

WOMAN and HER WORK.

I suppose there are few things in this world easier than to make promises, in fact it is often so much easier to make them than not, that poor humanity walks into the trap which seems always open for its unsuspecting feet, yields to temptation and is lost, swamped in a sort of quagmire of hastily given, and heartily regretted promises. "But" says the critic "No well balanced person ever makes rash promises and to do so is a sure sign of a weak mind." Very true my learned friend but then I am afraid the world is very largely peopled with weak minded persons and the well balanced ones exist only in the same proportion towards the others as the raisins in a boarding school pudding offer to the amount of dough contained in the original structure.

The extremely fragile texture of which the average promise is composed, has long been a matter of comment and regret to all careful students of human nature and their opinion has become crystallized into the cynical old saying, "Promises are like piecrust, made to be broken."

Now, I am very certain that if I, or any other bold writer were to accuse the large majority of people who promise, and straightway forget all about it, of telling deliberate falsehoods, the majority in question would be very indignant, but I am afraid that is what it amounts to stripped of all figures of speech, and in what Oscar Wilde would call, "bludgeoned pointed language."

I know just how natural it is when Mrs. Smith admires the lovely piece of fancy work you have just finished, or your own especial chum goes into raptures over the dainty plaque you have just painted, to say, "Do you really think so? Why I shall be delighted to copy it for you," much more natural to some dispositions than to take the praise quietly and say nothing; you are pleased and flattered by the genuine admiration your friends express, and you feel as if you must make them some immediate return for it, your vanity is gratified too, and you would like them to possess a specimen of the work they consider so far beyond the average. But when the time to redeem the promise comes, things do look so very different, that fancy work, or that painting required a good deal of time to accomplish, even when it was for yourself, and possessed all the charm of novelty, but now it is quite an old story, and you know all about the tedious details, which seem to rob the second performance of the task of all interest; beside that it is impossible to get the requisite time now, it was hard enough before, when you were willing to make various sacrifices in order to secure it, but now there is no use in trying, so you finally stop doing so, and, save your conscience with the resolution that the very first centre piece you can manage to embroider, Mrs. Smith shall have, and as soon as you can beg, borrow or steal the necessary time, you will paint a plaque for your friend which shall so far eclipse the one she first admired, as the sun eclipses the moon in glory. So the time goes by, and the promise you gave so enthusiastically and in such good faith adds one more to the list of good intentions which are stored up in the lower regions for use when the pavement needs repairing.

I do not wish to condemn the people who make rash promises, or to set myself up against them in any way; indeed the making of the promise can scarcely be called a fault, because the impulse that prompts it is nearly always a generous one, and the more unselfish, and warm hearted the nature, the more inclined is the owner thereof to promise more than she can perform. I say "she" because of course I am writing for girls now, and also because I am afraid our sex is much more given to promising beyond their ability to fulfill, than the other and sterner half of humanity. We are less practical and more prone to let our hearts run away with our judgment. But it is in the non-performance of our obligations that the error lies; it looks so feasible and so easy when the generous offer to do some service for a friend, is first made, but when the obstacles begin to loom up on a closer inspection, and the size of the undertaking confronts us a very real regret that we did not think twice before we spoke, takes the place of our enthusiasm and our friend would probably take little pleasure in our gift if she had the least idea of the inconvenience it had caused us.

I am afraid that we, the grown up portion of humanity, have become so accustomed to the polite fictions of society, that we pay little more attention to the most generous of promises than we do to a general invitation to dinner or tea; both sound well, but neither means very much, and a courteous acknowledgment of the offered kindness is all that is expected or required; but all the same we never expect to see that pattern our hostess so kindly offered to cut from her own garment for us, or to receive the plant she promised to grow from the first slip that came upon her own choice exotic, any more than we expect to take her at her word, and arrive unexpectedly at her home some evening just as dinner is being put on the table, and announce your

intention of making one of the family party. But still, I don't think this state of affairs is at all right. I think a promise should not be rashly made, but once made it should be kept if possible; and nothing but real illness or some unforeseen circumstance should be allowed to interfere with its fulfillment.

But above and before all things else let the promises which are made to children be held sacred, the poor little souls have not yet had the advantage of mingling in a hollow world where words mean nothing and language is used to conceal thoughts. They, at least, believe what is told them, and it is of the greatest importance that their faith should be retained as long as possible. So be sure and give them whatever you have promised, whether it be a cookie or a spanking, if you wish to retain their respect. They have excellent memories, and it you assure them that if they are good children while you are away you will bring them home a supply of taffy they won't see the logical impossibility of your knowing whether they are good or not in time to purchase the promised reward before you return, but they will remember the promise all right, and long before you reach your own door you will see their eager little faces pressed against the window watching for you, and if you have not remembered that candy—well, you are either going to wish the sidewalk would open and swallow you up, or else you are a meaner woman than any I have met with yet.

Now, girls, I don't mean to preach a New Year's sermon to you, because I have very little faith in sudden resolutions, but suppose we all think the matter over, and resolve to try and make fewer promises, but to keep those we do make?

Concerning the question I ventured to propound some months ago, as to whether women are naturally cruel or not, and which called down upon my audacious head some very severe criticism, I have lately received some very startling evidence, which, I am sorry to say, seems to be of a confirmatory nature, and as it was not of my own seeking, but came to me quite accidentally, I will give it in the narrator's own words:—

"When I was in Chicago last autumn," said one of the few men I have met, who managed to see anything at the great exhibition of last year, or at any rate, to see anything he could come home and describe intelligently—"I made up my mind that whatever else I was obliged to miss, I would take time to go through Armour's establishment from end to end. I had always had a great desire to see that wonderful product of the nineteenth century enterprise, and though I dreaded the slaughter houses, I was determined not to leave them out of my programme; you know how I detest to see anything hurt, but I wanted to satisfy myself that the work was done in as humane a manner as possible, and besides that the trip through the buildings would not have been complete if the slaughter houses had been left out; so I smothered my disinclination for the scene, and went into the yards just as the slaughter was about to begin. You need not be afraid, or wave your hands at me Astra; I am not going to tell you anything about the manner in which the poor beasts were disposed of. I did not enjoy the scene much more than you would have done yourself! What I wanted to tell you was this—the thing that surprised me most of all was the number of ladies who occupied positions in that gory enclosure! They stood around in little groups, and evinced as much interest in the proceedings as any of the men. When the slaughter began and the cattle were falling by scores, I confess to a curious feeling of sick faintness, and I glanced keenly at the ladies near me, both to see how they were affected by the scene, and also to offer them assistance in case any of them fainted; but to my surprise not one even turned her head away when the crashing blows—all right! I won't then—they watched the proceedings with the keenest interest, and not an eyelid seemed to quiver, as the work went on, and when I left the enclosure most of the ladies were still there. There was no doubt about their being ladies, they looked, acted and spoke like refined and cultivated women, and it they had been agents of the S. P. C. A., delegates of the W. C. T. U., or representatives of any society whatever I could have understood their presence in such a place, but they were neither the one nor the other, and came to the slaughter pens out of pure curiosity. I cannot understand such curiosity and I confess such an incident is calculated to destroy a good many of the romantic fancies a man may have indulged in with regard to lovely woman's tenderness of heart and reluctance to witness scenes of horror."

My informant is one of the most humane of men, one who is not ashamed to pick up a June bug or a beetle carefully in his handkerchief and put it out of doors, when it is annoying him, instead of stamping on it as most men would, or dropping it into the lamp chimney to roast slowly to death, as I have seen lovely woman do; so I am

not surprised that the incident I have related made about as strong an impression upon his mind as anything else he saw at the great Fair.

What do you think of that little story girls, as direct evidence of feminine cruelty, and, if I must say it, feminine depravity? I only hope there were no Canadian women amongst the number who looked coolly on, while the meek eyed, patient beasts fell under the butcher's axe. Fancy any man who was in love with a girl, and thought her almost too pure and sweet and perfect to live in this world at all, hearing from her own lips when he made his usual evening call upon her, that she had been at the slaughter houses that day, and watched the killing! Or worse still having some man friend tell him—"I saw your friend Miss Blank at the slaughter pens, at Armour's to-day, and she seemed to enjoy the performance immensely." Faugh! how I should hate such a girl if I were a man, and it were my wife!—well I really think there would be a sensation in high life, because I am sure the temptation to box her ears well would prove too much for me.

Will some kindly disposed reader, who knows more about the manners and customs of mission boards than I do, kindly tell "Cinderella" where she should write for information concerning the sending out of missionaries? It will be a kindness both to my correspondent and myself. With reference to "Cinderella's" second question I must answer both yes and no, because my reason and common sense both forbid my believing in fortune telling, but yet I have known some such remarkable instances of fortune telling, that I cannot help thinking there may be more in the art than we think. I daresay there are plenty of fortune tellers in St. John, but I only know of one—the renowned "Professor" Hunter; at least he used to be heard, and I have never heard of his removal. Many thanks for "Cinderella's" very kind wishes. I am sorry I could not give her more information about the mission board.

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These business men (we thank Heaven they are few in number) wilfully and deliberately withhold from the sick and afflicted the only remedy that can meet their cases and give a new life; and will take the money of their victims for medicines they recommend because of the immense profits they make, never taking a thought for the precious life of the buyer, or caring whether pain and suffering is even alleviated for one short hour.

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