

The Fireside.

THE KINGDOM OF CONTENT.

BY MRS. CALEB LARRABEE.

I allow must folks has times, mostly jest after house-cleanin', when what one gets isn't what one wants. Seeme as if human nature is kind of queer; anyhow there's corners in a body's mind that's surprisin' when you get to over-haulin' them. Land, if there was a mind-cleanin' eevry spring, where'd we put all the rubbish?

Well, as I was sayin', I'd bin house-cleanin', and Caleb hed bin helpin' me. It did seem as if everybody an' everything was possess. Here I was dependin' or Almiry Higgins to come an' help me, an' what does she do but fall down the cellar-stairs an' break her arm. So there was nothin' to do but to take Caleb at his word an' let him help. Now, I'm not sayin' that a man isn't useful enough in his proper sphere, but house-cleanin' isn't his sphere. I couldn't be firmer settled in my mind on that point if I was to live to be a hundred years old. My, oh, my; what a two weeks I did put in, with him not wantin' to more than half beat the carpets, an' declarin' the floors didn't need scrubbin' when he was goin' to put the carpets right down agen, an' wantin' a cooked dinner when we was cleanin' the kitchen, jest as if a body hed time to think of eatin' then. But the way he acted about white-washin' the cellar was the last straw. You see, I'd bin keepin' an eye on him all along, but I allowed he could be trusted to white-wash the cellar wall. Well, you may believe me or not, but the man white-washed the cellar an' never moved the corner cubbert, jest reached in as far as he could with the brush. An' me never suspectin' an' sayin' how nice the cellar looked. An' all at once it came into my mind to climb up onto that cubbert an' light a match an' look behind it, an' sure enough, he hadn't touched it. I didn't say nothin', jest giv' him one look an' got down an' began to pull the cubbert out. An' the way he jerked that poor cubbert round an' banged the brush against the wall an' splattered the whitewash over everything was a caution.

Well, it had bin a tryin' time, and I hadn't got the new carpet I wanted, nor the new blinds, an' Caleb wouldn't lay a new stone walk, an' I was jest all out of patience with everything, an' I jest went in to my niece, Maria Ann's, to git a good rest. Her husband hed done right well an' she hes every thing that heart can wish, anyways it seems as if I would think so if I was in her place, but land, she was all out of sorts because the paper hangers hed come one day she was out an' hed put the parlor paper on the hall an' the hall on the parlor. They were jest pictures, both of them rooms, an' I couldn't see what difference it made, but she wouldn't talk of anything else until her washwoman spoiled one of her white waists, an' then she worried about that until her girl broke her meat plate. I stayed with her a few days an' then I went out to Wilkinsburg to see a cousin of Caleb's an' she hed a cozy, comfortable place, with trees all around an' a place fur all the flowers she could plant, but the street hed bin paved an' she didn't like bein' below the street an' her neighbor across the way was jest miserable on

account of havin' steps up to her door an' bein' above the street. Then I went over to Allegheny town to an aunt of mine that lives facin' the commons, and she was in the depths of despair because her boy didn't want to be a doctor an' did want to be a machinist. An' her daughter come to see her while I was there an' she was complain' because her home was so shut-in she wisht she lived where her mother did, an' her children all took after their father's folks, an' she did love a child with bright hair an' blue eyes. The dear little things, they was jest as purty as they could be, but she sighed an' shook her head an' sed, "If they only was fair complected."

Uncle Daniel come home at supper time. He keeps a store over in Pittsburgh, an' he was dreadful down-hearted over the carryin' on of Bigelow an' Hays an' he was sure there was no honest men left only him.

Well, I went to bed that night an' I thought over all them folks a growlin' an' complain', an' not a single solitary one of them hed a mite to complain about. They all hed good health, good children, good wives an' husbands, all of them enough to live on, an' some of them lots to spare. An' sez I to myself, "They ain't a bit more contented than I am;" an' then I sees in my mind the old house an' the laylock bush a bendin' down with bunches of flowers, an' a peepin' in the kitchen window, an' the apple an' cherry trees makin' a picture that no painter ever copied, an' the grass lookin' like green velvet, an' the rockin' chair sittin' on the porch a holdin' out its arms an' sayin' "Come on home, come on home."

Oh, yes; there's folks that think chairs hev no feelin's, but I know better. An' old rockin' chair—it hes to be old—is the friendliest creature you'll meet in a day's journey, an' if you can't hear what it says, well that's your fault, not the chair's. Well, as I was a-sayin', I made up my mind I'd go home in the mornin' an' I went. By good luck I got a chanst to ride to the front of the lane an' I walked up to the stones an' round to the kitchen door, an' there was Caleb gitten dinner. He hed my best dish settin' on the hot stove a warmin' up some potatoes, an' was cuttin' ham on my kitchen table, the whole end was one big grease-spot; but I didn't say a word, fur the dear old place seemed that lovely I could hev jest set down an' cried fur joy. An' I allow Caleb was jest as glad to see me as I was to get back, fur all he wasn't lookin' fur me, an' hadn't lifted the ashes nor swep the kitchen floor. Well, I got my good clothes off an' got on somethin' to eat. Seemed as if warned-over potatoes wasn't in keepin' with my feelin's, an' so I jest took a pint of strippin's an' mixed up a few biscuits. I never done sech a foolish thing as use anything but fore-milk in makin' biscuit before, but land, I felt that high steppin' I could 'ave used cream an' not begrudged it. While we were eatin' our dinner with the laylocks noddin' at us an' the leaf shadows a dancin' on the porch floor, an' the air blowin' in jest heavy with the smell of the blossoms, I sez to him, "Ain't this jest lovely." An' sez he, "You're jest about right, Maria Ann. When a man's bin livin' on nothin' fur over a week, biscuits an' raspberry jam

is good an' no mistake. I read onct about a queer sort of a man that didn't care a mite fur good eatin', but I don't believe there ever was any sech a man."

After we'd hed our dinner I went out an' set down in the old rockin' chair, an' after a bit Caleb come an' set down on the top step, an' sez he, "We had a rattlin' good sermon last Sabbath. The text was 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' It went on to tell all about folks racin' round from Dan to Beersheba huntin' a good time, an' all the time they've got it in themselves."

An sez I to myself, "Maria Ann Larrabee, you're the very woman that sermon fits." Here was me leavin' home an' runnin' round from pillar to post a searchin' fur somethin' better than I hed myself an' not findin' it. I allow that the kingdom of content is like the kingdom of God. An' the rockin' chair a rockin' over the creaky board in the porch sez, oh, so plain: "The kingdom of content is with-i-i-n you, with-i-i-n you. The kingdom of cont-e-e-nt is within you." An' it's kep' on sayin' it ever since.—United Presbyterian.

DO NOT WATCH THE THERMOMETER.

"I never watch the thermometer, and I never suffer from heat or cold half as much as my neighbore appear to, who are constantly consulting it."

This remark reached my ears from the opposite side of an electric car on which I happened to be riding one cold winter day. The person to whom it was addressed was bundled in fur to her chin, while her companion wore a neat walking-suit, open at the throat, and evidently made to admit of a brisk walk without in any way inconveniencing its wearer.

When the car stopped to let them off, I noticed that the woman who never consulted the thermometer started up the street in a bright, alert manner, in keeping with her optimistic tone of conversation; while her companion snuggled down into her furs, and seemed to be making frantic efforts to keep pace with her friend's lively step.

The conversation awakened a train of thought which kept me busy during the remainder of my ride. Is there not a grain of truth in the assertion of the woman who had no use for a thermometer? Do we not often give our hands an extra rub and button our coat a bit tighter when a glance at that erratic little ball of quicksilver assures us that it is ten degrees colder than we had thought it was? And we have not felt the perspiration start to our forehead some warm summer day, as we have seen that same little exclamation mark climbing up among the eighties, when we had imagined the signal-station to have been seventy or thereabout?

One aphorism usually suggests another. "You are not looking well today," Mrs. Brown remarks to Mrs. Jones.

"No, I have a slight headache," Mrs. Jones replies, immediately feeling a sympathetic twinge in her left temple, in response to her friend's remarks.

"How well you are looking!—ten per cent better than when I last saw you!" Smith affirmed to his neighbor across the way, whom he had not met for several days.

Now Neighbor Blane had started out with a pain in his back, and a dissatisfaction with himself and the world in general. But Smith's assertion said to that pain, "Go!" and it went. Smith's cheery smile flashed its radiance into

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Neighbor Blake's receptive countenance, and he answered cheerily: "Yes, I'm feelin' pretty toler'ble well for an old man. Had the rheumatis' when I started out, but it's 'bout gone, now;" and Neighbor Blake passed on, wondering what there was about Neighbor Smith that made him chirp a fellow up so.

How many times we have been brought to the verge of nervous prostration, or some equally depressing malady, simply from hearing the symptoms discussed by people whose ailments form the chief topic of their conversation, when our own nerves were unstrung and ready to respond with an answering twinge to whatever was brought to bear upon them.

I once heard of a woman who, during a cholera epidemic, suffered all the symptoms of that dire malady, even to taking to her bed, simply from a nervous dread of the disease. She was alone in a house a mile from any neighbor. She had been told that extreme cleanliness

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