

A Kind Word When You Can.

Do you know a heart that hungers
For a word of love and cheer?
There are many such about us;
It may be that one is near.
Look around you. If you find it,
Speak the word that's needed so,
And your own heart may be strengthened
By the help that you bestow.

It may be that some one falters
On the brink of sin and wrong,
And a word from you might save him—
Help to make the tempted strong.
Look about you, O my brother!
What a sin is yours and mine
If we see that help is needed
And give no friendly sign.

Never think kind words are wasted,
Bread on water cast are they;
And it may be we shall find them
Coming back to us, some day.
Coming back when sorely needed,
In a time of sharp distress.
So, my friend, let's give them freely,
Gift and giver God will bless.

RURAL NOTES AND NOTIONS.

"A Book's A Book."

BY SENEX SMITH.

"My John is a great reader," said Mrs. Marvyn to me with evident satisfaction. "When he gets hold of a book he forgets all about his dinner, he is so interested."

"And all about his work, too, doesn't he?"

"Yes, that's so," replied the fond mother, with a slight tinge of sadness in her voice. "The truth is, we shall have to make a scholar of him, for he is too much of a student to be contented to work with his hands."

I was anxious to know what kind of book this studious youth was devouring. The mother did not know exactly. He got them at the public library and some he borrowed of the other boys at school. She didn't understand about books herself, for she had to work so hard she had no time to read. But she picked up one that Johnny had thrown down very reluctantly when the school bell rang, and brought it to me. It was entitled "Black Bart, the Bandit." I told her what kind of a book it was and assured her that it would be far more likely to make her boy a robber than a scholar. The good woman was astonished. She thought all books were meant to make people wise and good, and that the more they read the wiser and better they would be.

When I showed her that such books were as unwholesome as tainted meat, she asked me what she should do, for she said that reading kept Johnny out of mischief, and if she tried to make him read only good books he would get mad and wouldn't read at all. I could only reply that she might as well starve the boy as to poison him; but the interview awakened a train of sad reflections.

There are a good many people as unsophisticated as Mrs. Marvyn. They think that "a book is a book," and that a great reader is sure to become a great scholar. They don't realize that there are all sorts of books, and that to most people the bad ones are more interesting than the good ones. Some one has said that reading makes

A FULL MAN.

But whether this is desirable or not, depends upon what it is that fills us. A glutton, to gratify his appetite, will fill himself with indigestible food; the result is that he becomes a dyspeptic. A drunkard will fill himself with whisky. A silly boy, who has learned to read and has no one to control his morbid appetite, will fill his memory with stories that are fascinating, but fearfully demoralizing. Better for him to have never known his letters than to spend his time and money in the worst kind of intoxication—making the fancy drunk with scenes of unholy excitement. The youth who starts out in life full of the adventures of such heroes as Black Bart will be strongly tempted to imitate them; and I believe that more than half of the criminals in our prisons to-day have been readers of vicious books. We used to think that men became robbers and cut-throats because they were ignorant, and that education would make people honest. But the criminal records of the country have long since dispelled this illusion.

I have just received a pamphlet containing a sermon by Rev. Arthur Brown, a graduate of Lane Seminary, who is now the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Portland, Ore. He says some things on this relation of

IGNORANCE AND CRIME

that I want to commend to the attention of my readers.

"It has been shown over and over again that high intellectual culture may co-exist with depraved morals and an effeminate character. Knowledge is power. But it depends altogether upon the principle which controls it whether it is a power for good or a power for evil. The archangel Michael and the arch devil Lucifer may have the same intel-

lectual ability and the same intellectual attainments, but the fidelity of the one and the disobedience of the other make heaven and hell. Unless knowledge ripens into moral force it becomes the tool of selfishness and sin. Corrupted intelligence is worse than misled ignorance. Knowledge perverted is misused power. Give the printing-press to vicious men and they will only do harm with it. There is to-day a superstitious faith in spelling-books; men who ought to know better will tell you, with census tables and statistics of all kinds in hand, that ignorance is the cause of crime. But if statistics are to be our guide, it is no more a cause than dirtiness of skin or want of a change of clothing. Ignorance is only one of many concomitants of crime. If we want our children to become good men we must educate their souls as well as their heads. Morality is founded upon religion, and can never be separated from it. We can not make children honest by teaching them the multiplication table; nor virtuous by teaching them grammar; nor benevolent by teaching them geography. They must be taught the religion of Christ."

I have sometimes thought that a library is somewhat like

A DRUG-STORE.

You go to the apothecary for medicine; you look around upon shelves filled with vials of various sizes; they remind you of books, large and small, folios, quartos, 12mos, 16mos, etc. There are labels on the vials as there are titles on the backs of the books; but unless you are a chemist and familiar with the science of Materia Medica, you can not tell much about the contents of the vials by the labels. Some are tonics; some are anodynes; some are poisons. If you should choose a vial because you liked the label, you might make a fatal choice; and it is so with the titles of books. Authors know how to attract buyers and readers by a taking title. Ronan called his poisonous book, which he intended should kill the faith of his fellow countrymen in Christianity, "The Life of Jesus." Some unsophisticated man or woman might take up that book thinking that it was written by a lover of Jesus, and get erroneous ideas about his Saviour's character; or at least have his mind clouded and his heart pained by doubts.

Now because of the ignorance of most people as to the character of the contents of the vials in a drug-store, they are not allowed to go in and take what they fancy. There is a druggist in attendance, who is obliged to mark all poisons as such when he sells them, and to know to whom he sells them, and for what purpose they are bought; and most prescriptions are put up on the written order of a physician. But your twelve-year-old boy can go into the public library and take out any book that he fancies; the librarian is not bound to tell him whether it is a good book or not. And so he can go into a bookstore and buy a book that is as poisonous as arsenic, and the bookseller won't tell him that it is. Public sentiment and the law won't allow him to keep on his shelves indecent books, those that are vile or vulgar in their style and illustrations. But this kind of books are not the most dangerous; it is those in which the poison is sugar-coated—in which vice is clothed in an attractive garb, and its cloven foot neatly covered with a fashionable French kid boot. There are scores of such books in all our libraries and in nearly all of our bookstores.

Their parents must see to it that their children read only good books. It won't do to let them choose books that are popular or that are puffed in the Sunday newspapers. They are educated morally by what they read rather than by their studies at school. If they have a taste for reading, try to gratify it by getting for them books that are interesting as well as instructive. There are plenty of such books. Would you let your boys eat anything and everything that they fancied because they had such good appetites? If you did, you know how disastrous the consequences might be. And should you not be more careful in regard to the diet of the soul than in regard to that of the body? Marvyn, who think that it is a fine thing for their children to be great readers, no matter what they read.

THE SERPENT IN THE BOOK.

I remember a little story which was told in this paper a dozen years ago, and which from it went the rounds of the religious press: A gentleman in India took a book from a shelf in his library and opened it to read. As he did so a tiny poisonous serpent, which had coiled itself up between the leaves, darted out and stung him. It was only a little sting, and on one of his little fingers. But the whole body swelled, became moribund, and the next day the man was dead. There are books, not a few, in our day that are like that; there is a serpent coiled up in them. And when the fascinated reader sits

down with one of them in his hand suddenly the serpent may sting his very soul. A doubt may be suggested that will be at first only like a spark falling on a pile of shavings. But it may kindle a broad and destructive fire.—*Journal and Messenger.*

The True Home Spirit.

The hardest questions that come to us are those that strive to settle a balance, fair and just, between our several duties. How far are we justified in excluding all outside questions from our active interests in the home, keeping a loving, firm touch on each? We all see home and husbands suffer from too much housekeeping. We all know women who perceive no difference between housekeeping and homekeeping. That man whose wife knows the difference between the two professions, and chooses to belong to the latter, is a fortunate man. Perhaps no question that faces a wife is harder to decide than how she shall be a perfect mother and yet a perfect wife. It is so hard for a mother to educate herself to a little wholesome neglect of her children, that she may be the companion of their father. Yet how can a man find companionship in his home if the mother of his children becomes their nurse at the expense of every other duty or pleasure?

The saddest experience that can come to any husband or wife is an acquiescent separation, and this experience is lived in too many homes. One, and sometimes both, are looking forward to the time when the first days of their married life will be lived over again; when there will be more money to hire servants, or when the children will be grown. If we could count on the future there would be a degree of safety in trusting this future time for happiness. But death, mental growth for one and not for the other, and loss of mental power are the terrible possibilities that stand in the path of that future. Each month, yes, each day is a link in a chain, or a bar between two souls who are interdependent for their happiness of all who share the home or house they create.

A mother who sacrifices her husband's companionship to the children that are alike the bond and the burden of each is not a wise mother; the short sightedness that is at the root of her misconception prevents the clear spiritual perception necessary to the true mother. The first essential in every home is love, and it is not the quantity in the home, but the quality and disposition of it, that makes its happiness. No outer and visible bond can hold the souls of a husband and wife in union. Companionship, close and intimate, that has in it the spiritual power to shut out every object in life at times except each other, and find heaven and God in those moments, is the only true relation between husband and wife. The children are better loved, more wisely governed, more spiritually trained, when the two souls made one by love are their guardians. That is a home rather than a house where such love is, and the children are nearer perfection when it is a united force, not a divided power, that makes the law and light under which they live.—*Christian Union.*

"Ask And Ye Shall Receive."

Less than half an hour ago, Ernest James asked Carrie Cross the question which was of vital importance to him, as far as his home happiness was concerned. Her answer filled him with joy, and with gratitude to the Heavenly Father.

They are kneeling, and I hear these petitions: "Oh, God, we thank thee for this great happiness. Wilt thou bless us ever. May we always seek thy kingdom before our own interests." "Dear Father, may we be very faithful to thee, and each other. May we trust thee, and strive to do thy will."

Three years have passed. Again our friends are kneeling, this time as husband and wife. These are some of their words: "Dear Father, we thank thee for our baby boy. If it be thy will may he be spared to us, and may he be a blessing to us, and to others." And the wife and mother prays, "Loving Father, we cannot praise thee enough for this great blessing. May we so train this little one, and wilt thou so bless him, that his life may be a praise offering to thee."

Many years have fled. The happy home has been gladdened by other little ones. Death's hand has taken two home to Him who gave life. But father and mother kneel with the four remaining ones at the family altar. I listen first to the father's voice, "Wilt thou bless our boy as he goes from us. May the years of study to which he is looking forward prepare him for thy service." Then to the mother's, "May Fred go forth with a heart full of love to thee, dear Saviour, and to all of thy creatures. May he be faithful each day of his life." Then to Fred as he prays: "O, Heavenly Father, may I be kept in the hour of tempt-

ation. May I be guided by thy Spirit. May I not disappoint father and mother. May I please thee."

Once more it is my privilege to be present at the evening devotion. The father, in a broken voice, utters these words only, "O, God! teach us to say, 'Thy will be done.'" Then the mother prays: "We thank thee, our Father, that this son, whom thou didst give us, has been a blessing. We thank thee that some who might never have heard of thee, but for his efforts, will praise thee throughout eternity. We thank thee that we shall soon meet him in the heavenly mansion. But oh, wilt thou comfort us now." And the daughter who is with them, prays: "Dear Saviour, wilt thou watch over Fred's little boy, and may he too be a blessing. Wilt thou bless Annie, and may this great sorrow bring her nearer thee. And may Fred's example make us all strive to serve thee better."—*Watchman.*

Which Will You Take?

Entering the office of a well-known merchant, I lifted my eyes and found myself confronted with the brightest and most thrilling temperance lecture I ever steered myself against in the whole course of my life. It was an inscription marked with a pen on the back of a postal card nailed to the desk. The inscription read as follows:

WHICH?
WIFE OR WHISKY?
THE BABES OR THE BOTTLE?
HOME OR HELL?

"Where did you get that, and what did you nail it there for?" I asked the merchant. "I wrote that myself and nailed it up there," was his reply, "and I will tell you the story of that card. Some time ago I found myself falling into the drinking habit. I would run out once in awhile with a visiting customer or at the invitation of a traveling-man, or on every slight occasion that offered. I soon found that my business faculties were becoming dulled, that my stomach was continually out of sorts, my appetite failing and a constant craving for alcoholic stimulants becoming dominant. I saw tears in the eyes of my wife, wonder depicted in the face of my children, and then I took a look ahead. One day I sat down at this desk, and half unconsciously wrote the inscription on that card. On looking at it upon its completion it was a revelation burst upon me like a flash. I nailed it up there, and read it over a hundred times that afternoon. That night I went home sober, and I have not touched a drop of intoxicating liquor since. You see how startling is its alliteration. Now, I have no literary proclivities, and I regard that card as an inspiration. It speaks out three solemn warnings every time I look at it. The first is a voice from the altars, the second from the cradle and the third and last from—"

Here my friend's earnestness deepened into a solemn shaking of the head, and with that he resumed his work.

I don't think I violate his confidence by repeating the story of that card. In fact, if it should lead to the writing of similar cards to adorn other desks, I think he will be immeasurably gratified.—*Saturday Evening Call.*

Intentional wrong-doing, carelessness, thoughtlessness and ignorance can be more or less guarded against and corrected, and it's every one's duty to grow out of such habits.

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