



THE
PERFECT
HOME

J. R. MILLER, D.D.

The
Perfect
Home



THE
PERFECT HOME

BY THE
REV. J. R. MILLER, D.D.
AUTHOR OF
"COME YE APART" "WEEK-DAY RELIGION" ETC.

"When fondly welcomed to th' accustomed seat,
In sweet complacence wife and husband meet,
Look mutual pleasure, mutual purpose share,
Repose from labours, but unite in care."

—BISHOP

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THE WEDDED LIFE

3

THE benediction that falls upon the homes of a country is like the gentle rain that descends among the hills. A thousand springs are fuller afterward, and along the banks of a thousand streamlets, flowing through the valleys, the grass is greener and the flowers pour out richer fragrance.

Homes are the springs among the hills, whose many streamlets, uniting, form—like great rivers—society, the community, the nation, the Church. If the springs run low, the rivers waste; if they pour out bounteous currents, the rivers are full. If the springs are pure, the rivers are clear like crystal; if they are foul, the rivers are defiled.

A curse upon homes sends a poisoning blight everywhere ; a blessing sends healing and new life into every channel.

Homes are the divinely ordained fountains of life. It is not by accident that men live in families rather than in solitude. The human race began in a family, and Eden was a home. The divine blessing has ever rested upon nations and communities just in the measure in which they have adhered to these original institutions and have kept marriage and the home pure and holy ; and blight and curse have come just in the measure in which they have departed from these divine models, dishonouring marriage and tearing down the sacred walls of home.

At the root of the home lies marriage. The wedding-day throws its shadow far down the future ; it may be, ought to be, a shadow of healing and benediction.

In a tale of mediæval English life a maiden goes before the bridal party on

their way to the church, strewing flowers in their path. This was meant to signify that their wedded life should be one of joy and prosperity. Almost universally, wedding ceremonies and festivities have some feature of similar significance, implying that the occasion is one of gladness. In some countries flowers are worn as bridal wreaths. In some they are woven into garlands for the waist, the tying of the ends being a part of the ritual. In others they are carried in the hand or worn in the hair or on the bosom. Music comes in also—joyous music, implying that the ceremony is one of peculiar gladness. In some places, too, wedding-bells are rung, and their peals are merry and gladsome.

All these and similar bridal customs indicate that the world regards the wedding as the crowning day of life, and marriage as an event of the highest felicity, an occasion for the most enthusiastic congratulations. Yet not

always are these happy prophecies fulfilled. Sometimes the flowers wither and the music grows discordant, and the wedding peals die away into only a *memory* of gladness. It ought not to be so. It is not so when the marriage has been true, and when the wedded life is ruled by love. Then the bridal wreath remains fresh and fragrant till it is laid upon the bier by the loving hands of the one who survives to close the eyes of the other ; and the wedding music and the peals of the bells continue to echo in tones of gladness and peace until hushed in the sobbings of sorrow, when the singers sing in dirges, and the bells toll out the number of the finished years.

Marriage is intended to bring joy. The married life is meant to be the happiest, fullest, purest, richest life. It is God's own ideal of completeness. It was when He saw that it was not good for man to be alone that woman was made and brought to him to supply

what was lacking. The divine intention, therefore, is that marriage shall yield happiness, and that it shall add to the fulness of the life of both husband and wife; that neither shall lose, but that both shall gain. If in any case it fails to be a blessing and to yield joy and a richer, fuller life, the fault cannot be with the institution itself, but with those who under its shadow fail to fulfil its conditions.

The causes of failure may lie at the back of the marriage altar, for many are united in matrimony who never should have entered upon such a union; or they may lie in the life after marriage, for many who might attain to the very highest happiness in wedded life fail to do so because they have not learned the secret of living happily together.

To guard against the former mistake, the sacred character and the solemn responsibilities of marriage should be well understood and thoughtfully considered by all who would enter upon

it. Marriage is a divine ordinance : it is not a mere human arrangement, something that sprang up in the race as a convenience during the course of the history of ages. It was not "devised" by any earthly lawgiver. It is not a habit into which men fell in the early days. The stamp of divine intention and ordination is upon it.

As a relationship, it is the closest and most sacred on earth. The relation of parent and child is very close. Children are taught in all the Scriptures to honour their parents, to revere them, to cleave to them, to brighten and bless their lives in every possible way. Yet the marriage relation is put above the filial, for a man is to leave his father and his mother, to give up his old home with all its sacred ties and memories, and cleave to his wife. After marriage, a husband's first and highest duties are to his wife, and a wife's are to her husband. The two are to live for and in each other. Life is to be lost for life.

Every other interest is thenceforward secondary to the home interest.

Then the marriage relation is indissoluble. The two become in the fullest, truest sense one. Each is incomplete before ; marriage is the uniting of two halves into one complete whole. It is the knitting together of two lives in a union so close and real that they are no more twain, but one ; so close that nothing save death or the one crime of infidelity to the marriage bond itself can disunite them. Marriage, therefore, is not a contract which can be annulled at the will of one or both of the parties. It may be discovered after the marriage has been formed that the parties are ill-mated ; one may find in the other traits or habits unsuspected before, which seem to render happiness in union impossible ; the husband may be cruel and abusive, or the wife ill-tempered, thriftless, or a burden ; yet the Scriptures are very explicit in their teachings, that the tie once formed is

indissoluble. There is one crime, said the pure and holy Jesus, which, committed by either, leaves the guilty one as dead, the other free. But, beside this, the teaching of Christ recognises no other lawful sundering of the marriage tie. When two persons stand at the marriage altar and with clasped hands promise before God and in the presence of human witnesses to take each other as wife and as husband, to keep and to cherish each other, only death can part them. Each takes into sacred keeping the happiness and the highest good of the other to the end of life.

In view of the sacredness and indissolubleness of this relation, and the many tender and far-reaching interests that inhere in it, it is but the simplest commonplace to say, that the greatest care should be taken before marriage to make sure that the union will be a true one, that the two lives will sweetly blend together, and that each will be able to make the other at least

measurably happy. Yet obvious as is the fact, none the less is it profoundly important that it should be heeded. If there were more wise and honest forethought with regard to marriage, there would be less afterthought of regret and repentance.

A word may fitly be spoken here concerning the marriage formalities. The wedding-day is one that should ever be remembered and held sacred among life's anniversaries. It is the day whose benediction should fall on all other days to the end of life. It should stand out in the calendar bright with all the brightness of love and gratitude. The memory of the wedding-hour in a happy married life should shine like a star, even in old age. It is surely worth while, therefore, to make the occasion itself just as delightful as possible, to gather about it and into it whatever will help to make it memorable, so that it shall stand out even more bright and sacred among all life's

days and hours. This is not done when the marriage is secret; there are no associations about the event in that case to make its memory a source of pleasure in after years. Nor is it done when, on the other hand, the occasion is made one of great levity or of revelry; the joy of marriage is not hilarious, but deep and quiet.

On the wedding-day the happy pair should have about them their true friends, those whom they desire to hold in close relations throughout their life. It is no time for insincerity; it is no place for empty professions of friendship. Everything about the circumstances, the festivities, the formalities, the marriage ceremony itself, and the congratulations, should be so ordered as to cause no jar, no confusion, nothing to mar the perfect pleasure of the occasion, and so leave only the pleasantest memories behind. These may seem too insignificant matters for mention here, yet it is surely worth

while to make the occasion of one's wedding such that it shall always be remembered with a thrill of delight, with only happy associations, and without one smallest incident or feature to mar the perfectness of its memory.

But it is when the wedding ceremony is over, and the two are one, that the life begins which has so many possibilities of happiness, of growth, of nobleness of character, of heroism in living, of tenderness in loving. Angels hover about the marriage altar and hush their songs while hands are clasped and holy vows are plighted, and then spread their sheltering wings over the happy pair as they start out together on the voyage of life. The greatest blessedness, the highest development of character, the noblest manhood and womanhood, the most perfect attainments in Christian life, are to be reached in the marriage relation, if it be made what God meant it to be. It will be the fault of those

who wed, of one or of both, if marriage proves aught but a blessing, and if the happiness of either is wrecked in the voyage together.

Yet it must not be concluded that the bridal gate opens essentially into a garden of Eden. Marriage is not the panacea for all life's ills. It does not of itself lead invariably and necessarily to all that is noble and beautiful in life. While its possibilities of happiness and blessing are so great, its possibilities of failure must not be ignored. Only a true and wise, only the truest and wisest, wedded life will realise the blessings of the ideal marriage relation.

The first lesson to be learned and practised is *loving patience*. It requires some time to bring any two lives into perfect unison, so that they shall blend in every chord and tone. No matter how intimate the relations may have been before, neither knows really much of the actual and inmost

life of the other until every separating wall and every thinnest veil is removed.

In China the bridegroom does not see his bride until she is brought to him on his wedding-day, closely veiled, and locked up in a sedan chair. The key is handed to him when the chair reaches his house, and he unlocks the door, lifts the veil, and takes his first look at his treasure. Brides and bridegrooms with us are not usually such strangers to each other as among the Celestials ; they see each other's face often enough, but it is doubtful whether as a rule they really know much more of each other's inner life. Even without any intention of hiding their true selves or appearing veiled, it is only after marriage that their acquaintanceship becomes complete. There are graces of character and disposition that are then discovered for the first time ; and there are faults, peculiarities of habit, of taste, of temper, never

suspected before, which then disclose themselves.

It is just at this point that one of the greatest perils of wedded life is met. Some are disappointed and discouraged by the discovery of these points of uncongeniality, these possibilities of discord, concluding at once that their marriage was a mistake and must necessarily be a failure. Their beautiful dream is shattered, and they make no effort to build it up again. But really all that may be needed is wise and loving patience. There may be no reason for discouragement, much less for despair. It is entirely possible, notwithstanding the discovery of these points of friction and uncongeniality, to realise the highest ideal of wedded life. It is like the meeting of two rivers. At first there is confusion, excitement, commotion, and apparent conflict and strife, as the two flow together, and it seems as if they would never blend and commingle; but in a

little time they unite in one broad, peaceful stream, rolling in majesty and strength, without a trace of discord. So when two independent lives, with diverse habits, tastes, and peculiarities, first meet to be united into one, there is embarrassment, there is perplexity, there is seeming conflict, there is the dashing of habit against habit, of life against life, at many points. Sometimes it may seem as if they never could blend in one, and that the conflict must go on hopelessly and unceasingly ; but with loving patience the two will in due time coalesce and unite into one life, nobler, stronger, fuller, deeper, richer, and move on in calmness and peace.

Perfect harmony cannot be forced in a day, cannot indeed be *forced* at all, but must come through gentleness, and perhaps only after many days. There must be mutual adaptation, and time must be allowed for this. The present duty is unselfish love. Each must forget self in devotion to the

other. Each must blame self and not the other when anything goes wrong. There must be the largest and gentlest forbearance. Impatience may wreck all. A sharp word may retard for months the process of soul-blending. There must be the determination on the part of each to make the marriage happy, and to conquer everything that lies in the way. Then the very differences between the two lives will become their closest points of union. When they have passed through this stage of blending, though it may for the time be painful and perilous, the result will be a wedded life of deep peace, quiet joy, and inseparable affection.

Another secret of happiness in married life is *courtesy*. By what law of nature or of life is it that after the peals of the wedding-bells have died away, and they have established themselves in their own home, so many husbands and wives drop the charming little amenities and refinements of manner toward

each other that so invariably and delightfully characterised their intercourse before marriage? Is there no necessity for these civilities any longer? Are they so sure now of each other's love that they do not need to give expression to it, either in affectionate word or act? Is wedded love such a strong, vigorous, and self-sufficing plant that it never needs sunshine, rain, or dew? Is politeness merely a manner that is necessary in intercourse with the outside world, and not required when we are alone with those we love the best? Are home hearts so peculiarly constituted that they are not pained or offended by things that would never be pardoned in us if done in ordinary society? Are we under no obligations to be respectful and to pay homage to our dearest friends, while even to the rudest clown or the veriest stranger we meet outside our own doors we feel ourselves bound to show the most perfect civility?

On the contrary, there is no place in the world where the amenities of courtesy should be so carefully maintained as in the home. There are no hearts that hunger so for expressions of affection as the hearts of which we are most sure. There is no love that so needs its daily bread as the love that is strongest and holiest. There is no place where rudeness or incivility is so unpardonable as inside our own doors and toward our best beloved. The tenderer the love and the truer, the more it craves the thousand little attentions and kindnesses which so warm the heart. It is not costly presents at Christmas and on birthdays and anniversaries that are wanted; these are only mockeries if the days between are empty of affectionate expressions. Jewellery and silks and richly-bound volumes will never atone for want of warmth and tenderness. Between husband and wife there should be maintained, without break or pause,

the most perfect courtesy, the gentlest attention, the most unselfish amiability, the utmost affectionateness. Coleridge says : "The happiness of life is made up of minute fractions, the little soon-forgotten charities of a kiss or a smile, a kind look, a heartfelt compliment, and the countless infinitesimals of pleasurable thought and genial feeling." These may seem trifles, and the omission of them may be deemed unworthy of thought ; but they are the daily bread of love, and hearts go hungry when they are omitted. It may be at first only carelessness in a busy husband or a weary wife that fails in these small, sweet courtesies, and it may seem a trifling matter ; but in the end the result may be a growing far apart of two lives which might have been for ever truly happy in each other had their early love been but cherished and nourished.

" For love will starve if it is not fed,
And true hearts pray for their daily bread."

Another important element in married life is *unity of interest*. There is danger that wedded lives drift apart, because their employments are nearly always different. The husband is absorbed in business, in his profession, in his severe daily toil; the wife has her home duties, her social life, her friends and friendships, her children; and the two touch at no point. Unless care is taken, this separation of duties and engagements will lead to actual separation in heart and life. To prevent this, each should keep up a constant, loving interest in whatever the other does. The husband may listen every evening to the story of the home-life of the day, its incidents, its pleasures, its perplexities, its trials, the children's sayings and doings, what the neighbours said who dropped in, the bits of news that have been heard, and may enter with zest and sympathy into everything that is told him. Nothing that concerns the wife of his heart should be too small

for even the gigantic intellect of the greatest of husbands. In personal biography few things are more charming and fascinating than the glimpses into the homes of some of the greatest men of earth, when we see them, having laid aside the cares and honours of the world, enter their own doors to romp with the children, to listen to their prattle, and to talk over with loving interest all the events and incidents of the day's home-history.

In like manner, every wise and true-hearted wife will desire to keep up an interest in all her husband's affairs. She will want to know of every burden, every struggle, every plan, every new ambition. She will wish to learn what undertaking has succeeded and what has failed, and to keep herself thoroughly familiar and in full sympathy with all his daily, personal life.

No marriage is complete which does not unite and blend the wedded lives

at every point. This can be secured only by making every interest common to both. Let both hearts throb with the same joy, and share each pang of sorrow. Let the same burdens rest on the shoulders of both. Let the whole life be made common.

In another sense still should their lives blend. They should read and study together, having the same line of thought, helping each other toward a higher mental culture. They should worship together, praying side by side, communing on the holiest themes of life and hope, and together carrying to God's feet the burdens of their hearts for their children and for every precious object. Why should they not talk together of their personal trials, their peculiar temptations, their infirmities, and help each other by sympathy, by brave word, and by intercession, to be victorious in living?

Thus they should live one life, as it were, not two. Every plan and hope

of each should embrace the other. The moment a man begins to leave his wife out of any part of his life, or when she has plans, hopes, pleasures, friendships, or experiences from which she excludes him, there is peril in the home! They should have no secrets to keep from each other. They should have no companions or friends, save those which they have in common. Thus should their two lives blend into *one life*, with no thought, no desire, no feeling, no joy or sorrow, no pleasure or pain, unshared.

Into the innersanctuary of this wedded life no third party should ever be admitted. In its derivation, the word *home* contains the idea of seclusion. It shuts its inmates away from all the other life of the world about them. I have read of a young wife who prepared one little room in her house into which none but herself and her husband were ever to enter. The incident is suggestive. Even in the sanctuary of the

home-life there should be an inner holy of holies, open only to husband and wife, into which no other eye ever shall peer, in which no other voice ever shall be heard to speak. No stranger should ever meddle with this holy life, no confidential friend should ever hear confidences from this inner sanctuary. No window or door should ever be opened into it, and no report should ever be carried out of what goes on within. The blended life they twain are living should be between themselves and God only.

Another rule for wedded life is to *watch against every smallest beginning of misunderstanding or alienation*. In the wreck of many a home there lingers still the memory of months or years of very tender wedded life. The fatal estrangement that rent the home asunder, and made scandal for the world, began in a little difference which a wise, patient word would have dispelled. But the word was not

spoken,—an unwise, impatient word was spoken instead,—and the trivial breach remained unclosed, and grew wider, till two hearts, that *had* been knit together as one, were torn apart for ever. Rarely are estrangements the work of one day, or caused by one offence : they are growths.

“ It is the little rift within the lute
That by and by will make the music mute,
And, ever-widening, slowly silence all—
The little rift within the lover’s lute :
Or little pitted speck in garnered fruit,
That, rotting inward, slowly moulders
all.”

It is against the beginnings of alienations, therefore, that sacred watch must be kept. Has a hasty word been spoken? Instantly recall it and ask for forgiveness. Is there a misunderstanding? No matter whose the fault may be, do not allow it to remain one hour. Is the home-life losing a little of its warmth? Ask not for the cause nor where the blame lies ; but hasten to get back the old fervour

at any cost. Never allow a second word to be spoken in a quarrel. Let not the sun go down upon an angry thought or feeling between two hearts that have been united as one. Pride must have no place in wedded life. There must never be any standing upon dignity, nor any nice calculation as to whose place it is to make the apology or to yield to the other. True love knows no such casuistry: it seeks not its own; it delights in being foremost in forgiving and yielding. There is no lesson that husbands and wives need more to learn, than instantly and always to seek forgiveness of each other, whenever conscious of having in any way caused pain or committed a wrong. The pride that will never say, "I did wrong; forgive me," is not ready for wedded life.

"Oh, we do all offend—
There's not a day of wedded life, if we
Count at its close the little, bitter sum
Of thoughts, and words, and looks unkind
and froward—

Silence that chides, and woundings of the
eye—

But, prostrate at each other's feet, we should
Each night forgiveness ask."

A writer closes a book on home-life with this earnest word: "The great care should be so to live in the home that when it shall any way be lost, there may be no accompanying sting of memory, harder to bear than any will of God. A little constant thought, self-denial, fidelity, a true life each with each, and each with God, will not only save all unavailing regret, and ensure the purest peace under all experience, but make the thought of reunion and life again in the Home of God chief among incentives to His service." The only way to ensure a memory without a pang, when the separating hand has done its work, is to make each hour of wedded life, as it comes, tender and true as two loving hearts can make it.

To crown all, the presence of Christ should be sought at the marriage

festivity, and His blessing on every day of wedded life. It is a sad omission when, in setting up their home, the husband and wife leave out Jesus. No other omission they could possibly make would cause so great a want in the household. Without His presence to bless the marriage, the congratulations and good wishes of friends will be only empty words. Without His benediction on the wedded life day by day, even the fullest, richest tenderness of true affection will fail to give all that is needed to satisfy hungry hearts. Without the divine blessing, all the beauty, the gladness, the treasure which earth can give to a home, will not bring peace that may not any moment be broken.

Surely too much is involved, too great responsibility, too many and too precious interests, to venture upon wedded life without Christ. The lessons are too hard to learn to be attempted without a divine Teacher.

The burdens are too heavy to be borne without a mighty Helper. The perils of the way are too many to be passed through without an unerring Guide. The duties are too delicate, and the consequences of failure too far-reaching and too terrible, to be taken up without wisdom and aid from above.

The prayer of the Breton mariner, as he puts out on the waves, is a fit prayer for every wedded life as its barque is launched: "Keep me, O God, for my boat is so small and the ocean is so wide."



THE HUSBAND'S PART

3

IN home-making each member of the family has a part, and the fullest happiness and blessedness of the home can be attained only when each one's part is faithfully fulfilled. If any one member of the family fails in love or duty, the failure mars the whole household life, just as one discordant voice in a company of singers spoils the whole music, though all the others sing in perfect accord.

One person cannot alone make a home what it ought to be, or what it might be. One sweet soul may spread through the home the spirit of love, even though among the other members there be bitterness and strife, just as

one fragrant flower may spread a breath of perfume through a hedge of thorns. The influence of one gentle and unselfish life may also in time soften rudeness or melt selfishness, and pervade the home-life with the blessedness of love. Yet it is still true that no *one* member of a household can make the household life full and complete. Each and all must do a part. The husband has a part, all his own, which no other one can do; the wife has a part; the children, the brothers, the sisters—each has his own part. Just as the different parts in music combine to produce harmony that pleases the ear, or as the artist's colours unite on his canvas to please the eye, or as the different parts of a machine work together to produce some effect of power, of motion, of delicacy, of skill; so, when each member of the family is faithful in every duty and responsibility, the result will be harmony, joy, and blessedness.

What is the husband's part? How

does the word of God define the duties of a husband? What is involved on his part in the marriage relation? What does he owe to his wife? When he stands at the marriage altar and takes the hand of his bride in his own, and makes solemn vows and pledges in the presence of God and of human witnesses, what is it that he engages to do?

There is one word that covers all—*to love*. “Husbands, love your wives,” comes the command, with all the divine authority, from the Holy Scriptures. The counsel is very short in words, but very long and broad in spirit and in observance.

The art of the photographer is now so perfect, that he can take the whole face of a great city newspaper on a plate small enough to be worn in a little pin; yet as you look at it under the microscope you find that every word is there, every point and mark. So in this word “love” we have a whole

volume of thoughts and suggestions of life and duty closely packed ; and, as we study it minutely and carefully, every one of them appears distinctly and clearly written out. What are some of the things that are embraced in a husband's love ?

One is *fondness, affection*. When a man offers his hand in marriage to a woman, he says by his act that his heart has made choice of her among all women, that he has for her a deeper and tenderer affection than for any other. At the marriage altar he solemnly pledges to her a continuance of that love until death. When the beauty has faded from her face and the lustre from her eyes, when old age has brought wrinkles, or when sickness, care, or sorrow has left marks of wasting or marring, the faithful husband's love is to remain deep and true as ever. His heart is still to choose and cling to his wife among all women, and to find its truest delight in her.

But the word implies more than mere emotional fondness. The Scriptures give the *measure of the love* which husbands are to bear to their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it."

There is no earthly line long enough to fathom the depths of Christ's love for His Church, and no mortal can love in the same degree; yet in so far as that love can be imitated on earth, every husband is required to imitate it. Christ gave Himself for His Church; the husband is to give himself, to deny himself, utterly to forget himself, in simple and whole-hearted devotion to his wife. In the true husband who realises all that this divine command involves, selfishness and self-absorbedness die at the marriage altar. He thinks no longer of *his own* comfort, but of his wife's. He takes the storm *himself*, and shelters *her* from its blast. He toils to support *her*. He denies

himself, that he may bring new pleasures and comforts to *her*. He counts no sacrifice too great to be made which will bring benefit to *her*.

There is something very sacred and almost awe-inspiring in the act by which a wife, at her entrance into the marriage state, confides all the interests of her life to the hands of him whom she accepts as her husband. She leaves father and mother and the home of her childhood. She severs all the ties that bound her to her old life. She gives up the friends and the friendships of her youth. She cuts herself off from the sources of happiness to which she has been accustomed to turn. She looks up into the face of him who has asked her to be his wife, and with trembling heart, yet with quiet confidence, she entrusts to him and to his keeping all the sacred interests of her life. It is a holy trust which he receives when she thus commits herself into his hands. It is the lifelong happiness of

a tender human heart capable of ineffable joy or unmeasured misery. It is the whole future well-being of a life which may be fashioned into the image of Christ, or marred and its beauty shattered for ever.

“ I wonder did you ever count
The value of one human fate,
Or scan the infinite amount
Of one heart's treasures, and the weight
Of life's one venture, and the whole
Concentrate purpose of a soul ? ”

The wife yields all up to the husband, gives herself in the fullest, completest sense. Will he be faithful to the holy trust reposed in his hands? Will he love her with an undecaying love? Will he shelter her from the blast, and protect her in the day of peril? Will he cherish her happiness as a precious jewel, bearing all things, enduring all things, for her sake? Will he seek her highest good, help her to build up in herself the noblest womanhood? Is he worthy to receive into his keeping all that her confiding love lays at his

feet? Will he be true to his trust for ever?

Miss Procter has put these words into the lips of an expectant bride—
“A Woman’s Question”:

“Before I trust my fate to thee,
Or place my hand in thine;
Before I let thy future give
Colour and form to mine:
Before I peril all for thee,
Question thy soul to-night for me;

I break all slighter bonds, nor feel
A shadow of regret;
Is there one link within the past
That holds thy spirit yet?
Or is thy faith as clear and free
As that which I can pledge to thee?

Does there within thy dimmest dreams
A possible future shine,
Wherein thy life could henceforth breathe,
Untouched, unshared by mine?
If so, at any pain or cost,
Oh, tell me before all is lost.

Look deeper still. If thou canst feel
Within thy inmost soul
That thou hast kept a portion back,
While I have staked the whole,
Let no false pity spare the blow,
But in true mercy tell me so!

Is there within thy heart a need
That mine cannot fulfil?
One chord that any other hand
Could better wake or still?
Speak now—lest at some future day
My whole life wither and decay!

Lives there within thy nature hid
The demon-spirit Change,
Shedding a passing glory still
On all things new and strange?—
It may not be thy fault alone—
But shield my heart against thine own!

Couldst thou withdraw thy hand one day
And answer to my claim
That Fate, and that to-day's mistake—
Not thou—had been to blame?
Some soothe their conscience thus; but thou
Wilt surely warn and save me now."

It is a solemn thing for any man to assume such a trust, and take a life, a gentle, delicate, confiding young life, into his keeping, to cherish, to shelter, to bless, until death either takes the trust out of his hands or strikes him down.

Alas! how many never realise the sacredness of the responsibility they so

lightly assume! How many fail, too, to keep the holy trust! How many trample with rude feet upon the delicate lives they swore at the altar to defend and cherish till death! How many let selfishness rule instead of love! How many fail to answer the needs of the tender hearts they have pledged themselves to sustain and satisfy with love! Every husband should understand that when a woman, the woman of his own free and deliberate choice, places her hand in his and becomes his wife, she has taken her life, with all its hopes and fears, all its possibilities of joy or sorrow, all its capacity for development, all its tender and sacred interests, and placed it in his hand, and that he is under the most solemn obligations to do all in his power to make that life happy, beautiful, noble, and blessed. To do this he must be ready to make any personal sacrifice. Nothing less than this can be implied in loving as Christ

loved His Church when He gave Himself for it.

This love implies *the utmost gentleness of manner*. One may be very faithful and true, and yet lack that affectionateness in speech and act which has such power to satisfy the heart. One of the special scriptural admonitions to husbands is, that they love their wives and be not bitter against them. It is a counsel against all display of ill-temper, all bitter feelings as well as angry words and unkind acts. The teaching of the passage, strictly interpreted, is that all bitterness should be suppressed in the very workings of the heart and changed into sweetness.

Are all husbands blameless in this respect? Are there none who are sometimes bitter against their wives? Are there none who sometimes speak sharp words that strike and sting like arrows in their hearts? It must be in thoughtlessness, for no true man who really loves his wife would

intentionally cause her pain. The poet Cowper suggested a very subtle test of character when he wrote—

“ I would not enter on my list of friends,
Though graced with manners and fine sense
(Yet wanting sensibility), the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.”

Yet there are men who would not willingly tread upon a crawling insect or a worm, who would not injure a dumb animal nor needlessly hurt any of the lowest of God's creatures, who every day bring many a pang to the heart of the tender, faithful, loving wife of their bosom by their sharp words or their impatient looks or deeds.

The trouble is that men fall into free and careless habits at home. They are not so in society; they are gentle to other women. They pride themselves on their thoughtfulness. They are careful not even by tone or look to hurt a sensitive spirit. But too often at home they are rude, careless in speech, and heedless of the effect of

their words and actions. They blurt out in their own houses the ill-humour they have suppressed all day in the street. They answer proper questions in an irritated tone. They speak impatiently on the slightest provocation. They are sullen, morose, and unsocial. They forget that their own wives are women with gentle spirits, easily hurt. A man thinks that because a woman is his wife she should understand him, that she should know that he loves her even if he is rude to her, that she should not mind anything he says or does, even if it is something that would sorely hurt or offend any other woman.

There never was a falser premise than this. Just because she *is* his wife, he owes her the loftiest courtesy that it is in his nature to pay. There is no other woman in all the world that feels so keenly the sting of sharp or thoughtless words from his lips as does his own wife, and there is no other of whose feelings he should be so careful

and whom he should so grieve to hurt. No other has the claim upon his thoughtfulness and affection that she has. Love gives no licence for rudeness or incivility to the one who is loved. The closer the relationship, the more are hearts pained by any look, tone, gesture, or word that tells of bitterness or even of thoughtlessness.

But it is not enough that men be not bitter against their wives. The mere absence of a fault or vice is not a virtue. Silence is no doubt better than bitterness. Even stateliness, though cold as a marble statue, is possibly better than rudeness. A garden without weeds, though having neither plant nor flower, is better than a patch of weeds; but a garden beautiful and fragrant with flowers is better still. It is a step in the right direction when a husband is not bitter against his wife, but it is a good deal farther in the right direction when, instead of being bitter, his words and

acts and whole bearing are characterised by gentleness and affectionateness. There are men who speak no bitter words, no sharp, petulant words, and yet but few kindly, tender sentences fall from their lips. The old warmth of the lover and the newly-wed husband has died out, and the speech is business-like and cold. No one needs to be told that there is nothing in such a bearing to satisfy a heart that craves the richest things true love can give.

Words seem little things, so fleeting and evanescent that apparently it cannot matter much of what sort they are. They are so easily spoken that we forget what power they have to give pleasure or pain. They seem so swiftly gone that we forget they do not go away at all, but linger either like barbed arrows in the heart where they struck, or like fragrant flowers distilling perfume. They seem so powerless for good or ill, and we do not remember that they either tear down

or build up fair fabrics of joy and peace in the souls of those to whom we speak them. They drop from our lips and are gone for ever, as it appears to us ;—

“ Yet, on the dull silence breaking
With a lightning flash, a word,
Bearing endless desolation
On its blighting wings, I heard ;
Each can forge no keener weapon,
Dealing surer death and pain ;
And the cruel echo answered
Through long years again.

I have known one word hung starlike
O'er a dreary waste of years,
And it only shone the brighter
Looked at through a mist of tears,
While a weary wanderer gathered
Hope and heart on life's dark way,
By its faithful promise shining
Clearer day by day.”

While gentleness should always mark a husband's bearing toward his wife, there are occasions which call for peculiar thoughtfulness and sympathetic expression. Sometimes she is very weary. The cares of the day have been unusually trying. Matters have not gone smoothly at home. Her

quivering nerves have been sorely overtaxed. She has heard sad news. A child has been sick all day, or, worse still, has by some disobedience or some wrong-doing almost broken her heart. What is a husband's part at such times? Surely, if he is capable of tenderness, he will show it now. He will not utter a word to add to the load the overburdened spirit is already carrying. He will seek rather, by every thoughtful help his love can give, to lighten the burden, to quiet the trembling heart, and to impart strength and peace.

Walking in the street one day in a violent and sudden storm, I was passing under a tree, from which a weary bird fluttered down from among the branches, and alighting on my bosom, crept under my coat. It was seeking a refuge from the fierce storm. Every wife should know that she will always find in her husband's love a safe and quiet refuge when she is perplexed and

tried. She should be sure that he will understand her, that he will deal most gently with her, that he will give his own strength to shelter her, that he will impart of his own life to build up the waste in hers. She should never have to doubt that he will sympathise with her in whatever it may be that tries her. She should never have to fear repulse or coldness or rebuke when she flees to him for shelter. What Christ is to His people in their weariness, their sorrow, their pain, their alarm, every husband in his own little measure should be to his own wife.

There is one place where we shall remember every unkindness and every neglect shown to those who lean upon us for support and for sympathy, and then the pain will be ours if we have failed in tenderness. Ruskin says: "He who has once stood beside the grave, to look back upon the companions on whom it has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent *there* is

the wild love or the keen sorrow to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart which can only be discharged to the dust." Yet how slow we all are to learn this lesson!

It is of little avail to bring flowers to a wife's coffin, when you failed to strew flowers on the path while her weary feet were painfully walking over it. It is of little avail to speak her praises now in every ear, to recount her excellences and dwell upon her virtues, when in her lifetime you never had a word of praise for her own ears, nor a loving compliment, nor any token to show to her how much you prized her.

"You placed this flower in her hand, you say,
This pure, pale rose in her hand of clay?
Methinks, could she lift her sealèd eyes,
They would meet your own with a grieved
surprise.

When did you give her a flower before?
Ah well, what matter, when all is o'er?

.

But I pray you, think, when some fairer
face
Shines like a star from her wonted place,
That love will starve if it is not fed—
That true hearts pray for their daily bread."

The time to show love's tenderness is when it is needed ; if we have failed then, the duty never can be rendered at all. No after-atonement of lavish affection can brighten the hours that were left unbrightened in passing, or lighten the burdens that were left unlightened when the weary spirit was bowing under them.

The spirit of this love requires a husband to *honour* his wife. He honoured her before she was his wife. He saw in her his ideal of all that was noble, lovely, and queenly. He showed her every mark of honour of which his soul was capable. Now that he has lifted her up to the throne of his heart, will he honour her the less? Not less,

but more and ever more, if he be a true husband and a manly man. He has taken her now into the closest and holiest relation of earth. He has linked her life with his own, so that henceforward whatever affects one affects both. If one is honoured, the other is exalted; if one is dishonoured, the other is debased. There is infinitely more reason why he should honour her now than before she was his wife!

The ways in which he should show her honour are countless. He will do it by providing for her wants on as generous a scale as his position and his means will justify. He will do it by making her the sharer of all his own life. He will counsel with her about his business, advise with her concerning every new plan, and confide to her at every point the results of his undertakings. A true wife is not a child. When he chose her to be his wife, he believed her to be worthy. She may not have all of his wisdom with regard to

the affairs of business, but she may be able to make many a suggestion which will prove valuable, for women's quick intuition often sees at a glance what men's slow logic is long in discovering. Many a man owes to his wife's wise counsel a large measure of his success. And there is many another man whose success would have been greater, or to whom failure would not have come, if he had sought or accepted his wife's help.

But even if she is not qualified to give him great aid in his business plans, she loves him, and is deeply interested in everything that he is doing. She is made happy by being taken into all his counsels, and thus lifted up close beside him in his life-work ; and he is made stronger, too, for energetic duty and for heroic achievement by her warm sympathy and by the inspiration of her cheerful encouragement. Whether the day bring defeat or victory, failure or success, he should confide all to her in

the evening. If the day has been prosperous, she has a right to share the gratification ; if it has been adverse, she will want, as a true wife, to help her husband bear his burden, and to whisper a new word of courage in his heart. Not only then does a man fail to give his wife due honour when he shuts her out of his own business life, but he also robs himself of that inspiration and help which every true wife is able to minister to her husband.

It need scarcely even be said, further, that a husband should honour his wife by being worthy of her. Love has been the inspiration that has lifted many a man from a lowly place to lofty heights of worth or power. Many a youth of humble origin and without rank or condition has worshipped at the feet of a maiden far above him in social standing, and, incited by his ardent affection, has made himself worthy of her and then won her as his bride.

Quintin Matsys, the celebrated

painter, was in his youth a blacksmith at Antwerp. He loved the beautiful daughter of a painter and was loved in return; but her father was inexorable. "Wert thou a painter," he said, "she should be thine; but a blacksmith—never!" The young man was not discouraged. The hammer dropped from his hand. A new life began to stir within him. A thousand glorious conceptions began to flit like shadows across his brain. "I will be a painter," he said. He thought of his utter ignorance of art, the absence of all technical knowledge on his part, and was cast down at first. But he began, and his first efforts encouraged him. He took the pencil, and the lines that came were the features of the face that glowed in his heart. Inspired by love, he wrought on. "I will paint her portrait," he said; and the colours flashed upon his canvas till the likeness was perfect! He took it to the father. "There," said he, "I claim the prize,

for I am a painter now." He won his bride by making himself worthy of her. Under the inspiration of love he continued to paint, gaining new victories of genius, becoming eminent among artists, and when he died, was buried with high honours in the cathedral of his native city. The grand motive of his life was to become worthy of her whom he desired to win, and whom he won.

Every true-hearted husband should seek to be worthy of the wife he has won. For her sake he should reach out after the noblest achievements and strive to attain the loftiest heights of character. To her he is the ideal of all that is manly, and he should seek to become every day more worthy of the homage she pays to him. Every possibility in his soul should be developed. Every latent power and energy of his life should be brought out. His hand should be trained under love's inspiration to do its most skilful work. Every fault in

his character should be eradicated, every evil habit conquered, and every hidden beauty of soul should burst into fragrant bloom for *her* sake. She looks to him for her ideal of manhood, and he must see to it that the ideal is never marred—that he never falls by any unworthy act of his own from the high pedestal in her heart to which she has raised him. Among all sins, few are worse than those by which a man draws down shame and reproach upon himself; for, besides all the sorrow he brings upon her in so many other ways, he thus crushes in his wife's heart the fair and noble image of manhood which she had enshrined there next to her Saviour's.

In the spirit of this love every husband should be *a large-hearted man*. He should never be a tyrant, playing the petty despot in his home. There is no surer mark than this of a small man. A manly man has a generous spirit, which shows itself in all his life, but

nowhere so richly as within his own doors. There are wives whose natures do not blossom out into their best beauty, because the atmosphere in which they live is chill and cold. A lady who is always watching for beautiful things and gathering them about her, brought from the mountain-side a sod of moss. She put it in her parlour, and after a while, in the genial warmth, there sprang out from the heart of the moss a multitude of sweet, delicate spring-flowers. The seeds had lain long in the moss, though in the cold air of the mountain they had never been able to burst into life. There are noble wives in homes humble and homes stately who are just like this moss. In their natures there are the germs of many excellences and the possibilities of rich outcome, but the home atmosphere is repressing and chilly, and in it none of these richer qualities and powers manifest themselves. The bringing of new warmth into the home will draw

out these latent germs of unsuspected loveliness. The husband who would have his wife's nature blossom out into its best possibilities of character, influence, and power must make a genial summer atmosphere for his home all the year round.

Then this large-heartedness will impart its spirit to the home itself. A husband who is generous within his own doors will not be close and niggardly outside. The heart that is always used to be open at home cannot be carried shut through this suffering world. The prosperous home of a generous man sends many a blessing and comfort out to less favoured ones. Every true home ought to be a help to a great many struggling lives. Every generous and large-hearted man scatters many a comfort among the needy and the suffering as he passes through this world.

There is nothing lost by such scattering. No richer blessing can come upon

a home than the benedictions of those who have been helped, who have been fed at its doors, or sheltered beneath its roof, or inspired by its cheer and kindly interest. There is no memorial that any man can make for himself in this world so lasting and so satisfying as that which a life of unselfish kindness and beneficence builds up.

There is the old legend of the White Hand. There was a king who gloried not in pomp and power, but in deeds of love. He scattered blessings everywhere. He took the food from his own table and gave it to the poor. Nothing in his possession was withheld when human need cried in his ear. He would give the last he had to help some suffering one.

One day a bishop seized the royal hand and blessed it, saying, "May this fair hand, this bounteous hand, never grow old!" Soon after this, war came, and the king was slain in battle. His conqueror gave command to sever his

limbs and expose them to view, according to the cruel custom of the time, on poles and stakes. It was done, but that hand which had thus been blessed, and which had wrought so many beautiful deeds of love, when all else had perished in the bleaching sun, remained unblemished, unwasted, wondrous white and fair, pointing still upward toward heaven as if raised in prayer.

The legend teaches that the hands and hearts which give our blessings to others in the Master's name and for His sake, that minister comfort, joy, help, healing, and uplifting, that make others happier, stronger, safer, better, shall remain for ever pure and white in the heaven of glory, when earthly honours have faded, and crowns and jewels have mouldered.

One thing more may be said : Every husband of a Christian wife should walk with her in common love for Christ. There are some husbands, however, who fail in this. They love their wives

very sincerely, and make many sacrifices for their sakes. They carefully shelter them from life's rude blasts. They bless them with all tenderness and affectionateness. They honour them very highly, bringing many a noble achievement to lay at their feet, and showing them all homage and respect. They do everything that love can suggest to make their earthly happiness full and complete. They share every burden, and walk close beside them in every way of trial. But when they come to the matter of personal religion, they draw back and leave them to go alone. While the wife goes into the sanctuary to worship, the husband waits without. At the very point where his interest in her life should be deepest, it fails altogether !

Surely it is a great wrong to a woman, tender and dependent, to leave her to walk alone through this world in her deepest life, receiving no sympathy, no

companionship, no support from him who is her dearest friend? She must leave him outside the most sacred part of her life. She must be silent to him concerning the experiences of her soul in its spiritual struggles, aspirations, yearnings, hopes. She must bear alone the responsibility of the children's religious nurture and training. Alone she must bow in prayer before God. Alone she must sit at the Lord's table.

It cannot be right that a husband should leave his wife to live such a large part of her life without his companionship and sympathy. His love should seek to enter with her into every sacred experience. In no other way could he give her such joy as by taking his place beside her as a fellow-heir of the same grace. It would lighten every burden, since he would now share it with her. It would bring new radiance to her face, new peace to her heart, new zest to all life for her. It would make their marriage more perfect, and unite their

hearts in a closer union. Then it would also introduce the husband himself to sources of blessing and strength of which he has never known before ; for the religion of Christ is a reality, and brings the soul into communication with God and with infinite springs of comfort, help, and blessing. In sharing her life of faith and prayer he would find his own life linked to heaven. United, then, on earth in a common faith in Christ, their mutual love mingling and blending in the love of God, they shall be united also in heaven in eternal fellowship. Why should hearts spend years on earth in growing into one, knitting life to life, blending soul in soul, for a union that is not to reach beyond the valley of shadows? Why not weave for eternity?



THE WIFE'S PART

3

IT is a high honour for a woman to be chosen from among all womankind to be the wife of a good and true man. She is lifted up to be a crowned queen. Her husband's manly love laid at her feet exalts her to the throne of his life. Great power is placed in her hands. Sacred destinies are reposed in her keeping. Will she wear her crown beneficently? Will she fill her realm with beauty and with blessing? Or will she fail in her holy trust? Only her married life can be the answer.

A woman may well pause before she gives her hand in marriage, and inquire whether he is worthy to whom she is asked to surrender so much; whether

he can bring true happiness to her life ; whether he can meet the cravings of her nature for love and for companionship ; whether he is worthy to be lifted to the highest place in her heart and honoured as a husband should be honoured. She must ask these questions for her own sake, else the dream may fade with the bridal wreath, and she may learn, when too late, that he for whom she has left all and to whom she has given all is not worthy of the sacred trust, and has no power to fill her life with happiness, to wake her heart's chords, to touch her soul's depths.

But the question should be turned and asked from the other side. Can she be a true wife to him who asks for her hand ? Is she worthy of the love that is laid at her feet ? Can she be a blessing to the life of him who would lift her to the throne of his heart ? Will he find in her all the beauty, all the tender loveliness, all

the rich qualities of nature, all the deep sympathy and companionship, all the strengthful, uplifting love, all the sources of joy and help, which he seems now to see in her? Is there any possible future for him which she could not share? Are there needs in his soul, or hungers, which she cannot satisfy? Are there chords in his life which her fingers cannot wake?

Surely it is proper for her to question her own soul for him while she bids him question his soul for her. A wife has a part in the song of wedded love if it is to be a harmony. She holds in her hands on her wedding-day precious interests, sacred destinies, and holy responsibilities, which, if disclosed to her sight at once, might well appal the bravest heart. Her opportunity is one which the loftiest angel might covet. Not the happiness only of a manly life, but its whole future of character, of influence, of growth, rests with her.

Look at the picture of a good wife by a master :—

“A good wife is Heaven’s last, best gift to man, his angel and minister of graces innumerable, his gem of many virtues ; her voice his sweetest music, her smiles his brightest day, her kiss the guardian of his innocence, her arms the pale of his safety, the balm of his health, the sure balsam of his life ; her industry his surest wealth, her economy his safest steward, her lips his faithful counsellor, her bosom the softest pillow of his cares, and her prayers the ablest advocate of Heaven’s blessing on his head.”

If that is what a wife is to be to her husband, is there no need for a woman to question her soul before she goes to the marriage altar ?

What is the true ideal of a wife ? It is not something lifted above the common experiences of life, not an ethereal angel feeding on ambrosia and moving in the realms of fancy ! In

some European cities they sell to the tourist models of their cathedrals made of alabaster, whiter than snow. But so delicate are these alabaster shrines that they must be kept under glass covers or they will be soiled by the dust, and so frail that they must be sheltered from every rude touch, lest their lovely columns may be shattered. They are very graceful and beautiful, but they serve no lofty purpose. No worshippers can enter their doors. No melody rises to heaven from their aisles. So there are ideals of womanhood which are very lovely, full of graceful charms, pleasing, attractive, but which are too delicate and frail for this prosaic, storm-swept world of ours. Such ideals the poets and the novelists sometimes give us. They appear well to the eye as they are portrayed for us on the brilliant page. But of what use would they be in the life which the real woman of our day has to live? A breath of earthly air would stain them,

One day of actual experience in the hard toils and sore struggles of life would shatter their frail loveliness to fragments. We had better seek for ideals which will not be soiled by a rude touch nor blown away by a stiff breeze, and which will grow lovelier as they move through life's paths of sacrifice and toil. The true wife needs to be no mere poet's dream, no artist's picture, no ethereal lady too fine for use, but a woman healthful, strong, practical, industrious, with a hand for life's common duties, yet crowned with that beauty which a high and noble purpose gives to a soul.

One of the first essential elements in a wife is *faithfulness*—faithfulness, too, in the largest sense. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." Perfect confidence is the basis of all true affection. A shadow of doubt destroys the peace of married life. A true wife by her character and by her conduct proves herself worthy

of her husband's trust. He has confidence in her affection ; he knows that her heart is unalterably true to him. He has confidence in her management ; he confides to her the care of his household. He knows that she is true to all his interests—that she is prudent and wise, not wasteful and extravagant. It is one of the essential things in a true wife, that her husband shall be able to leave in her hands the management of all domestic affairs and know that they are safe. Wifely thriftlessness and extravagance have destroyed the happiness of many a household and wrecked many a home. On the other hand, many a man owes his prosperity to his wife's prudence and her wise administration of household affairs.

Every true wife makes her husband's interests her own. While he lives for her, carrying her image in his heart and toiling for her all the days, she thinks only of what will do him good. When burdens press upon him, she

tries to lighten them by sympathy, to cheer by the inspiration of love. She enters with zest and enthusiasm into all his plans. She is never a weight to drag him down ; she is strength in his heart to help him ever to do nobler and better things.

All wives are not such blessings to their husbands. Woman is compared sometimes to the vine, while man is the strong oak to which it clings. But there are different kinds of vines. Some wreath a robe of beauty and a crown of glory for the tree, covering it in summer days with green leaves, and in the autumn hanging among its branches rich clusters of purple fruit ; others twine their arms about it only to sap its very life and destroy its vigour, till it stands decaying and unsightly, stripped of its splendour, discrowned, and fit only for the fire.

A true wife makes a man's life nobler, stronger, grander, by the omnipotence of her love " turning all the forces of

manhood upward and heavenward." While she clings to him in holy confidence and loving dependence, she brings out in him whatever is noblest and richest in his being. She inspires him with courage and earnestness. She beautifies his life. She softens whatever is rude and harsh in his habits or his spirit. She clothes him with the gentler graces of refined and cultured manhood. While she yields to him and never disregards his lightest wish, she is really his queen, ruling his whole life, and leading him onward and upward in every proper path.

But there are wives also like the vines which cling, only to blight. Their dependence is weak, indolent helplessness. They lean, but impart no strength. They cling, but they sap the life. They put forth no hand to help. They loll on sofas or promenade the streets; they dream over sentimental novels; they gossip in drawing-rooms. They are utterly useless, and

being useless they become burdens even to manliest, tenderest love. Instead of making a man's life stronger, happier, richer, they absorb his strength impair his usefulness, hinder his success, and cause him to be a failure among men. To themselves also the result is wretchedness. Dependence is beautiful when it does not become weakness and inefficiency. The true wife clings and leans, but she also helps and inspires. Her husband feels the mighty inspiration of her love in all his life. Toil is easier, burdens are lighter, battles are less fierce, because of the face that waits in the quiet of the home, because of the heart that beats in loving sympathy whatever the experience, because of the voice that speaks its words of cheer and encouragement when the day's work is done. No wife knows how much she can do to make her husband honoured among men, and his life a power and a success, by her loyal

faithfulness, by the active inspiration of her own sweet life. Here are true words from another pen:—

“ The woodman's axe swings lighter, the heavy blows on the anvil have more music than fatigue in them, the farmer whistles cheerfully over his plough, the mechanic's severest toil is lightened by a sweet refrain, when he knows that his fair young bride is in sympathy with him, and while watching his return is providing daintily for his pleasure and comfort, eager to give him loving welcome. To the artist at his easel come fairer visions to be transferred to the canvas, because of the dear one presiding over his house. The author in his study finds the dullest subjects clothed in freshness and vigour, because of the gentle critic to whom he can go for aid and encouragement. The lawyer prepares his case with better-balanced energy, thinks more clearly, pleads his cause with more effective eloquence,

inspired by the cheering words uttered as he goes to his labours, by the young wife whose thoughts he is assured will follow his work with her judicious, tranquillising sympathy. The physician in his daily rounds among the sick and suffering knows there is one, now all his own, praying for his success, and this knowledge so fills his being that his very presence by the sickbed has healing in it. The young pastor in his efforts to minister to the spiritual wants of his flock will speak peace to the troubled souls committed to his trust with far more zeal and tenderness for the love that will smile on him when he returns home."

The good wife is a *good housekeeper*. I know well how unromantic this remark will appear to those whose dreams of married life are woven of the fancies of youthful sentiment; but these frail dreams of sentiment will not last long amid the stern realities of life, and then that which will prove one of the rarest

elements of happiness and blessing in the household will be housewifely industry and diligence.

A Greek philosopher, walking at night and gazing up at the sky, stumbled and fell. His companion observed: "One should not have one's head in the stars while one's feet are on the earth." There are some wives who commit the same mistake. They set their eyes on romantic ideals, and neglect the real duties that come close to their hands, in which the true secret of happiness and blessing lies. They have their eyes and head among the stars, while their feet are walking on mundane soil, and no wonder if they stumble! It may be put down as a positive rule, whether among the rich or the poor, whether in a palace or in a cottage, that the wife who would be happy, and make her home happy and permanently beautiful, must work with her hands at the housewifely tasks which the days in turn bring to her.

When young people marry, they are rarely troubled with many thoughts about the details of housekeeping. Their dreams are high above all such commonplaces. The mere mention of such things as cooking, baking, sweeping, dusting, mending, ironing, jars upon the poetic rhythm of the lofty themes of conversation. It never enters the brains of these happy lovers that it can make any difference in the world in their home-life whether the bread is sweet or sour, whether the oatmeal is well cooked or scorched, whether the meals are punctual or tardy. The mere thought that such sublunary matters could affect the tone of their wedded life seems a desecration.

It is a pity to dash away such exquisite dreams; but the truth is, they do not long outlast the echo of the wedding peals or the fragrance of the bridal roses. The newly married are not long within their own doors before they find that something more

than tender sentiment is needed to make their home-life a success. They come down from the clouds when the daily routine begins, and touch the common soil on which the feet of other mortals walk. Then they find that they are dependent, just like ordinary people, on some quiet, prosaic conditions. One of the very first things they discover is, the intimate relation between the kitchen and wedded happiness. That love may fulfil its delightful prophecies and realise its splendid dreams, there must be in the new home a basis of material and very practical elements. The palace that is to rise into the air, shooting up its towers, displaying its wonders of architecture, flashing its splendours in the sunshine, the admiration of the world, must have its foundation in commonplace earth, resting on plain, hard, honest rock. Love may build its palace of noble sentiments and tender affections and sweet charities, rising into the very

clouds, and in this splendid home two souls may dwell in the enjoyment of the highest possibilities of wedded life ; but this palace, too, must stand on the ground, with unpoetic and unsentimental stones for its foundation. That foundation is *good housekeeping*. In other words, good breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, a well-kept house, order, system, promptness, punctuality, good cheer—far more than any young lover's dream does happiness in married life depend upon such commonplace things as these. Love is very patient, very kind, very gentle ; and where there is love, no doubt the plainest fare is ambrosia and the homeliest surroundings are charming. I know the wise man said, " Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox (*i.e.* a good roast-beef dinner) with hatred therewith " ; but herbs as a constant diet will pall upon the taste, especially if poorly served, even if love is ever present to season them. In this day

of advanced civilisation it ought to be possible to have both the stalled ox and love. Husbands are not angels in this mundane state, and not being such they need a substantial basis of good housekeeping for the realisation of their dreams of blissful home-making.

Here is a paragraph worth quoting :
“ The spirit of wedded love may regard the house, in its completeness of appointment and wisdom of management, as only the outer shell, worthless except when vitalised by the heart into a living home ; but it must not forget that its delicate life needs sheathing in this outer order of the house—the temple-walls around the inner altar—that its heaven-lighted fire may be guarded from being chilled down by dampening worries or blown out by nasty tempers. The house, with its provision for the daily needs of the lower life, duly ordered and graciously illumined, is the trellis within which affections intertwine, and loving hearts, growing out

into efflorescent richness, build up the home. Where a strengthful womanhood keeps the house wisely and well, in prudent care and orderly comfort and cheerful peace, there, in the daily duties, trying and tasting, her character issues in loveliness of bloom and blessedness of privilege, softly shadowing the household beneath its gracious power and unselfish gentleness ; so that the heart of her husband rejoiceth in her, and the love which was planted within those walls strikes down its roots through all thin-soiled fancy and passion into the rich ground of manly reverence and honour, from which to draw a sustenance and life which shall keep it fresh and green in the midst of the years as those that are planted in the house of the Lord."

There certainly have been cases in which very tender love has lost its tenderness, and when the cause lay in the disorder, the negligence, and the mismanagement of the housewifery.

There is no doubt that many a heart-estrangement begins at the table, where meals are unpunctual and food is poorly cooked or repulsively served. Bad housekeeping will soon drive the last vestige of romance out of any home. The illusion which love weaves about an idolised bride will soon vanish if she prove incompetent in her domestic management. The wife who will keep the charm of early love unbroken through the years, and in whose home the dreams of the wedding-day will come true, must be a good house-keeper.

In one of his Epistles, St. Paul gives the counsel that young wives should be "workers at home," as the Revisers have put it, signifying that home is the sphere of the wife's duties, and that she is to find her chief work there. There is a glory in all the Christian charities which Christian women, especially in these recent days, are founding and conducting with so much enthusiasm

and such marked and unbounded success. Woman is endowed with gifts of sympathy, of gentleness, of inspiring strengthfulness, which peculiarly fit her to be Christ's messenger of mercy to human woe and sorrow and pain.

“ The mission of woman on earth! To
give birth
To the mercy of heaven descending on earth.
The mission of woman; permitted to bruise
The head of the serpent, and sweetly infuse
Through the sorrow and sin of earth's
register'd curse
The blessing which mitigates all: born to
nurse,
And soothe, and to solace, to help and to
heal
The sick world that leans on her.”

There is the widest opportunity in the most fitting service for every woman whose heart God has touched to be a ministering angel to those who need sympathy or help. There are many who are free to serve in public charities, in caring for the poor, for the sick in hospital wards, for the

orphaned and the aged. There are few women who cannot do a little in some one or more of these organisations of Christian beneficence.

But it should be understood that for every wife the first duty is the making and keeping of her own home. Her first and best work should be done there, and till it is well done she has no right to go outside to take up other duties. She is to be a "worker at home." She must look upon her home as the one spot on earth for which she alone is responsible, and which she must cultivate well for God, if she never does anything outside. For her the Father's business is not attending Dorcas societies, and missionary meetings, and mothers' meetings, and temperance conventions, or even teaching a Sunday-school class, until she has made her own home all that her wisest thought and best skill can make it. There have been wives who in their zeal for Christ's work outside have neglected

Christ's work inside their own doors. They have had eyes and hearts for human need and human sorrow in the broad fields lying far out, but neither eye nor heart for the work of love close about their own feet. The result has been that, while they were doing angelic work in the lanes and streets, the angels were mourning over their neglected duties within the hallowed walls of their own homes. While they were winning a place in the hearts of the poor or the sick or the orphan, they were losing their rightful place in the hearts of their own household. Let it be remembered that Christ's work in the home is the first that He gives to every wife, and that no amount of consecrated activities in other spheres will atone in this world or the next for neglect or failure there.

The good wife is *generous and warm-hearted*. She does not grow grasping and selfish. In her desire to economise and add to her stores, she does not

forget those about her who suffer or want. While she gives her wisest and most earnest thought and her best and most skilful work to her own home, her heart does not grow cold toward those outside who need sympathy. I cannot conceive of true womanhood ripened into mellow richness yet wanting the qualities of gentleness and unselfishness. A woman whose heart is not touched by the sight of sorrow, and whose hands do not go out in relief where it is in her power to help, lacks one of the elements which make the glory of womanhood.

This is not the place to speak of woman as a ministering angel. If it were, it would be easy to fill many pages with the bright records of most holy deeds of self-sacrifice. I am speaking now, however, of woman as wife; and only upon so much of this ministry to the suffering as she may perform in her own home, at her own door, and in connection with her house-

wifely duties, is it fit to linger at this time. But even in this limited sphere her opportunities are by no means small.

It is in her own home that this warmth of heart and this openness of hand are first to be shown. It is as wife and mother that her gentleness performs its most sacred ministry. Her hand wipes away the tear-drops when there is sorrow. In sickness she is the tender nurse. She bears upon her own heart every burden that weighs upon her husband. No matter how the world goes with him during the day, when he enters his own door he meets the fragrant atmosphere of love. Other friends may forsake him, but she clings to him with unalterable fidelity. When gloom comes down and adversity falls upon him, her faithful eyes look ever into his, like two stars of hope shining in the darkness. When his heart is crushed, beneath her smile it gathers itself

again into strength, "like a wind-torn flower in the sunshine." "You cannot imagine," wrote De Tocqueville of his wife, "what she is in great trials. Usually so gentle, she then becomes strong and energetic. She watches me without my knowing it; she softens, calms, and strengthens me in difficulties which distract *me*, but leave her serene." An eloquent tribute, but one which thousands of husbands might give! Men often see not the angel in the plain, plodding woman who walks quietly beside them, until the day of trial comes; then in the darkness the glory shines out! An angel ministered to our Lord when in Gethsemane He wrestled with His great and bitter sorrow. What a benediction to the mighty Sufferer was in the soft gliding to His side of that gentle presence, in the touch of that soothing, supporting hand laid upon Him, in the comfort of that gentle voice thrilling with sympathy as it

spoke its strengthening message of love! Was it a mere coincidence that just at that time and in that place the radiant messenger came? No, it is always so. Angels choose such occasions to pay their visits to men.

“ With silence only as their benediction
 God’s Angels come,
 Where in the shadow of a great affliction
 The soul sits dumb.”

So it is in the dark hours of a man’s life, when burdens press, when sorrows weigh like mountains upon his soul, when adversities have left him crushed and broken, or when he is in the midst of fierce struggles which try the strength of every fibre of his manhood, that all the radiance and glory of a true wife’s strengthful love shine out before his eyes. Only then does he recognise in her God’s angel of mercy.

“ O woman! in our hours of ease
 Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
 And variable as the shade
 By the light quivering aspen made ;
 When pain and anguish wring the brow,
 A ministering Angel thou !”

In sickness, how thoughtful, how skilful, how gentle a nurse is the true wife! In struggles with temptation, or adversity, or difficulty, what an inspirer she is! In misfortune or disaster, what lofty heroism does she exhibit, and what courage does her bravery kindle in her husband's heart! Instead of being crushed by the unexpected loss, she only then rises to her full grandeur of soul. Instead of weeping, repining, and despairing, and thus adding tenfold to the burden of the misfortune, she cheerfully accepts the changed circumstances, and becomes a minister of hope and strength. She turns away from luxury and ease to the plainer home, the simpler life, the humbler surroundings, without a murmur. It is in such circumstances and experiences that the heroism of woman's soul is manifested. Many a man is carried victoriously through misfortune and enabled to rise again, because of the strong, inspiring sym-

pathy and the self-forgetting help of his wife; and many a man fails in fierce struggle, and rises not again from the defeat of misfortune, because the wife at his side proves unequal to her opportunity.

But a wife's ministry of mercy reaches outside her own doors. Every true home is an influence of blessing in the community where it stands. Its lights shine out. Its songs ring out. Its spirit breathes out. The neighbours know whether it is hospitable or inhospitable, warm or cold, inviting or repelling. Some homes bless no lives outside their own circle; others are perpetually pouring out sweetness and fragrance. The ideal Christian home is a far-reaching benediction. It sets its lamps in the windows, and while they give no less light and cheer to those within, they pour a little beam upon the gloom without, which may brighten some dark path and put a little cheer into the heart of some be-

lated passer-by. Its doors stand ever open with a welcome to everyone who comes seeking shelter from the storm, or sympathy in sorrow, or help in trial. It is a hospice, like those blessed refuges on the Alps, where the weary or the chilled or the fainting are sure always of refreshment, of warmth, of kindly friendship, of gentle ministry of mercy. It is a place where one who is in trouble may go, confident ever of sympathy and comfort. It is a place where the young people love to go, because they know they are welcome, and because they find there inspiration and help.

And this spirit of the home the wife makes ; indeed, it is her own spirit filling the house and pouring out like light or like fragrance. A true wife is universally beloved. She is recognised as one of God's angels scattering blessings as far as her hand can reach. Her neighbours are all blessed by her ministrations. When sickness or

sorrow touches any other household, some token of sympathy finds its way from her hand into the shadowed home. To the old she is gentle and patient. To the young she is inciting and helpful. To the poor she is God's hand reached out. To the sufferer she brings strength. To the sorrowing she is a consoler. There is trouble nowhere near but her face appears at the door and her hand brings its benediction.

I quote a few words from Mr. Arnot: "They call woman sometimes, in thoughtless flattery, an angel; but here an angel in sober truth she is, a messenger sent by God to assuage the sorrows of humanity. The worn traveller who has come through the desert with his life and nothing more; the warrior faint and bleeding from the battle; the distressed of every age and country, long instinctively for this Heaven-provided help. Deep in the sufferer's nature, in the hour of his

need, springs the desire to feel a woman's hand binding his wound or wiping his brow—to hear soft words dropping from a woman's lips. . . . Woman was needed in Eden; how much more in this thorny world outside! Physically, the vessel is weak, but in that very weakness her great strength lies. If *knowledge* is power in man's department, *gentleness* is power in woman's."

These are words that every wife should ponder over. Every home should be a Bethesda, "a house of mercy," where the suffering, the weary, the sorrowing, the tempted, the tried, the fallen, may ever turn, sure of sympathy, of help, and of love's holiest fruits.

Two little stories of Elizabeth of Hungary illustrate this point, and show the reward which such service brings. Her kindness to the sick and the poor was unbounded. Once, it is said, she brought a leprous child to her palace

and laid it in her own bed, because there was no other place in which to lay it. Her husband heard of it, and came in some displeasure and drew down the cover of the bed to see if the object concealed there was really so loathsome as he had heard. And lo! instead of the festering and leprous body, he saw the Saviour, radiant with glory, and the husband turned away awestricken and yet glad. That was what Jesus said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." The ministries rendered to the poor, the suffering, the tempted, the sorrowing, are wrought as to Christ Himself.

Some wife, weary already, her hands over-full with the multiplied cares and duties of her household life, may plead that she has no strength to spend in sympathy and help for others. But it is truly wonderful how light these added burdens seem when they are

taken up in love. Another of these legends of Elizabeth tells that once when she was bearing her cloak full of loaves to the poor, whom she daily fed, her husband met her, and being amazed at the size of the load she bore, looked to see what it was, and found only flowers. The loaves were as light as they were fragrant to the noble woman who carried them for the love she bore her Lord. So always the duties we perform out of love for Him and His suffering ones become easy and pleasant as we take them up. Heaven's benediction rests ever on the home of her who lives to do good.

Scarcely a word has been said thus far of a wife's personal relation to her husband and the duties that spring out of that relation. These are manifold, and yet they are so sacred and delicate that it seems hardly fit to speak or write of them. A few of the more important of these duties belonging to

the wife's part may be merely touched upon.

A true wife gives her husband her fullest confidence. She hides nothing from him. She gives no pledge of secrecy which will seal her lips in his presence. She listens to no words of admiration from others which she may not repeat to him. She expresses to him every feeling, every hope, every desire and yearning, every joy or pain. Then, while she utters every confidence in his ear, she is most careful to speak in no other ear any word concerning the sacred inner life of her home. Are there little frictions or grievances in the wedded life? Has her husband faults which annoy her or cause her pain? Does he fail in this duty or that? Do differences arise which threaten the peace of the home? In the feeling of disappointment and pain, smarting under a sense of injury, a wife may be strongly tempted to seek sympathy by telling her trials to some

intimate friends. Nothing could be more fatal to her own truest interests and to the hope of restored happiness and peace in her home. Grievances complained of outside remain unhealed sores. The wise wife will share her secret of unhappiness with none but her Master, while she strives, in every way that patient love can suggest, to remove the causes of discord or trouble.

Love sees much in a wife that other eyes see not. It throws a veil over her blemishes ; it transfigures even her plainest features. One of the problems of her wedded life is to retain this charm for her husband's eyes as long as she lives, to be lovely to him even when the colour has faded from her cheeks and when the music has gone out of her voice. This is no impossibility ; it is only what is done in every true home. But it cannot be done by the arts of the dressmaker, the milliner, and the hairdresser ; only the arts of

love can accomplish it. The wife who would always hold in her husband's heart the place she held on her wedding-day will never cease striving to be lovely. She will be as careful of her words and acts and her whole bearing toward him as she was before marriage. She will cultivate in her own life whatever is beautiful, whatever is winning, whatever is graceful. She will scrupulously avoid whatever is offensive and unwomanly. She will look well to her personal appearance; no woman can be careless in her dress, slatternly and untidy, and long keep her place on the throne of her husband's life. She will look well to her inner life. She must have mental attractiveness. She will seek to be clothed in spiritual beauty. Her husband must see in her ever-new loveliness as the years move on. As the charms of physical beauty may fade in the toils and vicissitudes of life, there must be more and more beauty of soul to shine out to replace

the attractions that are lost. It has been said that "the wife should always leave something to be revealed only to her husband, some modest charm, some secret grace, reserved solely for his delight and inspiration, like those flowers which give of their sweetness only to the hand that lovingly gathers them." She should always care more to please him than any other person in the world. She should prize more highly a compliment from his lips than from any other human lips. Therefore she should reserve for him the sweetest charms ; she should seek to bring ever to him some new surprise of loveliness ; she should plan pleasures and delights for him. Instead of not caring how she looks or whether she is agreeable or not, when no one but her husband is present, she should always be at her best for him. Instead of being bright and lovely when there is company, then relapsing into languor and silence when the company is gone,

she should seek always to be brightest and loveliest when only he and she sit together in the quiet of the home. Both husband and wife should ever bring their best things to each other.

Again let me say that no wife can overestimate the influence she wields over her husband, or the measure in which his character, his career, and his very destiny are laid in her hands for shaping. The sway which she holds over him is but the sway of love, but it is mighty and resistless. If she retains her power, if she holds her place as queen of his life, she can do with him as she will. Even unconsciously to herself, without any thought of her responsibility, she will exert over him an influence that will go far toward making or marring all his future. If she has no lofty conception of life herself, if she is vain and frivolous, she will only chill his ardour, weaken his resolution, and

draw him aside from any earnest endeavour. But if she has in her soul noble womanly qualities, if she has true thoughts of life, if she has purpose, strength of character, and fidelity to principle, she will be to him an unfailing inspiration toward all that is noble, manly, and Christlike. The high conceptions of life in her mind will elevate his conceptions. Her firm, strong purpose will put vigour and determination into every resolve and act of his. Her purity of soul will cleanse and refine his spirit. Her warm interest in all his affairs and her wise counsel at every point will make him strong for every duty and valiant in every struggle. Her careful domestic management will become an important element of success in his business life. Her bright, orderly, happy home-making will be a perpetual source of joy and peace, and an incentive to nobler living. Her unwavering fidelity, her tender affectionateness,

her womanly sympathy, her beauty of soul, will make her to him God's angel indeed, sheltering, guarding, keeping, guiding, and blessing him. Just in the measure in which she realises this lofty ideal of wifeness will she fulfil her mission and reap the rich harvest of her hopes.

Such is the "woman's lot" that falls on every wife. It is solemn enough to make her very thoughtful and very earnest. How can she make sure that her influence over her husband will be for good, that he will be a better man, more happy and more successful in his career, because she is his wife? Not by any mere moral posturing so as to seem to have lofty purpose and wise thoughts of life; not by any weak resolving to help him and be an uplifting inspiration to him; not by perpetual preaching and lecturing on a husband's duties and on manly character; she can do it only by *being*, in the very depths of her soul, in every

thought and impulse of her heart and in every fibre of her nature, *a true and noble woman*. She will make him not like what she tells him he ought to be, but like what she herself is.

So it all comes back to a question of *character*. She can be a good wife only by being a good woman. And she can be a good woman in the true sense only by being a Christian woman. Nowhere save in Christ can she find the wisdom and strength she needs to meet the solemn responsibilities of wifhood. Only in Christ can she find that rich beauty of soul, that gemming and empearling of the character, which shall make her lovely in her husband's sight when the bloom of youth is gone, when the brilliance has faded out of her eyes and the roses have fled from her cheeks. Only Christ can teach her how to live so as to be blessed and a blessing in her married life.

Nothing in this world is sadder than to compare love's early dreams—what

love meant to be, with the too frequent story of the after-life—what came of the dreams, what was the outcome of love's venture. Why so many sad disappointments? Why so many bridal wreaths fallen into dust? Is there no possibility of making these fair dreams come true, of keeping these flowers lovely and fragrant through all the years?

Yes, but in Christ alone.

The young maiden goes smiling and singing to the marriage altar. Does she know that if she has not Christ with her, she is a lamb going to the sacrifice? Let her tarry at the gateway till she has linked her life to Him who is the First and the Last. Human love is very precious, but it is not enough to satisfy a heart. There will be trials, there will be perplexities, there will be crosses and disappointments, there will be solitudes and sorrows. Then none but Christ will be sufficient. Without Him the way will be dreary. But with His benediction and presence, the flowers

that droop to-day will bloom fresh again to-morrow, and the dreams of early love will build themselves up into a palace of peace and joy for the solace, the comfort, and the shelter of old age.



THE PARENTS' PART



A HOME without children is only a fragment of a home. Its life, however happy, is a song with the sweetest part left out. Where no children come, the husband and wife miss much that is deepest and richest in life. Their wedded joy never realises its fullest measure of tenderness. There are chords in their hearts that are never waked. There are whole fields in their natures that are never brought under culture. There are powers and capacities in their souls that are never developed. They lose many a deep lesson that can be read from no book save from the pages of unfolding child-life. They miss many

an inspiration of purity, of gentleness, of unselfishness, of beauty, for God has so constituted us that only in loving and caring for children are the richest and best things in us drawn out. Then, when old age comes on, how lonely is the childless home, with neither son nor daughter to come back with grateful ministries, to bring solace and comfort to the declining years!

It is a new marriage when the first-born enters the home. It draws the wedded lives together in a closeness they have never known before. It touches chords in their hearts that have lain silent until now. It calls out powers that have never been exercised before. Hitherto unsuspected beauties of character appear. The laughing, heedless girl of a year ago is transformed into a thoughtful woman. The careless, unsettled youth leaps into manly strength and into fixedness of character when he looks

into the face of his own child and takes it to his bosom. New aims rise up before the young parents, new impulses begin to stir in their hearts. Life takes on at once a newer and deeper meaning. The glimpse they have had into its solemn mystery sobers them. The laying in their hands of a new and sacred burden, an immortal life, to be guided and trained by them, brings to them a sense of responsibility that makes them thoughtful. Self is no longer the centre. There is a new object to live for, an object great enough to fill all their life and engross their highest powers. It is only when the children come, that life becomes most real and earnest, and that parents begin to learn to live. We talk about training our children but they train us first, teaching us many a sacred lesson, stirring up in us many a slumbering gift and possibility, calling out many a hidden grace, and disciplining our

wayward powers into strong and harmonious character.

“Children are God’s apostles, day by day
Sent forth to preach of love, of hope, of
peace.”

Our homes would be very cold and dreary without the children. Sometimes we weary of their noise. They certainly bring us a great deal of care and solicitude. They cost us no end of toil. When they are very young, they break our rest many a weary night with their teething and other infantile ailments, and when they grow older, they well-nigh break our hearts many a time with their waywardness. After they come to us, we may as well bid farewell to living for self, to personal ease, and to independence, if we mean to do faithful duty as parents. There are some who therefore look upon the coming of children as a misfortune. They talk about them lightly as “responsibilities.” They regard them as in the way of

their pleasure. They see no blessing in them. But it is cold selfishness that looks upon children in this way. Instead of being hindrances to true and noble living, they are helps. They bring benedictions from heaven when they come, and while they stay they are perpetual benedictions.

“ Ah! what would the world be to us
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us
Worse than the dark before.

What the leaves are to the forest,
With light and air for food,
Ere their sweet and tender juices
Have been hardened into wood—

That to the world are children;
Through them it feels the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier climate
Than reaches the trunks below.”

When the children come, what shall we do with them? What duties do we owe to them? How may we discharge our responsibility? What is the parents' part in the making of the home and the home-life? It is impos-

sible to overstate the importance of these questions.

“ It is no little thing when a fresh soul
And a fresh heart, with their unmeasured
scope
For good, not gravitating earthward yet,
But circling into diviner periods,
Are sent into this world.”

It is a great thing to take these young and tender lives, rich with so many possibilities of beauty, of joy, of power, all of which may be wrecked, and to become responsible for their shaping and training and for the upbuilding of their character. This is what must be thought of in the making of a home. It must be a home in which children will grow up for true and noble life, for God and for heaven. Upon the parents the chief responsibility rests. They are the builders of the home. From them it receives its character, whether good or evil. It will be just what they make it. If it be happy, they must be the authors of the happiness ; if it be unhappy, the blame must

rest with them. Its tone, its atmosphere, its spirit, its influence, it will take from them. They have the making of the home in their own hands, and God holds them responsible for it.

This responsibility rests upon both the parents. There are some fathers who seem to forget that any share of the burden and duty of making the home-life belongs to them. They leave it all to the mothers. They come and go as if they were scarcely more than boarders in their own house, with no active interest in the welfare of their children. They plead the demands of business as the excuse for their neglect. But where is the business that is so important as to justify a man's evasion of the sacred duties which he owes to his own family? There cannot be any other work in this world which a man can do, that will excuse him at God's bar for having neglected the care of his own home and the training of his own children. No success in any

department of the world's work can possibly atone for failure here. No piling up of this world's treasures can compensate a man for the loss of those incomparable jewels, his own children.

In the prophet's parable he said to the king, "As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." May not this be the only plea that some fathers will have to offer when they stand before God without their children: "As I was busy here and there, they were gone"? Men are busy in their worldly affairs, busy pressing their plans and ambitions to fulfilment, busy gathering money to lay up a fortune, busy chasing the world's honours and building up a name, busy in the quest for knowledge; and while they are busy, their children grow up, and when they turn to see if they are getting on well, they are gone. Then they try most earnestly to get them back again, but their intensest efforts avail not. It is too late then to do that blessed work

for them, and upon their lives, which could so easily have been done in their tender years. Dr. Geikie's book, entitled *Life*, opens with these words: "Some things God gives often: some He gives only once. The seasons return again and again, and the flowers change with the months, but youth comes twice to none." Childhood comes but once with its opportunities. Whatever is done to stamp it with beauty must be done quickly.

Then it matters not how capable, how wise, how devoted the mother may be; the fact that she does her part well does not free the father in any degree from his share of the responsibility. Duties cannot be transferred. No other one's faithfulness can excuse or atone for my unfaithfulness. Besides, it is a wrong and an unmanly thing for a strong, capable man, who claims to be the stronger vessel, to seek to put off on a woman, whom he calls the weaker vessel, duties and

responsibilities which clearly belong to himself. There is a certain sense in which the mother is the real homemaker. It is in her hands that the tender life is laid for its first impressions. In all its education and culture she comes the closer to it. Her spirit makes the home atmosphere. Yet from end to end of the Scriptures the law of God makes the father the head of the household, and devolves upon him, as such, the responsibility of the building up of his home, the training of his children, the care of all the sacred interests of his family.

Fathers should awaken to the fact that they have something to do in making the life of their own homes, besides providing food and clothing, and paying taxes and bills. They owe to their homes the best influences of their lives. Whatever other duties press upon them, they should always find time to plan for the good of their own households. The very centre of

every man's life should be his home. Instead of being to him a mere boarding-house where he eats and sleeps, and from which he starts out in the mornings to his work, it ought to be the place where his heart is anchored, where his hopes gather, to which his thoughts turn a thousand times a day, for which he toils and struggles, and into which he brings always the richest and best things of his life. He should realise that he is responsible for the character and the influence of his home-life, and that if it should fail to be what it ought to be, the blame and guilt must lie upon his soul.

Socrates used to say that he wondered how men who were so careful of the training of a colt were so indifferent to the education of their own children. Yet even in these Christian days men are found, men professing to be followers of Christ and to believe in the superiority of life itself to all things else, who give infinitely more thought

and pains to the raising of cattle, the growing of crops, the building up of businesses, than to the training of their children. Something must be crowded out of every earnest, busy life. No one can do everything that comes to his hand. But it will be a fatal mistake if any father allows his duties to his home to be crowded out. They should rather have the first place. Anything else had better be neglected than his children. Even religious work in the kingdom of Christ at large must not interfere with one's religious work in the kingdom of Christ in his home. No man is required by the vows and the spirit of his consecration to keep other men's vineyards so faithfully that he cannot keep his own. That a man has been a devoted pastor, or a diligent church-officer, or a faithful Sunday-school superintendent or teacher, will not atone for the fact that he was an unfaithful father.

Definitions are important. It will

help very greatly in working out the problem of the home-life to settle precisely the object of a home, and what it is intended to accomplish for those who are to grow up in it. When boys are to be trained for soldiers, a military academy is what is required. If they are to serve in the navy, they are sent to a naval school. If a young girl desires to study art, she does not go to a college of music, but to an art-school. If she wishes to study the science of medicine, she enters not a theological but a medical school. The course of study, the instruction, the tone and spirit of these schools, are not the same in all, but in each are adapted to produce the end desired. If we know definitely what a home ought to do for the children who are brought up in it, we can tell better what the training, the instruction, and the influences should be.

What, then, is the object of a home? What is its mission? What is it de-

signed to accomplish? What kind of results is it expected to yield? We know the design of a blacksmith's shop; articles and implements of iron are forged and fashioned there. We know what a marble-cutter's yard is for; forms of grace and beauty are there chiselled from the block. We know what a great linen factory is designed to do; its shuttles weave the fabrics which men and women are to wear. When an artist fits up a studio we know what kind of work he expects to send out; on canvas or in marble he will fix the beautiful creations of his genius, and send them forth to give inspirations of loveliness to others. In every kind of shop or factory or mill which men build, they have some definite design to accomplish, some specific results to be achieved. What are the results which homes are meant to produce? What forms of beauty, what fabrics of loveliness, are they expected to yield?

We begin to think of these questions, and we say, "A home is a place in which to sleep and get one's meals. It is a place in which to rest when one is tired, to stay and be nursed when one is sick; a place in which to rock the babies and let the children romp and play; a place to receive one's friends and keep the treasures one gathers."

Is that all? Someone asked a young lady who had just completed her education, what her aim in life now was, and she replied, "To breathe." Her reply may have been made in jest, yet there are many who have no higher aim in living. And about as high an aim as most married people have in their home-making is to have as good and showy a house as they can afford, furnished in as rich a style as their means will warrant, and then to live in it as comfortably as they are able, without too much exertion or self-denial.

But the true idea of a home is, that it is a place for growth. It is a place for the parents themselves to grow in—to grow into beauty of character, to grow in refinement, in knowledge, in strength, in wisdom, in patience, gentleness, kindness, and all the Christian graces and virtues. It is a place for children to grow—to grow into physical vigour and health, and to be trained in all that shall make them true and noble men and women. That is, just as the artist's studio is built and furnished for the definite purpose of preparing and sending out forms of beauty, so is a true home set up, and all its life ordered, for the definite purpose of training, building up, and sending out human lives fashioned into symmetry, filled with lofty impulses and aspirations, governed by principles of rectitude and honour, and fitted to enter upon the duties and struggles of life with wisdom and strength.

If this be the true object and design in setting up a home, the question arises: What sort of home-culture and home-education will produce these results? What influences will best fashion human infancy and childhood into strong, noble manhood, and lovely, queenly womanhood? The smith furnishes his shop with the appliances and tools which are best fitted to do the work he intends to do. The gardener prepares his soil, sows his seeds, waters his plants, regulates the temperature, and provides just the conditions adapted to promote the growth of his flowers. What sort of implements do we need in training tender lives? What are the conditions which will best promote growth in human souls? What kind of home-life must we try to make, if we would build up noble character in our children?

For one thing, the house itself in which we live, with its surroundings

and adornments, is important. Every home-influence, even the very smallest, works itself into the heart of childhood and then reappears in the opening character. Homes are the real schools in which men and women are trained, and fathers and mothers are the real teachers and builders of life. The poet's song that charms the world is but the sweetness of a mother's love flowing out in rhythmic measure through the soul of her child. The lovely things which men make in their days of strength are but the reproductions in embodied forms of the lovely thoughts that were whispered in their hearts in tender youth. The artist's picture is but a touch of a mother's beauty wrought out on the canvas. There is nothing in all the influences and surroundings of the home of tender childhood so small that it does not leave its touch of beauty or of marring upon the life.

Even the natural scenery in which a

child is reared has much to do with the tone and hue of its future character. Beautiful things, spread before the eye of childhood, print themselves on the sensitive heart. The mountains, the sea, lovely valleys, picturesque landscapes, forests, flowers, all have their influence in shaping the life. Still greater is the influence of the house itself in which a child is brought up. This subject has not yet received the attention which it merits. As people advance in civilisation and refinement, they build better houses. In great cities the criminal and degraded classes live in wretched hovels. One of the first steps in any wise effort to elevate the low and vicious elements of society must be to provide better dwellings for them. When a whole family is crowded into one room, neither physical nor moral health is possible. In a wretched, filthy apartment in a dark court or miserable alley, it is impossible for children to grow up in purity and re-

finement. One of the things for true philanthropy to do is, to devise some plan by which better homes may be provided for the poor. Until this is done, the leprous spots in our great cities can never be healed.

Wherever a child grows up, it carries in its character the subtle impressions of the home in which it lived. The house itself, its shape and appearance, its interior arrangement and decoration, its furniture, its external surroundings, —brick walls and paved streets, or green grass and flowers,—its outlook, on the majestic sea, on the grand mountains, on barren stretches or picturesque landscape,—all these have their influence on the character, and help to determine its final sphere. In the choosing and preparation of a home, this fact must not be overlooked. The educating power of beauty must not be forgotten. The surroundings should be cheerful and attractive. The house itself, whether large or small, should be

neat and tasteful. Its ornaments and decorations should be simple, yet chaste and pleasing to the eye. The rooms in which our children are to sleep and play and live, we should make just as bright and lovely as our means can make them. If we can afford but two rooms for our home, we should put into them just as much educating power as possible. Children are fond of pictures, and pictures in a house, if they be pure and good, have a wondrous influence in refining their lives. In these days of cheap art, when prints and engravings can be purchased at such small cost, there is scarcely anyone who may not have on the walls of his house some bright bits of beauty which will prove an inspiration to his children. Every home can at least be made bright, clean, sweet, and beautiful, even if bare of ornament and decoration. It is almost impossible for a child to grow up into loveliness of character, gentleness of disposition, and purity of

heart amid scenes of slovenliness, untidiness, repulsiveness, and filthiness. But a home clean, tasteful, with simple adornments and pleasant surroundings, is an influence of incalculable value in the education of children.

But the house is not all. Four walls do not make a home, though built of marble and covered with rarest decorations. A family may be reared in a palace filled with the loveliest works of art, and yet the influences may not be such as leave blessing. The home-life itself is more important than the house and its adornments. By the home-life is meant all the intercourse of the members of the family. It is a happy art, the art of living together in tender love. It must begin with the parents themselves. Unless their life together is loving and true, it will be impossible for them to make their home-life so. They give the keynote to the music. If their intercourse is marked by bickerings and quarrel-

lings, they must expect their children to imitate them. If gentleness and affectionateness characterise their bearing toward each other, the same spirit will rule in the family life. For their children's sake, if for no other, parents should cultivate their own lives, and train themselves to live together in the most Christlike way. They will very soon learn that good rules and wise counsels from their lips amount to but little, unless their own lives give example and illustration of the things thus commended.

We enter some homes, and they are full of sweetness, as summer fields are of fragrance. All is order, beauty, gentleness, and peace. We enter other homes, and we find jarring, selfishness, harshness, and disorder. This difference is not accidental. There are influences at work in each home which yield just the result we see in each. There are different kinds of shells in the sea. Some of them are very coarse,

ugly, and unsightly outside; others are very lovely, like the nautilus, "many-chambered, softly curved, pearl-adorned, glowing with imprisoned rainbows." But each shell exactly corresponds with the nature of the creature that lives in it. Each little creature builds a house just like itself; indeed, it builds its own life into it. In like manner every home takes its colour and tone from its makers. A refined spirit puts refinement into a home, though it be only one plain room without an ornament or a luxury; a coarse nature makes the home coarse, though it be a palace filled with all the elegances that wealth can buy. No home-life can ever be better than the life of those who make it. It is nothing less nor more than the spirit of the parents, like an atmosphere, filling all the house.

What should this home-spirit be? First of all, I would name the law of *unselfishness* as one of its essential

elements. Where selfishness prevails, there can be no real happiness. Indeed, there is no deep, true, and holy love where selfishness rules. As love grows, selfishness dies out in the heart. Love is always ready to deny itself, to give, and to sacrifice, just in the measure of its sincerity and intensity. Perfect love is perfect self-forgetfulness. Hence, where there is love in a home, unselfishness is the law. Each forgets self and lives for the others. But when there is selfishness, it mars the joy. One selfish soul will destroy the sweetness of the life of any home. It is like an ugly thorn-bush in the midst of a garden of flowers.

It was selfishness that destroyed the first home and blighted all the loveliness of Paradise, and it has been blighting lovely things in earth's homes ever since. We need to guard against this spirit. Self-culture on the part of the parents is therefore an urgent duty and necessity. Selfishness in them will

spread the same unhappy spirit through all the household life. They must be, not in seeming but in reality, what they want their children to be. The lessons they would teach they must themselves live.

Another essential element of true home-life is *affectionateness*; not love only, but the cultivation of love in the daily life of the family, the expression of love in words and acts. This reminder is not altogether needless. There are homes where the love is deep and true; the members of the family would die for each other; when grief or pain comes to one of them, the hearts of all the others give out their warmest expressions of affection. There is no question as to the reality and strength of the attachment that binds the household together. Yet in their ordinary intercourse there is a great lack of those exhibitions of kindly feeling which are the sweetest blossomings of love. Husband and wife pass

weeks without one of those endearing expressions which have such power to warm the heart. Meals are eaten in haste and in dreary silence, as if the company that surround the table had nothing in common, and had only been brought together by accident. The simplest courtesies that even polite strangers never fail to extend to each other are altogether omitted in the household intercourse. Ill manners, that would not be tolerated for a moment in the ordinary associations of society, are oftentimes allowed to find their way into this holiest circle.

This should not be so. The heart's love should be permitted to flow out in word and deed. There are such homes. The very atmosphere as one enters the door seems laden with fragrance. The conversation is bright, sparkling, cheerful, courteous. The warmth of love makes itself felt in continuous influence. No loud, harsh tones are ever heard. A delightful

thoughtfulness pervades all the family life. Everyone is watchful of the feelings of the others. There is a respectfulness of manner and bearing that is shown even toward the youngest, and toward servants. Without any of the extravagances of expression which mark the intercourse of some families, there is here a genuine kindness of manner which is very charming even to the casual visitor, and which for the hearts of the household has a wondrous warming and satisfying power. All the amenities and courtesies of true politeness are carefully observed, touched also by a tenderness which shows that they come from the heart.

This is the true home spirit. It needs culture. Even the best of us are in danger of growing careless in our own family life. Our very familiarity with our home companions is apt to render us forgetful, and when we have grown forgetful and have dropped

the little tendernesses out of our home intercourse, soon the love itself will begin to decay, and what the end may be of coldness and desolateness no one can foretell.

The home-life should also be made bright and full of sunshine. The courtesy of the true home is not stiff and formal, but sincere, simple, and natural. Children need an atmosphere of gladness. Law should not make its restraints hang like chains upon them. Sternness and coldness should have no place in home-life or in family government. No child can ever grow up into its richest and best development in a home which is gloomy and unhappy. No more do plants need sunshine and air than children need joy and gladness. Unhappiness stunts them, so that their sweetest graces never come out.

Someone says: "Make your children happy in their youth; let distinction come to them, if it will, after well-spent

and well-remembered years." Wise parents will see that their home possesses the essential conditions of happiness. They will sympathise with their children, and take care never to grow away from them in spirit, though carrying the weightiest responsibilities or wearing the highest honours among men. The busiest father should find at least a few moments every day to romp with his children. A man who is too stately and dignified to play with his baby, or carry his little ones pick-a-back, or help them in their sports and games, not only lacks one of the finest elements of true greatness, but fails in one of his duties to his children. For this is one of the points at which the mother should not be left alone. She is with her children all the day, and carries the burden of their entertainment for long hours without rest or pause. Surely it is only just to her that for the little time the father is in the home he should relieve her?

Besides, he owes it to his children, for happiness is one of their inalienable rights under his roof and at his hands. Then in no other way can he so enshrine himself in their hearts as by giving them daily a few precious moments of gladness associated with himself, which shall endear him to them for ever. No father can afford to let his children grow up without weaving himself into the memories of their golden youth.

Norman Macleod says: "O sunshine of youth, let it shine on! Let love flow out fresh and full, unchecked by any rule but what love creates, and pour itself down without stint into the young heart. Make the days of boyhood happy; for other days of labour and sorrow must come, when the blessing of those dear eyes and clasping hands and sweet caressings will, next to the love of God whence they flow, save the man from losing faith in the human heart, help to deliver him from

the curse of selfishness, and be an Eden in the evening when he is driven forth into the wilderness of life." Another writes: "The richest heritage that parents can give is a happy childhood, with tender memories of father and mother. This will brighten the coming days when the children have gone out from the sheltering home, will be a safeguard in times of temptation, and a conscious help amid the stern realities of life."

Whatever parents may do for their children, they should at least make their childhood sunny and tender. Their young lives are so delicate that harshness may mar their beauty for ever, and so sensitive that every influence that falls upon them leaves its trace, which grows into the character either as a grace or a blemish. A happy childhood stores away sunshine in the chambers of the heart which brightens the life to its close. An unhappy childhood may so fill the life's

fountains with bitterness as to sadden all the after years.

“ Wait not till the little hands are at rest
Ere you fill them full of flowers ;
Wait not for the crowning tuberose
To make sweet the last sad hours ;
But while, in the busy household band,
Your darlings still need your guiding hand,
Oh, fill their lives with sweetness !

Remember the homes whence the light has
fled,
Where the rose has faded away ;
And the love that glows in youthful hearts,
Oh, cherish it while you may !
And make your home a garden of flowers,
Where joy shall bloom through childhood's
hours,
And fill young lives with sweetness !”

Something must be said concerning the training of children. It is to be kept in mind that the object of the home is to build up manhood and womanhood. This work of training belongs to the parents, and cannot be transferred. It is a most delicate and responsible duty, one from which a thoughtful soul would shrink with awe

and fear, were it not for the assurance of divine help. Yet there are many parents who do not stop to think of the responsibility which is laid upon them when a little child enters their home.

Look at it a moment. What is so feeble, so helpless, so dependent, as a new-born babe? Yet look onward and see what a stretch of life lies before this feeble infant away into the eternities. Think of the powers folded up in this helpless form, and what the possible outcome may be. Who can tell what skill there may be lying unconscious yet in these tiny fingers, what eloquence or song in these little lips, what intellectual faculties in this brain, what power of love or sympathy in this heart? The parents are to take this infant and nurse it into manhood or womanhood, to draw out these slumbering powers and teach it to use them. That is, God wants a man trained for a great mission in the world,

and He puts into the hands of a young father and mother a little babe, and bids them nurse it and train it for Him until the man is ready for his mission ; or at least to have sole charge of his earliest years, when the first impressions must be made which shall mould and shape his whole career.

When we look at a little child and remember all this, what a dignity surrounds the work of caring for it ! Does God give to angels any work grander than this ?

Women sigh for fame. They would be sculptors, and chisel out of the cold stone forms of beauty to fill the world with admiration of their skill. Or they would be poets, to write songs to thrill a nation and to be sung around the world. But is any work in marble so great as hers who has an immortal life laid in her hands to shape for its destiny ? Is the writing of any poem in musical lines so noble a work as the training of the powers of a human

soul into harmony? Yet there are women who regard the duties and cares of motherhood as too obscure and commonplace tasks for their hands. So when a baby comes, a nurse is hired, who for a weekly compensation agrees to take charge of the little one, that the mother may be free from such drudgery, and devote herself to the nobler and worthier things that she finds to do!

Is the following indictment too strong?—"A mother will secure from the nearest registry office a girl who undertakes to relieve her of the charge of her little one, and will hand over to this mere hireling, this ignorant stranger, the soul-mothering which God has entrusted to her. She has mothered the body—anyone will do to mother the soul! So the little one is left in the hands of this hireling, placed under her constant influence, subjected to the subtle impress of her spirit, to draw into its inner being the life, be it what

it may, of this uncultured soul. She wakens its first thoughts, rouses its earliest emotions, brings the delicate action of motives to bear upon the will—generally in such hands a compound force of bullying and bribing, mean fear and mean desire—tends it, plays with it, lives with it; and thus the young mother is free to dress and drive, to visit and receive, to enjoy balls and operas, discharging her trust for an immortal life by proxy! Is there any malfeasance in office, in these days of dishonour, like unto this? Our women crowd the churches to draw the inspiration of religion for their daily duties, and then prove recreant to the first of all fidelities, the most solemn of all responsibilities. We hear fashionable young mothers boast that they are not tied down to their nurseries, but are free to keep in the old gay life; as though there was no shame to the soul of womanhood therein.”

Oh that God would give every mother

a vision of the glory and splendour of the work that is given to her when a babe is placed in her bosom to be nursed and trained! Could she have but one glimpse into the future of that life as it reaches on into eternity; could she look into its soul to see its possibilities; could she be made to understand her own personal responsibility for the training of this child, for the development of its life, and for its destiny,—she would see that in all God's world there is no other work so noble and so worthy of her best powers, and she would commit to no other hands the sacred and holy trust given to her.

This is not the place to present theories of family government: I am trying only to define the parents' part in the making of the home. So far as their children are concerned, their part is to train them for life, to send them out of the home ready for whatever duty or mission God may have ready for them. Only this much may

be said—whatever may be done in the way of governing, teaching, or training, theories are not half so important as the parents' lives. They may teach the most beautiful things; but if the child does not see these things in the life of the parent, he will not consider them important enough to be adopted in his own life. To quote here the words of another: "You cannot give your child what you do not possess: you can scarcely help giving your child what you do possess. If you are a coward, you cannot make him brave; if he becomes brave, it will be in spite of you. If you are a deceiver, you cannot make him truthful; if you are selfish, you cannot make him generous; if you are self-willed, you cannot make him yielding; if you are passionate, you cannot make him temperate and self-controlled. The parent's life flows into the child's life. We impress ourselves upon our children less by what we teach them than by what we are.

Your child is a sensitive plate ; you are sitting before the camera : if you do not like the picture, the fault is with yourself. One angry word from your lips will outweigh a hundred rebukes of anger. One selfish deed, one social deception, will do more to mar than a hundred homilies can do to make."

What we want to do with our children is not merely to control them and keep them in order, but to implant true principles deep in their hearts which shall rule their whole lives ; to shape their character from within into Christlike beauty, and to make of them noble men and women, strong for battle and for duty. They are to be trained rather than governed. Growth of character, not merely good behaviour, is the object of all home governing and teaching. Therefore, the home *influence* is far more important than the home laws, and the parents' lives are of more moment than their teachings.

Men say that into the strings of an old Cremona violin the life of the master who once played upon it has passed, so that it is as an imprisoned soul, breathing out at every skilful touch. This is only a beautiful poetic fancy. But when a little child in a mother's bosom is loved, nursed, caressed, held close to her heart, prayed over, wept over, talked with, for days, weeks, months, years, it is no mere fancy to say that the mother's life has indeed passed into the child's soul. What it becomes is determined by what the mother is. The early years settle what its character will be, and these are the mother's years.

Oh, mothers of young children, I bow before you in reverence! Your work is most holy! You are fashioning the destinies of immortal souls! The powers folded up in the little ones that you hushed to sleep in your bosoms last night are powers that shall exist for ever. You are prepar-

ing them for their immortal destiny and influence. Be faithful! Take up your sacred burden reverently! Be sure that your heart is pure and that your life is sweet and clean! The Persian apologue says that the lump of clay was fragrant because it had lain on a rose. Let your life be as the rose, and then your child as it lies upon your bosom will absorb the fragrance. If there is no sweetness in the rose, the clay will not be perfumed.

History is full of illustrations of the power of parental influence. It either brightens or darkens the child's life to the close. It is either a benediction which makes every day better and happier, or it is a curse which leaves blight and sorrow on every hour. Thousands have been saved from drifting away by the holy memories of happy, godly homes, or, when they have drifted away, have been drawn back by the same charm of power.

There are no chains so strong as the cords that a true home throws about the heart. John Randolph said: "I used to be called a Frenchman, because I took the French side in politics. But though this is false, I should have been a French atheist, had it not been for one recollection, and that was the memory of the time when my departed mother used to take my little hands in hers, and, causing me to bow at her knee, taught me to pray, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'" Is it not worth while for parents to seek to have such abiding, strong, and blessed influence over their children's lives? Just as far-reaching and as powerful is the evil influence if parents are unholy. When the morning sun rises, the shadow of Mount Etna is cast far across the lovely island of Sicily, resting on gardens and fields and the people's homes, a shadow always of gloom, a shadow as of an ever-imminent terror. So over the life of

a child to its close hangs the shadow of an ungodly parental influence. What parent wants to project such fatal gloom over the future years of the child he loves so well?

When I think of the sacredness and the responsibility of parents, I do not see how any father and mother can look upon the little child that has been given to them, and consider their duty to it, and not be driven to God by the very weight of the burden that rests upon them, to cry to Him for help and wisdom. When an impenitent man bends over the cradle of his firstborn, when he begins to realise that here is a soul which he must train, teach, fashion, and guide through this world to God's bar, how can he longer stay away from God? Let him, as he bends over his child's crib to kiss its sweet lips, ask himself: "Am I true to my child while I shut God out of my own life? Am I able to meet this solemn responsibility of parenthood all alone,

in my unaided human weakness, without divine help?" I know not how any father can honestly meet these questions as he looks upon his innocent, helpless child, given to him to shelter, to keep, to guide, and not fall instantly upon his knees and give himself to God. Rather would I see my own little ones laid away in the grave to-morrow, than attempt to train them, teach them, and lead them on, without the help of God.

“Better be out on the boundless sea, without knowledge of the stars above or the currents beneath; better be in the untrodden forest, without pathway or compass; better be on the trackless desert without a landmark in all the horizon, nothing but burning sand under foot and brazen sky overhead,—than to be on this sea, in this wilderness, upon this desert of our life, with a human destiny entrusted to your care and no guiding God to pilot you to Him and the desired haven! But with God's presence, help, and guidance, even this

great and responsible work shall not crush you nor make you afraid."

There is an old picture which represents a woman who has fallen asleep at her wheel, in very weariness, as she toils to fulfil her household duties, and the angels have come and are softly finishing her task while she sleeps. Let parents be faithful; let them do their best. What they cannot do, the angels will come and finish while they sleep. Night by night they will come and correct the day's mistakes, and, if need be, do all the poor, faulty work over again. Then at last, when the parents sleep in death, dropping out of their hands the sacred work they have been doing for their children, again God's angels will come, take up the unfinished work, and carry it on to completeness.

THE CHILDREN'S PART

3.

“WHAT would I not give,” said Charles Lamb, “to call my dear mother back to earth for a single day, to ask her pardon, upon my knees, for all those acts by which I grieved her gentle spirit !”

Many another sensitive heart has felt the same pain when standing by a parent's grave, and has sighed in like manner for an opportunity to speak its penitence and its cries for pardon into the dead ear. But filial love blossoms out too late when it waits till the parental ear is beyond the reach of human cry. The time for the child to show his affection and gratitude is along the years when the father

and mother are living and treading earth's paths with him. If he then strews thorns for their feet, what does it avail that he brings flowers for their burial? If he dishonours them by disobedience, by unkindness, by unworthy conduct, by sin, what does it avail that he sets up the costly monument over their graves, cutting in the white marble his praises of their virtues and their faithfulness?

The place for the flowers is along the hard paths of toil and care and burden-bearing. The best monument for grateful affection to erect is a noble, beautiful life, a joy to the heart and an honour in the eyes of fond parental hope. Kindness to the living is better than bitter tears of penitence over the dead.

The debt of children to a true home is one that never can be overpaid, or even fully discharged. It dates from the first moment of their being; it accumulates as the days and years

pass on. There are the years of helpless infancy, with their solitudes, their broken nights and toilsome days, their unsleeping thoughtfulness and unselfish sacrifice, their gentle nursing and patient watching. There are the years of training and teaching, when the bodily powers are being developed, the feet taught to walk, the hands to handle, the tongue to speak; when the mental faculties are being drawn out, and when all the functions of life are being trained to their several uses. There are the times of sickness, when the lamp never goes out in the room by night, and the pale, weary watcher accepts no relief till the danger is past. There are long years of anxieties, of prayers, of tears, of hopes, of disappointments, of sacrifices, of pains and toils. The best that a child can do for true parents will never repay them for what they have done for him.

The question, therefore, "What is the children's part in the home-life?"

is no unimportant one. They have a place in making the home joy. Dreary is the household life where no children ever come; very lonely and desolate is the home where they come and stay for a time and then go away. Unconsciously, the children have a most sacred and holy part in the home-life from their earliest infancy. Then all along their years, while they remain under the old roof, and after they leave its shelter to set up homes of their own, they have duties to perform and obligations to render to those who gave them birth and watched over their helpless years.

The little wheels of a watch do not seem to be important, yet if one of them is broken, or if it is bent, or if it fails to perform its part, all the wheels will be arrested in their motion and the watch will stop. If the smallest wheel goes wrong, moves too fast or too slow, the hands on the dial likewise go wrong. There is no part

of the delicate machinery of the watch so small that it makes no difference how it does its duty.

When the question is asked, "What part have the children in making the home-life?" someone may answer, "The children cannot do anything, at least while they are small, to aid in making the home what it should be. They cannot help make money to buy bread. They cannot do the work. When they grow older they can be of use, but when they are young all they can do is to be rocked and petted while they are babies, and then as they grow larger go to school and eat and romp and wear out clothes. They cannot help in any way; they are only burdens."

But wait a minute. They are not so useless, after all. They are like the tiny wheels of the watch. They may not look large enough to be of any use, and yet there is not a child in any true home so small as to have

no influence. There is not even a baby that does not unconsciously affect all the home-life by its coming. Indeed, every baby is an emperor, with crown and sceptre, and from its throne on the mother's bosom it rules all the house. The father, out at his work in the busy world, has a lighter, warmer heart because he is thinking of the baby at home. The mother gets through all her work more easily because her baby is sleeping in its crib or kicking up its heels on the floor beside her. The boys and girls are gentler, more quiet and more thoughtful, since baby came. No one can say that any child is too small to have a part in making the home-life. Of course a baby's part is done unconsciously, and it is not to be held responsible, as are the children who have grown older. This chapter is not addressed to babies, but to those who are of sufficient age to know what they ought to do and to try to do it.

Here is the question on which every child living in a parent's house should think much: "*What is my part* in making this home what it should be?"

You know what a true home ought to be. It ought to be a place where love rules. It ought to be beautiful, bright, joyous, full of tenderness and affection, a place in which all are growing happier and better each day. There should never be any discord, any wrangling, any angry words or bitter feelings. The home-life should be a harmonious song, without one jarring note, day after day. The home, no matter how humble, how plain, how small it is, should be the dearest spot on the earth to each member of the family. It should be made so happy a place and so full of love that no matter where one may wander in after years, in any of the ends of the earth, his home should still hold its invisible lines of influence about him, and should ever draw resistlessly upon his heart.

It ought to be the one spot in all the earth to which he would first turn in trouble or in danger. It should be the refuge of his soul in every trial and grief.

To make a home such a power in one's after-life, it must be happy in the days of childhood and youth. Have childhood and youth any responsibility for the realising of this ideal of home? Is it altogether and only the parents' work? So far as infancy is concerned there certainly is no responsibility. The father and mother must do all, and the little one is only a tender and fragile plant growing in the garden which parental hands tend. But with the years of consciousness comes responsibility, and then every child helps either to make or mar the home blessedness and the home joy.

What should the child-life be that would perfectly fulfil its part in the home? We have a model. Once there was a home on earth in which a

Child lived, whose life was spotless and faultless, and who realised all that is lovely, tender, and true in child-life. If we only knew how Jesus lived as a child in that Nazarene home, it would help other children to live aright. We know that He helped to make the home happy. He never caused His parents one anxiety, one pang, one moment of shame. He never failed in a duty. We know that He did His part well in the making of that home, and if we only had a memoir of His years of childhood telling us what He did, every other child could study it and imitate His example.

We have no such memoir, but we have one single glimpse into His home-life which reveals a great deal. We see Him at twelve years of age. He is in the temple at Jerusalem. He has been lost from His parents in the great caravan returning from the Pass-over, and when they find Him again we are told in one brief sentence that

“He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” Then for eighteen years longer He remained in that home; we have not another word about Him; not another glimpse do we get of Him or of His home; Scripture is silent concerning Him all those years. We have only this one sentence about the way in which He lived in that home: “He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” Yet this one glimpse really reveals the whole history of those years. He was subject to His parents.

Remember who this Child was. It was over His birth that the angels sang their song: “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, goodwill to men.” He was the eternal Son of God. He had made all the worlds. He had adorned the heavens. Him all the hosts of glory obeyed. Yet He humbled Himself, veiled His glory, and dwelt in a lowly home of earth

for thirty years. He submitted Himself to earthly parents and obeyed them. Then He wrought Himself with His own hands to help support the home. No details are given—just this one word; but we can easily fill out the picture for ourselves. We see, for thirty years, from infancy to full manhood, this holy Child exhibiting toward His parents the most perfect dutifulness, obedience, honour, and helpfulness. He obeyed them, not by constraint but cheerfully, all these years. He did His part well in the making of *that* home.

This example is the answer to the question of this chapter; and what is it but this, that the *great duty of childhood in the home-life is to obey*? He was *subject* unto them. Although He was the Son of God, yet He learned obedience to human parents. He did their will, and not His own. He had entered upon the affairs of His Heavenly Father. In the temple He

had said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"¹ Yet immediately after saying this, He went back to His own home to take and keep for eighteen years more the place of a child. Hence we conclude that the Father's business for Him all those years was subjection to His earthly parents. That was the work which was given Him to do for that time. He had come to the earth on a great mission, the greatest ever undertaken or performed in the universe, yet the place in which He was prepared for that mission was not in any of the fine schools of the world, but in a lowly home; not at the feet of rabbis and philosophers, but with His own mother for His teacher. What

¹ The Revised Version renders it "in My Father's house," but gives in the margin as the literal rendering "in the things of My Father." Dean Alford says: "Primarily in the house of My Father; but we must not exclude the wider sense, which embraces *all places and employments of My Father's.*"

an honour does this fact put upon home! What a dignity upon motherhood!

It would seem that no argument after that were needed to prove to children the duty and the dignity of obedience to parents. We take our place far back in the history of the world; we stand under the cloud-crowned, fire-wreathed Sinai, and amidst its awful thunderings we hear the voice of God proclaim: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." But even all these scenes of majesty—the voice of Jehovah, the burning mountain, the cloud and the thunder—did not give to this command such sacred authority, such solemn importance, as when Jesus, the Son of God, for thirty years in a lowly home on earth, submitted Himself to human parents and obeyed their commands.

Does any question ever arise as to

the authority of this divine word in the Decalogue? This picture of Jesus obeying it in that Galilean home is sufficient answer.

Does the thought ever arise, "Is it manly—is it womanly—to yield to my parents, to have no will of my own, to do their bidding in all things?" Behold Jesus till thirty years of age yielding to the control of His human parents, asking them continually what they would have Him to do, referring every question to them. Was it manly in Him? Can it then be *unmanly* in any son of earthly parents in this world? Where shall we learn manliness if not in the life and from the example of Jesus? Thomas Hughes says, in speaking of manliness, and of courage as one of its elements: "Tenacity of will lies at the root of all courage, but courage can only rise into true manliness when the will is surrendered; and the more absolute the surrender of the will the more

perfect will be the temper of our courage and the strength of our manliness." There is nothing manlier in all Christ's life than His quiet subjection to His parents in that cottage at Nazareth, though conscious of His divine origin and nature and of His glorious mission. There is no manlier thing ever seen on this earth than a man in the prime of his strength and power showing deference and love to a humble parent, and yielding obedience and honour as if he were a little child.

Does some evil spirit suggest that such subjection to parents keeps a child down, puts chains on his freedom, keeps him under restraint, and hinders him from rising into grandeur and nobleness of character? Did it have such an effect upon Jesus? Did the thirty years of submission in His home cramp and fetter His manhood? Did His subjection break His power, repress the glorious aspiration of His soul, stunt and hinder the development

of His life, and make His career a failure in the end? We know well that it did not. There was a preparation for His mission which, as a man, He could have gotten in no other way but by the discipline He obtained in His own home. No human powers were ever yet cramped or stunted or repressed by taking the place of subjection in a true home. Rather, that life will always be more or less a failure which in its earlier years does not learn to submit and be ruled. No one is fitted for ruling others who has not first learned in his place to obey.

Someone again may say: "My parents are very plain people. They have never known much of the world. They have missed the opportunities that I am enjoying, and therefore have not intelligence or wisdom or education sufficient to direct my life."

We have only to remember again who Jesus was. Was there ever any human parent in this world who was

really worthy or capable, in this sense, to be His teacher, to guide and control His life? Was there ever, in any home on earth, such a distance between parents and child as there was in that home at Nazareth? Yet this Son of God, with all His wisdom, and knowledge, and grandeur of character, did not hesitate to submit Himself to the training of that peasant mother and that peasant father. Shall any other child, in view of this model child-life at home, assert that he is too far advanced, too superior in knowledge and culture, too wise and intelligent, to submit to the parents God has given him? If Christ could be taught and trained by His lowly parents for His glorious mission, where is the true parent who is not worthy to be his own child's guide and teacher?

This, then, is the part of every child in the home-life. This is the way in which children can do the most to make the home true and happy. It is the

part of the parents to guide, to train, to teach, to mould the character. God holds them responsible for this. They must qualify themselves to do it. Then it is the part of the children to accept this guidance, teaching, training, and shaping at the parents' hands. When both faithfully do their part, the home-life will be a sweet song of love; where either fails, there will be discordant life, and the angel of blessing will not leave his benison of peace.

Such, in general, is the central feature of the children's part in the home-life—to recognise their parents as the head, and to yield to them in all things. This is not meant to make slaves of them. The home-life I am depicting is ruled by love; the parental authority is exercised in love; it seeks only the highest good of each child; it asks nothing unreasonable or unjust. If it withholds things that a child desires, it is either because it is not able to grant them, or because the

granting of them would work injury rather than good. If it seeks to guide the tender feet in a way that is not the chosen way, nor the most easy and pleasant way, it is because a ripper wisdom sees that it is the best way. True parental guidance is love grown wise. It is an imitation of God's government. He is our Father, and we are His children. We are to obey Him absolutely and without question. Yet it is no blind obedience. We know that He loves us with a love deep, tender, unchanging. We know that He is wiser than we, infinitely wiser, and can never err. We know that when He denies a request the granting of it would be an unkindness; when He leads us in another path than the one we had marked out, His is the right way; when He chastens or corrects, there is love in His chastisement or correction. We know that in all His government and discipline He is seeking only our highest good.

Our whole duty, therefore, as God's children is to yield ourselves to His will. True human parenthood is a faint copy of the divine, and to its direction and guidance children are to submit.

This subjection implies *obedience to the commands* of parents. Thus Paul interprets it: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right;" and again, "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." It is right on moral grounds, and this ought to settle the matter. True manliness never wants to know more than that a thing is right, is duty. Devotion to duty, at whatever cost, is one of the first elements of heroism. It is *right* that children should obey their parents, and no further question need be asked, no further reason for obeying need be sought.

But it is also well-pleasing unto the Lord. He is watching how every

child acts, and He is well-pleased when He sees obedience. This ought to furnish an additional motive, if any were needed. The thought that doing a certain duty faithfully causes emotions of pleasure and approval in the heart of God certainly ought to be a wonderful spur and incentive to heroic fidelity.

This obedience is to extend to "all things," the things that are agreeable and the things that are disagreeable. Though he may be unjustly treated, the child is not to rebel. He may know that his parent is unkind or oppressive, or even cruel, but his duty is not thereby changed. Wrong on the parent's part will never justify wrong on the part of the child. There is only one qualification; children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." If the parent commands the child to commit a sin, of course it is not to obey. Salome was under no moral obligation to obey when her cruel and bloody mother bade her ask for the

head of John the Baptist. No human authority is ever binding when it bids us break a divine law. No true parent will knowingly ask anything of his child that is not right; hence the law of parental government requires obedience in all things.

It is told of the son of General Havelock, that one day, when he was a boy, his father, having some business to do, left him on London Bridge and bade him wait there till he came back. The father was detained and forgot his son, not returning to the Bridge all the day. In the evening he reached home, and after he had rested a little while, his wife inquired, "Where's Harry?" The father thought a moment. "Dear me!" said he, "I quite forgot Harry. He is on London Bridge, and has been there for eight hours waiting for me." He hastened away to relieve the boy, and found him just where he had left him in the morning, pacing to and fro like a sentinel on his beat.

That father knew just where to find his son, because he knew that he always obeyed his commands. It is such obedience that pleases God, while it ensures harmony and peace in the home. The parents are the divinely-constituted head of the family, and it is the children's part to obey.

This requirement implies also *honour and respect*. "*Honour thy father and thy mother,*" says the command. Honour is a larger word than obey. We may obey a person whom we do not respect. We are to honour our parents—that is, reverence them—as well as obey them.

There is no need for any argument to prove that every child should honour his parents. Yet it is idle to deny that there is on every hand a lack of filial respect. There are many children who show by their words or acts that their parents are not sacredly enshrined in their hearts.

You have been a great deal of trouble

to your mother in your time, but she has borne it all cheerfully for you. She has gone without many things herself that you might have what you wanted. She has worked very hard that you might receive an education and be fitted to shine in society among your friends, and be ready for an honoured and useful place in this world.

Sometimes you think she looks very plain and old-fashioned. Perhaps she does ; perhaps she is more than a little faded and worn ; but did you ever think that it is because she has given so much of the best power and energy of her life to caring for you? If she had not chosen to toil and suffer and deny herself for your sake, if she had thought more of herself and less of you, she might have been very much fairer and fresher now. If she had only neglected you and not herself, she might now shine instead of you in the parlour, for once her cheeks were as lovely as yours are now. She

might have found more rest and less hard work, if she had not chosen to spend so many hours in stitching away on frocks, trousers, jackets, or dresses for you, making new and mending old. She might even now have better clothes to wear, so that you would not blush to have your friends meet her with you, if she did not take so much interest in dressing you prettily and richly. It may be that the little allowance of money that she gets is not sufficient to dress both herself and you in fashionable array, and in order that you may be well clad she wears the same dress and bonnet year after year.

Never forget where your mother lost her freshness and youthful beauty—it was in self-denying toil and suffering for *your* sake. Those wrinkles in her face, those deep care-lines in her cheeks, that weary look in her eye—she wears all these marks now, where once there was fresh beauty, because she has forgotten herself all these long years in

her loving devotion to you. These scars of time and toil and pain are the seals of her care for *you*.

Look at your father, too. He is not so fresh and youthful as once he was. Perhaps he does not dress so finely as some of the young people you see about you, or as their fathers dress. There are marks of hard toil upon him, marks of care and anxiety, which in your eye seem to disfigure his beauty. It may be that you sometimes blush a little, when your young friends meet you walking with him or when he comes into the parlour when you have company, and wish he would take more pains to appear well. Do not forget that he is toiling all these days for you, and that his hard hands and his bronzed face are really tokens of his love for you. If he does not appear quite so fresh and handsome as some other men, very likely it is because he has to work harder to give you your pleasant home, your good clothes, your daily food and

many comforts, and to send you to school. When you look at him and feel tempted to be ashamed of his appearance, just remember this.

Perhaps he is now an old man, with bent form, white hair, slow step, awkward hand, wrinkled face, and feeble, broken voice. Forget not what history there is in all these marks, that look to you like marrings of his manly beauty. The soul writes its story on the body. The soldier's scars tell of heroism and sacrifice. The merchant's anxious face and knit brow tell of struggle and anxiety. So gluttony and greed and selfishness and other sins write out their record in unmistakable lines on the features, and so do kindness, benevolence, unselfishness, and purity. You look at your father and see signs of toil, of pain, of self-denial, of care. Do you know what they reveal? They tell the story of his life. He has passed through struggles and conflicts. Do you know how much

of this story, if rightly interpreted, concerns you? Is there nothing in the bent form, the faded hands, the lines of care, that tells you of his deep love for you and of sufferings endured, sacrifices made, and toils and anxieties for your sake?

When you think thus of what you owe to your parents and of what they have borne and wrought for you, can you ever again be ashamed of them? Will not the shame rather be for yourself, that you could ever have been so ungrateful as to blush at their homeliness? All the reverence of your soul will be kindled into deepest, purest admiration as you look upon these marks of love and sacrifice for your sake. You will honour them all the more, the more they are worn and wasted, the more they are broken and their grace and beauty shattered. These tokens of self-neglect and self-sacrifice are the jewels in the crown of love.

This honour is not to be shown only

by the young child living yet as a child in the old home, but by those who are grown up to full manhood and womanhood. While parents live, there never comes a time when a child is no longer a child, owing love and honour. Few things in this world are so beautiful as the sight of a middle-aged man or woman showing true devotion to an aged father or mother. A beautiful instance occurred in the life of the American President, James Garfield, who on the day of his inauguration, and in the presence of all the greatest and noblest American citizens, stooped down, in the hour of his exaltation, to imprint a kiss of honour upon the wasted face of his aged mother. It was she who had toiled and suffered for him, and struggled through poverty and adversity on his account; and to her was the kiss of gratitude due. His is not the only case. This noble trait is not so rare as we might think, though it sometimes shines with a lustre so

brilliant as to draw all eyes to itself. Life's history is not all written. Love's noble deeds are not all wrought in the eyes of the world. Much of the rarest and noblest heroism of love is never seen by human eyes. There are other great men who have shown the same reverence and love for parents in age or feebleness. There are noble daughters, too, who forego the joys offered to them in homes of their own, refusing offers of marriage and voluntarily choosing to live without its blessing and comfort, that they may shelter in old age and surround with love's tenderness the father or the mother, or both, who filled their youth with sunshine. Here and there an act or life of heroism finds its way into record; but the noblest heroisms of life, the tenderest histories of love, the most sacred things wrought by human affection, remain unwritten and untold.

Men talk of the wickedness of this

world, and surely it is wicked enough. Sin leaves blackness everywhere. There are horrors of ingratitude, of meanness, of shame, of guilt, which make earth a sorrow to God ; yet amid all that is so sad, there are records of such sacred tenderness, such holy beauty, such ineffable love, that angels must pause over them in reverence. These are fragments of the Eden loveliness that float down upon the dark tide, like lilies pure and white and unsullied on the black waters of some stagnant bog. In earth's homes where the story of Christ's love has been told, there are acts of filial devotion that are as fair as the ministries of angels.

It was on the cross that Jesus paid His last tribute of love and honour to His mother. The nails were in His hands and feet, and He hung there in agony. He was dying in deepest shame. The obloquy of the world was pouring its blackest tides upon

His head. In the throng below, His eye fell on a little group of loving friends, and among them He saw His mother. Full as His heart was of its own anguish, it was not too full to give thought to her. She would have no protector now. The storms would beat in merciless fury upon her unsheltered head. Besides the bitterness of her bereavement, there would be the shame she must endure on His account, the shame of being the mother of One who died on a cross. His heart felt all this, and there, in the midst of His own agony, He made provision for her, preparing a home and shelter for her. Amid the dark scenes of the cross His example shines like a star in the bosom of the blackest clouds, saying to us, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

If true honour for parents has its seat in the heart, there is little need for rules or detailed suggestions. Yet a few particular ways may be men-

tioned in which children can add to the happiness and blessedness of the home-life.

They should show their love for their parents by *confiding in them*; not simply by believing in them and trusting their love and their wisdom, but by telling them all their confidences. A wise parent teaches his child from the very beginning to conceal nothing from him, to tell him everything, and there is no part of the child's life in which he takes no interest. True filial love maintains this openness of heart and life toward a parent, even into the years of maturity. There are no other friends in the world who have so much right to all the confidences of children as their own parents. There are no others in whose breasts these confidences will be so safe; they will never betray the trusts that are placed in them by their own children. There are no others who will take such deep interest in all the events of their daily

lives. To the true mother nothing is trifling which has interested her child. She listens as eagerly to the story of its experiences, its joys, its disappointments, its plans, its imaginations, its achievements, as other people listen to the recital of some romantic narrative. She never laughs at its fancies, nor ridicules anything that it says or does. Then there are no other friends who are such safe and wise counsellors. Someone says that bad advice has wrecked many souls and destinies. The advice of godly and loving parents never wrecks souls. Thousands are wrecked because they will not be guided by it, but none by following it. The children that speak every thought, every hope, every ambition, every plan, every pleasure, in the ear of their parents, and consult them on every matter, will live safely. At the same time they will confer great happiness upon their parents by confiding so fully in them, for it is a great grief

to parents when a child does not confide in them, and turns away to others with the sacred confidences of his heart.

Children must learn *self-denial* if they would faithfully do their part. They cannot have everything they desire. They must learn to give up their own wishes for the sake of others. They must learn to do without things that they would like to have. In no other way can home-life be made what it should be. Every member of the family must practise self-denial. The parents make many sacrifices for the children, and it is certainly right that the children early learn to practise self-denial to relieve their parents, to help them and to minister to their comfort.

They should also learn *thoughtfulness*. A home is like a garden of tender plants which are easily broken or bruised. A thoughtless person is for ever causing injury or pain, not through intention,

but through heedlessness. Many, also, who are careful of the feelings of others, and quick to speak the gentle word that heals and blesses, are thoughtless at home. But surely there is no place in the world where we ought to be so studiously thoughtful as in our own homes! There are no other friends who love us as do the friends at home. There are no other hearts that are so much hurt by our want of thought as are the hearts at home.

It does not seem unreasonable to expect that even quite young children shall learn to be thoughtful; for those who are older there certainly cannot be a shadow of excuse for rudeness and thoughtlessness. There are in every home abundant opportunities for the culture and display of a thoughtful spirit. If anyone is sick, all the others should avoid noise, moving quietly about the house, speaking softly, so as not to disturb the sufferer. All

should be gentle to the invalid, ministering in every little way, brightening the sickroom by their kindnesses. This thoughtfulness should show itself also towards parents. Ofttimes they carry heavy burdens while they go about busying themselves in their daily duties. Their work is hard, or they are in ill health, or they are perplexed and anxious, perhaps on their children's account. Bright, happy, joyous youth never can know what or how heavy burdens rest on the hearts of those who are older, who are in the midst of life's struggles. It would make us gentle even to strangers if we knew all their secret griefs ; and how much more would it soften our hearts towards our *friends* if we knew all their trials? If children would remember always that their parents have cares, anxieties, and sorrows of which they know not, it would make them gentle at all times towards them. Here is an opportunity for most helpful ministry, for nothing

goes deeper into a parent's heart than the sympathy and gentleness of his own child.

It is not great services that belong to thoughtfulness—only a word of cheer perhaps when one is discouraged, a little tenderness when one looks sad, a little timely help when one is overwrought. It may be nothing more than the bringing of a chair when the father comes in weary, or the running of a little errand for the mother to save her tired feet, or keeping quiet when the baby is sleeping; or it may be only a gentleness of manner and tone showing warmth within. Thoughtlessness causes much pain and care, oftentimes trouble and loss. It is always saying the wrong word and hurting someone's feelings. It is noisy in the sick-room, rude in the presence of sensitive spirits, and cold and unsympathetic towards pain and sorrow. It misses the countless opportunities which daily association with others gives us to

do really kind deeds, to give joy and help, and instead of such a ministry of blessing it is always causing pain. Its confession must continually be, "Ah, me !

' The wounds I might have healed,
The human woe and smart !
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part.
But evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as want of heart.' "

'Oh, I did not think," or, "I did not mean it," is the poor excuse most common in many homes. It would be better to *learn* to think, to think of others, especially of those who love us, and then to walk everywhere, but particularly in our own homes, with tender care and regard for the feelings and comfort of others.

Children should early learn *to bear some little share in the home work*. Instead of being always and only a burden to the loving ones who live and toil and sacrifice for them, they should seek in every way they can to

give help. It was Charles Kingsley who said, "We can become like God only as we become of use." There is a deep truth in his words. We begin to live only when we begin to live to minister to others. Instead of singing

"I want to be an angel,"

it were better if the children should strive to be *like* the angels, and the angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. Home is the school in which we are first to learn and practise the lessons of life. Children should learn there to be useful to their parents and to one another. They can do much in this direction by not requiring unnecessary attendance, by not making trouble and work for others on their account. There are some spoiled children who are such selfish tyrants at home that all the other members of the family are taxed to wait upon them. As soon as possible children should

learn to wait upon themselves, and in a measure be independent of the help of others, so as to become self-reliant and strong. What more painful picture do we see than that of sons and daughters growing up idle and selfish in their own homes, too indolent to put forth an exertion, too proud to soil their dainty hands with any kind of work, but not too proud to let delicate or already overwrought parents slave to keep them in costly food or showy array of dress! Nothing good or noble can ever come out of such home-life.

Children should *make themselves worthy of their parents*. They should seek to be all that the father and mother in their most ardent dreams had hoped for them. It is a sad thing to disappoint love's brilliant expectations. It matters not so much if mere dreams of earthly greatness fail to come true, for ofttimes the hopes of ambitious parents for their children

are only for honours that wither in a day, or for wealth that only sinks the soul to ruin. Such hopes were often better disappointed. But in the heart of every true Christian parent there glows an ideal of very fair beauty of character and nobleness of soul, which he wants to see his child attain. It is a vision of the most exalted life, lovelier than that which fills the thought of any sculptor as he stands before his marble and begins to hew at the block; fairer than that which rises in the poet's soul as he bows in ecstatic fervour over his page and seeks to describe his dream. Every true, godly parent dreams of the most perfect manhood and womanhood for his children. He wants to see them grow up into Christlikeness, spotless in purity, rich in all the graces, with character fully developed and rounded out in symmetrical beauty, shining in this world, but shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Just here it may be suggested to children, that a large part of what seems to them "fussiness" and needless fault-finding on the part of parents is due to anxiety to have them perfect. Parents sometimes err through over-anxiety, or through unwise and irritating because incessant admonitions; but the sons and daughters should recognise the fact, that deep anxiety for their well-doing is at the root of even this excessive carefulness.

There is a story of a great sculptor weeping like a child as he stood and looked on the fragments of his breathing marble, the work of his lifetime and his ripest powers, the dream of his fairest hopes, which lay now shattered at his feet. With still deeper sorrow and bitterer grief do true and godly parents look upon the wreck of their high hopes for their children, and the shattering of the fair ideals that glowed in their hearts during

the bright years of childhood and youth.

If children would do their part well in return for all the love that has blessed their helpless years and surrounded them in their youth, and that lingers still unwasted in the days of manhood and womanhood, they must seek to realise in their own lives all the sacred hopes of their parents' hearts. A wrecked manhood or a frivolous womanhood is a poor return for parental love, fidelity, and sacrifice. But a noble life, a character strong, true, earnest, and Christlike, brings blessed and satisfying reward to a parent for the most toilsome and painful years of self-forgetting love. Parents live in their children, and children hold in their hands the happiness of their parents. Let them never be untrue to their sacred trust. Let them never bring down the grey hairs of father or mother with sorrow to the grave. Let them be worthy of

the love, almost divine, that holds them in its deathless grasp. Let them so live as to be a crown of honour to their parents in their old age. Let them fill their declining years with sweetness and tenderness. Let them make a pillow of peace for their heads, when death comes.

When our parents grow old, they exchange places, as it were, with us. There were years when we were feeble and helpless, unable to care for ourselves; then they cared for us; they watched over us; they toiled and sacrificed for us; they sheltered us from hardship and toil; they threw around our tender years love's sweetest gentleness and holiest protection. Now we are strong, and they are feeble; we are able to endure hardship and toil, but the faintest breath of storm makes them tremble, and the lightest toil wearies them. This is the time for us to repay them. It is ours now to show tenderness to them,

to shelter them from trial, and to pour about them as much of love's tenderness as possible.

“And canst thou, mother, for a moment think
That we thy children, when old age shall
 shed
Its blanching honours on thy weary head,
Could from our best of duties ever shrink?
Sooner the sun from his high sphere should
 sink
Than we, ungrateful, leave thee in that
 day
To pine in solitude thy life away,
Or shun thee, tottering on the grave's cold
 brink.
Banish the thought! Where'er our steps
 may roam,
O'er smiling plains or wastes without a
 tree,
Still will fond memory point our hearts to
 thee,
And paint the pleasures of thy peaceful
 home;
While duty bids us all thy griefs assuage,
And smooth the pillow of thy sinking
 age.”

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