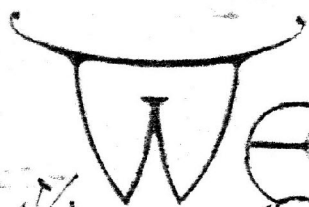
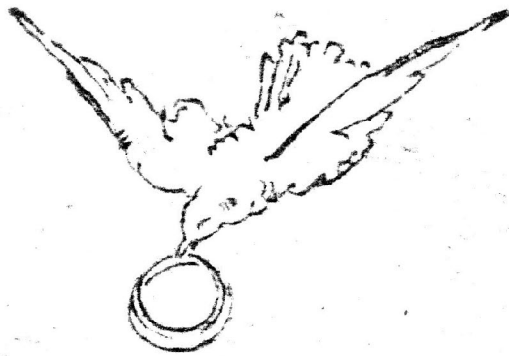


The



WEDDED

LIFE



WEDDED LIFE.

BY THE

REV. J. R. MILLER, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "WEEK-DAY RELIGION," "IN HIS STEPS," ETC.



PHILADELPHIA :

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This Certifies

That *Ludwig Luther*
of *Hosmer, Edmund's Co. S.D.*
and *Margaretha Pischke*
of *Hillsview, M^cPherson Co. S.D.*
were by me united in the bonds of

Marriage 1893

at *Leola South Dakota*
on the *16* day of *January*
in the year of our Lord Eighteen Hun-
dred and *ninety three*
conformably to the ordinance of God
and the laws of the State.

Geo. B. Reid

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

Francis M. ...

William ...

WITNESSES PRESENT AT THE MARRIAGE

CONTENTS.

I. PAGE
MARRIAGE 9

II.
THE HUSBAND'S PART 31

III.
THE WIFE'S PART 59

DEDICATORY.

THIS little book is dedicated to the happy people who have covenanted to walk together in the wedded life and are just setting out on their journey. It carries with it the sincere desire of the author that they may realize all the high hopes of joy and blessedness that now fill their hearts. Perhaps the counsels contained in these pages may be helpful toward this end; if so, this will be reward enough. Some one has said that he who causes two blades of grass to grow where there was only one blade before is a benefactor. Surely, it is a greater benefaction to help two immortal lives into wedded grace and loveliness, and two hearts to blend in holy joy.

This book goes out with the prayer that it may be used for good by Him who sanctified and adorned marriage by his presence and first miracle at a wedding-feast at Cana of Galilee.

It is proper to state that the chapters here given are from the author's book entitled *Home-Making*.

J. R. M.

PHILADELPHIA.

I.

MARRIAGE.

THE WEDDED LIFE.

I.

MARRIAGE.

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 solitarily. 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, dishonoring marriage and tearing down the sacred walls of home.

Back 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 gar-

lands 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, always joyous music, implying that the ceremony is one of peculiar gladness. In some places, too, wedding bells are rung, their peals being 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 a memory only 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 coffin 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 fullness 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 fulfill its conditions.

The causes of failure may lie 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 was part of God's original

intention when he made man. It is not a mere human arrangement, something that sprang up in the race as a convenience along the history of the 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 honor 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, 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 to her husband. The two are to live for 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 in 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 besides this the teaching of Christ recognizes 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 the other, only death can unclasp their hands. 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 repenting.

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 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 in their after 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, the congratulations, should be so ordered as to cause no jar, no confusion, nothing to mar the perfect pleasure of the occasion, and so as to leave only the pleasantest memory 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 noble-

ness of character, of heroism in living, of tender romance 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 is 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 realize the blessings of the ideal marriage relation.*

The first lesson to be learned and practiced 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 much of the real life of the other until they meet with every separating wall and every thinnest veil 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 to hide their true selves or to appear 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 also 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 again. But really all that is needed is wise and loving patience. There is no reason for discouragement, much less for despair. It is entirely possible, notwithstanding the discovery of these points of friction and uncongeniality, to realize 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 never would blend and commingle; but in a little time they unite in one broad peaceful stream, rolling in majesty and strength, without a trace of strife. So when two independent lives, with diverse habits, tastes and peculiarities first meet to be united in one, there is embarrassment, there is perplexity, there is seeming conflict, there is the dashing of life against life at many points. Sometimes it may seem as if they never could blend in one and as if the conflict must go on hopelessly for ever; but with loving patience the two will in due time coalesce and unite in 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 both 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 the process 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 characterized 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 satisfy 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. Jewelry and silks and richly-bound volumes will never atone for the 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 only carelessness at first in a busy husband or a weary wife that fails in these small, sweet courtesies, and it may seem a little matter, but in the

end the result may be a growing far apart of two lives which might have been for ever very happy in each other had their early love but been 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 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 neighbors 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 in-

telleet 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 honors 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 that she has plans, hopes, pleasures, friendships or experiences from which she excludes him, there is peril in the home. They should have no secrets which they keep from each other. They should have no companions or friends save those which they have in common. Thus their two lives should blend in one life, with no thought, no desire, no feeling, no joy or sorrow, no pleasure or pain, unshared.

Into the inner sanctuary 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 intermeddle 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 might have composed. 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 for ever apart. 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 fervor 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 first 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 they are 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. A lady was printing on a blackboard a text for her little girl. The text was: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Just as she had finished it the child entered the room and began to spell out the words. Presently she exclaimed, "Oh, mamma, you have left out *Jesus!*" True enough, she had left out the sacred name in transcribing the verse. It is a sad omission when, in setting up their home, any 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 in them too far-reaching and too terrible, to be taken up without wisdom and help 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 bark is launched: "Keep me, O God, for my boat is so small and the ocean is so wide."

hold life full and complete. Each 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 colors combine 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 his duties as 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 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—the word *love*. "Husbands, love your wives," comes the command, with all divine authority, from the Holy Scriptures. The counsel is very short, but it grows exceedingly long when it is fully accepted and observed.

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 crowded ; and as we study it closely 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, affectionate regard*. 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 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

II.

THE HUSBAND'S PART.

II.

THE HUSBAND'S PART.

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 music, though all the others sing in perfect accord.

One person cannot alone make a home what it ought to be, what it might be. One sweet spirit may spread through the home the odors of love, even though among the other members there are bitterness and strife, just as one fragrant flower may spread through a hedge of thorns a breath of perfume. The influence of one gentle and unselfish life may also in time soften rudeness and melt selfishness, and pervade the home-life with the blessedness of love. Yet still it is true that no one member of a household can make the house-

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 repeated on earth every husband is required to repeat 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 realizes all that this divine command involves, selfishness dies 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 to 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
 Color 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 fulfill?
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 realize 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 fill 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 thus 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 in 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 Scripture 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 acts.

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 at home too often 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-humor they have suppressed all day on 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 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 license 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, and it is a good deal farther in the right direction when, instead of being bitter, his words and acts and whole bearing are characterized by gentleness and affectionateness. There are men who speak no bitter words, no sharp, petulant words, and yet but few

kindly, tender words 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. 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 ;
Earth 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.

In walking on the street one day in a violent and sudden storm, as I was passing under a tree

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 or 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 sympathize 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 *honor* his wife. He honored 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 honor of which his soul was capable. Now that he has lifted her up to the throne of his heart, will he honor her 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 honored the other is exalted; if one is dishonored the other is debased. There is infinitely more reason why he should honor her now than before she was his wife.

The ways in which he should show her honor 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 con-

fide 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 honor 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 honor 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 worshiped 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, without any technical knowledge, 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 colors 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, winning new victories of genius, becoming eminent among artists, and, dying, was buried with high honors in the cathedral of his native city. The grand motive of his life was to become worthy of her whom he desired to win.

Every true-hearted husband should seek to be worthy of the wife he has already 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 skillful 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 as 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

within his own doors will not be close and niggardly outside. The heart that is used always 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-favored homes. 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 an 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 out 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 honors 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 sake.

They carefully shelter them from life's rude blasts. They bless them with all tenderness and affectionateness. They honor 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 of 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, since only those realize the full sweetness of wedded life who are one at every point and in every feeling, purpose and hope, and whose souls blend in their higher, spiritual part as well as in their lower nature and experiences. 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?

III.

THE WIFE'S PART.

honored. 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 answer? 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 appall 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 a pen-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 counselor, 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 worshipers 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 nor 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,

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 wretched-

ness. 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 honored 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 transformed 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 vigor 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 labors by the young wife whose thoughts he is assured will follow his work with her judicious, tranquillizing 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 sick bed 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 his head in the stars while his 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 quite prosaic conditions. One of the very first things they discover is the intimate relation between the kitchen and wedded happiness. That love may fulfill its delightful prophecies and realize 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 splendors 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 lovers 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 on the taste, especially if poorly served, even if love is ever present to season them. In this day of advanced civilization 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 realization 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 vitalized 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 gusty 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 honor, 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 house-keeping will soon drive the last vestige of romance out of any home. The illusion which love weaves about an idolized bride will soon vanish if she proves 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 housekeeper.

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 abounding 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 to 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 organizations 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 economize 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 skillful 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 housewifely 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 recognize 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 skillful, 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 sympathy 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 neighbors 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 belated passer-by. Its doors stand ever open with a welcome to every one who comes seek-

ing 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 recognized as one of God's angels scattering blessings as far as her hand can reach. Her neighbors 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 traveler 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. 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 she brought a leprous child to her palace and laid it in her own bed, because there was no other place 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 turned away awe-stricken 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 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 appear lovely to him even when the color 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 hair-dresser; only the arts of love can do 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

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 over-estimate 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 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 ardor, weaken his resolution and draw him aside from any earnest endeavor. 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 vigor 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 homemaking 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 realizes this lofty ideal of wifeness will she fulfill 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 successful in his career and more happy, 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 wifehood. 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 do so many bridal wreaths fall 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 only in Christ.

The young maiden goes smiling and singing to the marriage altar. Does she know that if she has not Christ with her she is as 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.