

The Fireside.

THE HOUSE-MOTHER'S LEISURE.

The members of the family, from the youngest to oldest, would have been astonished had any one suggested that they were cruel or even hard to mother. They loved her dearly, of course; they loved her better than any one else in all the world.

Who but mother could know the place and the time and the how of everything, wait on everybody in health as well as in sickness, and keep all the intricate machinery of the household in smoothly-running order?

The busy father trusted all domestic matters to her; he even brought her some of his business worries. The grown daughters dusted the parlors, watered the plants, and fed the canary. Then perhaps some of the girls happened in, or there was something to go to, and they hurried away, oblivious of the fact that the dressmaker was in the house, or that there were visitors; whatever extra burdens came in the way were allowed to fall upon mother's shoulders as a matter of course.

The big boys—loving, thoughtless fellows—had not lost their dependence on her, and zealously she looked after their comfort, their studies, their play, and their friends. Often they had their own invited company in the house.

Leagues and clubs and guilds called the young people here and there, until there seemed hardly time enough for everything. But always there was one at home to attend to the fires and lights, rearrange the littered rooms, prepare luncheon, and set all matters in order for the night and early morning. That one was mother.

The smaller children came to her, as a matter of course, with everything that interested them—questions, disagreements, problems, requests and hurts. She had wisdom to solve and to guide, patience for the endless questions, puzzles, and hard knots, and arnica, court-plaster, and kisses to heal the hurts and dry the tears.

She was willing to do all this—how willing! But as time went on she grew very tired—tired in body and brain and soul.

Finally, a morning came when mother had nothing to do. There was breakfast, and after that the dishes; the children to get off to school, the house to be put to rights, and the dinner to plan and cook; but she was as far removed from the care and anxiety and labor of it as if she were removed to another world.

"Complete collapse! Worked and worried to death!" said the indignant old doctor.

"But she will live! O doctor, say that she will live!"

"Can't say! Shouldn't think she'd want to! But we'll fight for her life to the last breath—you may be very sure of that!"

The members of the family, shocked and stunned, gazed wildly at each other. As soon expect the clock to go without its mainspring as that household to go on without its caretaker, its burden-bearer, its manager, and chief.

They wandered about with helpless hands and questioning hearts, pondering and resenting the old doctor's impatient words; but as days and nights went by, and one or another was forced to take up the details and cares of daily exist-

ence, they came to understand what heavy burdens had been laid upon the frail, shadowy being who lay upstairs in that darkened room, where a footfall, or even a whispered word, set all the unstrung nerves a quiver.

At last, slowly, the tide of life swung backward; each day there was a little gain. With the first strength came the question: "How do you get along without me? Oh, I must hurry to get well!" "She must go away," said the doctor. "Only in a sanitarium will she have a chance to get well!"

And in that refuge, where leisure was the only occupation, and where only faint echoes of the busy world of toil and care could come, the mother became well again. During the long months of waiting she and her family had time for meditation. She discovered that she, too, had erred; but it was through the intense love that thought no sacrifice too great if she could but serve her loved ones. She had fairly merged her own personality into theirs, had given up her rights to uphold their least desire. And they, who loved her most, had allowed her to do it year after year.

When she returned, it was like a queen coming into her kingdom, with loyal subjects to do her honor and bid her welcome. And such a bright, orderly house she found! Her own room was newly decorated and furnished. Heretofore, when new furniture was bought it went into the girls' room or the guest-chamber, and mother took the old articles.

But here was a new easy-chair beside a pleasant window, a table with books, magazines and flowers, and many voices assuring her of leisure in which to enjoy her new lease of life and love.

It was not a vain promise. Mother has time now to read, to pick out her half-forgotten music, and even to see a morning caller. And the household machinery does not stop, for several heads and several pairs of hands are planning and doing, and nothing in that house is so jealously guarded as mother's hours of leisure.—*Emma A. Lente, in Epworth Herald.*

A TRIFLE CLOSE.

"Did I understand you to state your opinion that Cousin Peltiah Johnson was a 'trifle close,' Mr. Smith?" "So I said," answered Mr. Smith. "Well, now, I have your idea of what a 'trifle' means. But I can tell you a story that will illustrate Peltiah's generosity.

"He and his wife hadn't made their daughter Abigail any Christmas present for a number of years after she was married, and Mrs. Johnson, she couldn't stand it any longer. She begged Peltiah to get something, but the most she could prevail on him to buy was a white cup and saucer.

"It wasn't much of a cup and saucer, but Mrs. Johnson put it up and sent it over to Abigail's by Peltiah himself. He got home about ten o'clock, and his wife helped him off with his overcoat. There was something in one of the inside pockets that stuck out a little and said she:

"What's this, Peltiah?"

"Peltiah kind of chuckled a little, and said he: 'That's the sasser.'

"'Sasser?' Mrs. Johnson cried out. 'You don't mean to say that you've

brought that sasser of 'Abigail's back again?'"

"That's just what I've done," said he. "And what for?"

"Wal, the cup's a pretty good present for once, I guess, an' I give 'em to understand that they'd git the sasser next year. An' that'll give 'em, ye see, somethin' to look for'ard to durin' a whole twelvemonth!"—*Selected.*

ONLY A BROKEN KNIFE-BLADE.

A ship was once wrecked on the Irish coast. The captain was a careful one. Nor had the weather been of so severe a kind as to explain the wide distance to which the vessel had swerved from her proper course. The ship went down, but so much interest was attached to the disaster that a diver was sent down. Among other portions of the vessel that were examined was the compass; that was swung on deck, and inside the compass-box was detected a bit of steel, which appeared to be the small point of a pocket-knife blade.

It appeared that the day before the wreck, a sailor had been sent to clean the compass, had used his pocket-knife in the process, and had unconsciously broken off the point and left it remaining in the box. The bit of knife-blade exerted its influence on the compass, and to a degree that deflected the needle from its proper bent, and spoilt it as an index of the ship's direction. That piece of knife-blade wrecked the vessel.

Even one trifling sin, as small as a broken knife-point, as it were, is able to rob the conscience of peace and happiness.—*Rev. John McNeill.*

IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

The popular adage is: "Oh, it makes no difference what a man believes if he is sincere."

Let us see. A family was poisoned in Montgomery County recently by eating toadstools, which they sincerely believed to be mushrooms. Three of them died. Did it make no difference?

A man indorsed a note for a friend whom he sincerely believed to be an honest man. He was a scoundrel, and left him to pay the debt. Did it make no difference?

A traveler takes the wrong train going north, sincerely believing it is the southern train. Will it make no difference? Will it bring him up at the south all the same?

If a man sincerely believes a certain thing, while the truth about it is entirely different, will this sincere belief make it all right?

The truth is, the popular adage is a lie, and a very transparent one at that. If a man is sincere, he will take pains to know the truth. For where facts are concerned, all the thinking in the world will not change them. A toadstool remains a toadstool, whatever we may think about it.—*The Covenant.*

A DOCTOR SILENCED.

A medical man, discoursing upon the absolute necessity of alcohol to the highest physical development, asserted positively that the mission of alcohol is a better physical development of man. A clergyman inquired, "Do you believe the Bible?" "Certainly I do, as sincerely as yourself," was the prompt reply. "If your position be correct," continued the clergyman, "what will you do with the fact that when God would make the strongest man that ever lived—Samson—He commanded not only the son to be a total abstainer, but the mother also,

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even before Samson's birth, lest some taint of physical weakness should be imparted to his constitution. God discarded alcohol in giving to the world the best example of physical strength on record. What will you do with that fact?" The doctor was silent.—*National Advocate.*

The man who had his name changed from John Smith to Gagadig Gigadab, in order that he might be as unlike John Smith as possible, sat down years afterward and meditated. "I see now," he said, "that I overdid it. If I had made it Jas. Walker or Thos. Benson, for instance, it would have been all right. Whenever I register at a hotel the clerk looks at the name, grins, and says, 'Oh, yes, you're the man that used to be John Smith.'" Thereupon he gave himself another kick.

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