of them half wonder why he does it.

But I hope that he will not give up these and some other peculiarities of his. It is refreshing to see, in these times of hurry, a quiet and refined gentleman to whom the little and delicate courtesies have become a habit. There is nothing which for a moment would suggest the want of

manly powers. No one ever thinks of that in connection with him. There is a calm self-poise and dignity blending themselves with his courtesy that command respect and deference from those who come even casually in contact with him.

Mr. Wholbred, that is my friend's name, remarking on the brusqueness of manner, coming from carelessness or something worse, which he sees, says that the times evidently are against the gentle amenities of life, that men are in too great a hurry in these times to pay any attention to them. I have heard him talk after this fashion: "These things are not vitally important, they are not necessary to the existence of society, but they are effects of real civilization." He says playfully, "Our American, indeed our modern hurry tends to barbarism. A little more leisure might perhaps make more gentlemen and fewer savages. These small (so some would call them) amenities of life which a true gentleman exhibits smooth the rough edges of life, and they make smiles in a world where smiles are greatly needed. There has been a decay of manners of late years, so that what once would not be tolerated is now hardly noticed, if noticed is excused."

"There," I have heard him say, "is the use of

tobacco. Few decent men chew the weed, but how carelessly some who are deemed gentlemen smoke it! I do not denounce a cigar in its place, but I grow indignant when I smell its fumes out of their place. That out of place is where ladies are, or anybody else who does not use it—for clearly men have rights as well as women. This indulgence in public places is simply a brutal practice, of which no real gentleman would be guilty. It exhibits the innate coarseness of the man's fibre."

Mr. Wholbred has some extreme—so some would consider them—ideas on this subject of courtesy in life. He says that our haste and so our decay in manners betrays itself in the flippant way in which some people acknowledge a favor. "Listen," I have heard him explain, "to that young fellow, as he says, 'No, thanks!' or hear that Miss, simper 'Yes, thanks.' I do not know where that came from—perhaps some snob, over the water, said it first, and these people think that it is 'so nice,' but it is after all the result of a want of true gentlemanly or ladylike instinct. If you feel any thanks, take time to say, 'I thank you, sir,' but never be guilty of cutting your expression of it off with a monosyllable." I think that my friend is not far from right.



## L.

### THE GOLDEN WEDDING.

ONE does not have an opportunity of attending a golden wedding very often ; but I would go farther and be at greater pains to be present where a husband and wife commemorate fifty years of wedded life, than where two young people are publicly plighting their faith and love. The one has the poetry of inexperience and of hopefulness, the other of fulfilment and retrospection.

Old Dr. Jasper and Mrs. Jasper sat together, after the first greetings were over, and quietly received the pleasant words which were spoken as the cheerful groups gathered round or passed before them. The calmness was in keeping with the hour, appropriately different from the time fifty years ago — mirth and jollity then, chastened thoughtfulness now.

The grandchildren waited on them ; the sons and

daughters—men and women in their maturity—tenderly came to them and busily attended to their gathered guests; but the father and mother sat silently and half dreamily. The past was passing before them. The little boy and girl that went away from earth forty years ago now seemed tripping by, and the far-away patter of their little feet on the stairs could be heard. Those two little ones were the only *children* left; all the rest were now bearded men and matronly women—these two alone were little still. The childish forms, the dimpled cheeks, the chubby hands were there; and even amid the cheerful din of the hour, father and mother could hear the tone of child-voices as from under the trees without—trees that have grown massive and far-spreading since that time when the little ones built ovens under them and shook the slender trunks to get the apples down.

They talked more about those little children than of all the rest. They told me that they were not chiefly and only sorrowful that they were gone. These parents had learned while fifty years were passing by that there are sorrows more grievous in life than the death of a little child, especially when they know that these two had been safely housed with God for these more than forty years.

It did not seem incongruous that we should be talking there, with the merry hum of the guests around us, and the noise of the dishes as the waiters set them down while the feast went on, over these memories of the dead—recalling the forms of the long-departed amid the laughter and the jests. It was all in keeping—a wedding that was looking backward and not forward; memories, not hopes; treasures gained or lost, not expected or to be won! Why should not the shadowy forms of the long-gone come up? Why should not the little voices be sounding like far-off music in the ear?

These parents could talk without tears. I have noticed that the aged do not weep easily over past sorrows. I do not know why, but they can talk with you very calmly and with unmoistened eyes over what, in the earlier time, they could only have told you with choked voices and flowing tears. So this father and mother talked, and it seemed all-fitting.

I gave place to others and stood apart or walked away from the crowded company, thinking easily such thoughts as these: What a record these fifty years have made of wisely-directed love! what a treasure of patience and forbearance! what an

arcana of forgetfulness and oblivion into which things have been thrown, purposely to be overlaid and forgotten! We must not suppose that to preserve and to hold make up all the blessedness of such a time as a golden wedding makes. There are cherished and valued memories, and there are forgetfulnesses as cherished and as valued. Words spoken hastily thirty—forty years ago, neglects and thoughtlessnesses, perhaps unmeant unkindnesses done in the long past, errors committed, days of estrangement when kisses were formal or passed by—these are carefully locked up and hidden in the darkness and forgotten in the dust-covered past. I was not certain whether or not the joy of this hour were most because of remembrance or forgetfulness.

Not every couple who have passed fifty years of married life can well celebrate a golden wedding. To some it would be a leaden one—a memorial rather of gloomy disappointments than gleaming fulfilments. The glow of early love faded out long ago; the sweet and glad confidences of those far-back days of newly-married life gave place many years since to silences and retirements each within the recesses of separated hearts. The husband and wife have been living together, but their lives have

been largely apart—each walking their own path. No one knows it, but a golden wedding would be no true commemoration, and would symbolize no reality. Long since, husband and wife determined—it seemed the wisest thing to do—to submit to the inevitable. They could hardly tell why: but they were asunder, their hands were not clasped, their lips did not meet as in the younger days. It was hard to have it so, but they grew used to it, and now they walk silently side by side—not wholly indifferent, but very calmly. So they have walked long—so they will walk perhaps to the end. A golden wedding, if fifty years should pass, would seem a strange memorial to them.

I would not think that it was so in this golden wedding of Dr. Jasper and his wife. As I looked on their placid faces I would fain believe that it was all good and true—that the backward looks of the hour, the recalled scenes, the retired voices were all harmonious with the wedding greetings and the wedding smiles.



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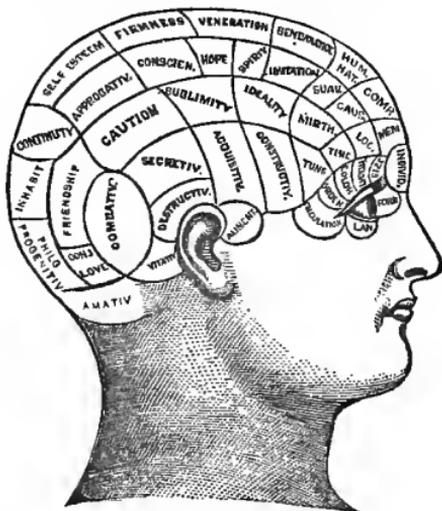
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