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THE MOTHER'S
TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS.

The Second Part of "Cottage Homes."

A BOOK FOR MOTHERS.

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Sixth Edition. 30th Thousand.

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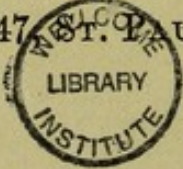
SCIENCE FOR THE HOUSEHOLD.

TWOPENCE EACH.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| THE GREAT ROUND WORLD. | BUSY-BODY OXYGEN. |
| THE WIDE AND DEEP SEA. | THE INVISIBLE AIR. |
| THE INCONSTANT WIND. | THE REFRESHING RAIN. |

LONDON:

JARROLD AND SONS, 47, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.



THE MOTHER'S TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS.

It was a bright Sunday afternoon in early summer, and the church bells had ceased. Anne Wright sat amidst the youngest of her little flock, teaching them lessons of heavenly wisdom; not preaching to them indeed, but simply telling them the great truths which she herself believed, talking of Jesus as of some dear friend in whose love she herself rejoiced, and to whom she longed to bring her beloved ones.

There was a reality and sincerity in all this Christian mother said, which at once inspired the children with faith in her; and it is a great point gained in educating our children, to have obtained their entire belief in our word. It lays a capital foundation for the structure hereafter to be raised of faith in things unseen.

To-day she was telling them the story of the widow's son, whom the Saviour, in pity for the mother's grief, had raised to life at Nain. Her voice faltered, and her eye filled as she spoke, for but three weeks ago she had laid her little Nelly, the child of many prayers, and the beloved of many hearts, in its grave in the green churchyard; and now she told them as they listened with a tender, hushed manner, which her quiet grief inspired, of the glad morning of the resurrection which should surely come, as surely as the spring had gladdened their hearts after the dreary winter. And they did not doubt it in the least. This mystery of the resurrection, which neither the child nor the parent understood, they reverently accepted, because God said so; just as they believed their parents when they told them a thing not exactly clear to their reason, simply on their parents' word.

So now they believed this great fact because God had declared it, and their little hearts took comfort in the words of Jesus, "Thy brother shall rise again."

Five years had passed away since last we looked in on the inhabitants of Barker's Buildings; changes had taken place there, and time had done its work. Death and life had each been busy. Nelly had been taken; and two others, one still a baby in arms, had been added to the little band, four of whom now sate at the mother's knee, whilst their elders were absent with the father at the house of prayer.

A neighbour dropped in to cheer the poor sorrowing mother; but there was a peace on that mother's brow, to which the world could neither add, nor take away; and Mrs. Grey sate down, feeling conscious that she must be a learner here.

She was a neat, prim, tidy woman, the mother of a large family, who inhabited the cottage long since deserted by the Wilmots, and presenting now a very different aspect from that it wore in those times of disorder and misrule. Dirt was Mrs. Grey's abhorrence, cleanliness the rule of her household. Good woman, she never remembered, when she asserted that cleanliness was next to godliness, that she was guilty of placing it before it; and that in her devotion to this idol she too often set aside the duties of forbearance, gentleness, and love. She prided herself on keeping her house always in order, her hearth well swept, her litters all cleared away before her good man returned from work. The coarse table cloth on which the meals were spread, never, or by rare accident, bore marks of dirty fingers, or of children's spilt food—and woe to the little hand which mistook the way to the mouth! The same care was exercised in the dress and persons of the family, as on the floors and tables of the cottage. Rags, dirty pinafores, holey stockings, buttonless shoes or shirts, were things not to be found in the Greys' wardrobe. And yet, it was a home sadly lacking in comfort and brightness, a home of unrest

and oftentime of sadness, from which the elder children longed to be free, though the freedom were but for hard toil in the world; and in which the younger ones knew little of the gladness of youth, or of the fond and tender influence of loving spirits.

Mrs. Grey, nevertheless, thought herself an excellent manager, a good wife, and a pattern mother; nay, she was something more in her own eyes, a good Christian. No Sunday frolicking, no visits to tea-gardens, nor long walks to Leigh woods in time of service; but as sure as the bells were out, the little Greys all dressed in plain, but neat fashion, were marshalled to the parish church by the father, a meek, quiet man, but with a sorrowful, depressed look, at which a wife might have blushed, let the cause be what it would.

The Greys were not allowed to go to Sunday school, they got their things so pulled about, and their bonnets so crushed, the mother said, and mixing with dirty children, there was no telling what they might catch; so she took their religious education into her own hands, and a very gloomy kind of religion she taught. She was not an ignorant nor an illiterate woman; she was well read in Bible History, and by no means a stranger to religious impressions. She had a great respect for religion indeed, suffered no one in her hearing to take God's name in vain, taught her children their prayers, and their duty to God and their neighbour, and would have thought it impossible to prosper in the week without attending church twice on the Sunday. Honest, kind-hearted in spite of her quick temper, faithful and industrious; what was that one thing lacking in the little household—that broken string which put all the rest out of tune? I will tell you; it was a spirit of love; her religion was one of fear, her rule was the same. She taught her children to fear God as she taught them to fear herself; but they did not learn from her lips, nor from the gentle tone of her voice, that the love of Jesus would make the service of their Maker easy.

A girl of ten accompanied her mother on this Sunday afternoon visit to Mrs. Wright; her eyes were red as though from recent weeping, and there was a sullen pout on her lips which bespoke a spirit not humbled by the appeal of love, although repressed by the hard voice of reproof. Anne Wright could scarcely bear to look at the little flushed face; the girl was just the age of her dead child, and she spoke tenderly to her without asking the cause of her grief, and let her hold the baby, an office much to the child's taste, apparently, who danced it with great glee.

"Now take care not to tumble its dress," said Bessie's mother sharply, "and don't make a din so as we can't hear ourselves speak; remember what day it is," she said sharper still, as the little Wrights began to dance round the crowing baby. "Remember what day it is!" those words were sounded in the Greys' ears till they were not likely to forget. "Remember what day it is"—most needless reminder—a day for long lessons, tedious church-goings, tedious, because no loving motives entered into the service of God's house; a day for long lectures, or duller restrictions from all manner of amusement, when the hours passed so wearily that the children fancied Sunday had twenty-four hours rather than the usual twelve. "Remember what day it is" was joyfully murmured to the little Wrights when they awoke to their happy Sabbaths; and oh, what pleasant associations were theirs with those Sunday bells. Father at home all day, that was their great joy. Mrs. Grey would have shaken her head, and said something about its being God's day, and frowned at the idea of the children's liking Sunday because father was at home; but we must take children not exactly as they ought to be, but as they are. And it is unreasonable to expect those who as yet are strangers to the spiritual enjoyments of a Sabbath, to pretend to rejoice in its advent on that account. After all, there was soundness in the principle of liking Sundays for one reason,

because father was at home. The father in the family is but an image of the great Father of the human race. To rejoice in the presence of this earthly parent, proves that the grand principle in our children's education has not been overlooked, and that their young hearts are prepared, by honouring and loving the father of their childhood, to learn the duty of reverence to Him who may be their reconciled Father Christ Jesus. "Remember what day it is"—the Wrights will never forget this early lesson, when scattered far and wide, when the family circle shall be broken up, and the beloved parents shall have passed from the humble cottage to the heavenly mansion, memories of Sabbaths spent in their happy, peaceful home, shall come across their spirits, winning back affections which perhaps have wandered from God; and in the hour of temptation, recalling the holy and peaceful Sabbath days of childhood.

The two mothers sate talking whilst Bessie, proud of her charge, carried the baby up and down the garden path, the other children chattering merrily somewhat to Mrs. Grey's scandal.

"Dear me, said the latter, as a merrier laugh arose, "how tiresome it is that children won't learn to be still and quiet on Sundays. There's Bessie, now. I was dressing the others for church this afternoon, and only turned my back for a minute, when, what must she do? but get out and talk to those Burrells, who know neither fear of God nor man. They told her they were going cowslip-gathering to Westberry, and set her longing, so when I called her in to finish dressing, she turned sulky and said she didn't want to go to church, and fell a crying, when I scolded her till she wasn't fit to be seen. But I gave it her and set her down to learn her catechism, and say it off to her father without a mistake to-night. She won't want to go gadding again in a hurry, I've a notion. I'm determined my children shan't break the Sabbath like their neighbours, if I teach them nothing else."

“Don't you think, by being over strict, though, you may make them rather dislike Sunday, Mrs. Grey, and so, when they grow older, be the more likely to break it.”

“No. I was always brought up to keep it holy; my mother, good creature, had eight of us, and we never missed our church, that I can recollect; we never went out to idle and play as some of the neighbour's children did. Look at those Panks. I'm sure every one of those girls is a walking sermon on the evil of Sabbath-breaking. ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he won't depart from it.’ Solomon said that, Mrs. Wright, and he was wiser than you or I.”

“I did not mean to excuse Sabbath-breaking, Mrs. Grey, far from it; but I do think it should be made a happy day to children; and we can't expect a child to spend it just as we do, who can reason. I do think, and you must excuse my freedom, that to keep children at work with religious books or church all Sunday is so unlike what a child can understand, or relish, that it is likely to make him dislike Sundays; and if he dislikes them when he is little, he never loses a sort of distaste for the day. So don't you think the best way to make the little ones keep it holy, is to teach them to love the God of the Sabbath. They will then love it naturally, because it is his own day, just like as they do our birthdays.”

Very different were the tea-tables of the Greys and the Wrights on this Sunday evening. The father of each family had returned from the afternoon service at their respective places of worship, each sitting down to a clean and well-prepared meal in an orderly and comfortable house,—but the dove of peace was not on each home threshold alike; the spirit of love and content was banished from the Greys' dwelling. The children had been restless at church, and when called upon to repeat the text, could not remember a word. After tea was over, and the

little ones were hurried to bed that the mother might attend an evening service, the elder children sate gloomily at the window, watching the neighbours pass the gate, or the boys and girls playing in the lane, and counting the moments when the long, dull, weary day should close, and bed-time, the happiest hour of the twelve, should come.

A little sadness there was on Anne Wright's face that night, as she busied herself among the children, for a vacant chair was by the table, and she thought of the dead lamb of the little flock; but she was not mournful when she spoke to them, nor did she expect that their young thoughts would continue to dwell as her mother's heart dwelt on the absent child. Besides, had she not a world of comfort in those who were spared? Willie, the eldest boy, he who had been the self-willed petulant little actor in that buttercup and daisy scene long ago, had gained many a victory over sin and self since that time, and the mother rejoiced in the hope that her first-born child was a child who loved God's word, and often sought his strength in prayer. Annie, now a useful and active little damsel of thirteen, was her right hand, and a great help with the little ones, neat-handed, and not afraid of work, but with a few of the faults of her age and of elder daughtership especially, which now and then disturbed the domestic peace and made her parents anxious. She was fond of being uppermost, ever sought the highest place, had a little hankering after change and gaiety, a little taste for a smart ribbon, and some considerable share of a love of gossip, which required a check.

These Sunday-evening meals were seasons of heart-outpourings; and in this quiet time they talked over the family joys and sorrows without reserve. It was felt to be a day of union as well as a day of rest. They never dreamed of cherishing an unkind thought, of concealing a fault, or of keeping back a cause of anxiety or trouble on a Sunday; for on Saturday nights the mother had always heard

any little tale of trial or temptation. By Sunday morning every heart was lightened by the knowledge that there was nothing to conceal; and on Sunday evening there came a peculiar gush of family love and confidence, which bore abundant fruit. Around that humble board the family might be likened to soldiers upon a battle-field, withdrawn a little from the camp, and gathering up fresh strength and wisdom for the fight from taking counsel together. Willie would tell of his week's trials; the boy with whom he worked, that bad, hard boy, whom his father had begged the master to try a little longer, was still no better—so idle—so mischievous, and he set such a bad example to the rest. Did the father really think that it was any use trying him on? And the father smiled and said, "Yet another week;" and reminded Willie of the seventy times seven which the Saviour spoke to Peter when he asked how often an erring brother should be forgiven. And Willie resolved that he would try and win Frank Burrell yet, and would watch over him for good; for Willie knew how much and long, not only his Heavenly but his earthly father had borne with him. Then Charley would tell how the obstinate fits still troubled him at school, but how the good marks really did increase in number, and how the multiplication table was mastered at last; at which there was a general hum of triumphant approval, for Sunday was a day when if one member of the family rejoiced, they all rejoiced together. Every one felt glad of Charley's victory over stubbornness and multiplication; and more than one remembered how pleased Nelly would have been, that loving, gentle, patient Nelly, who had so often won her wilful brother to obedience and love. Nelly was felt to be very near to the children on this Sunday evening. Thoughts of this buried one, now an angel in heaven, mingled naturally with the Sabbath communings of the little flock, and conscious that one link of the family chain

was drawn up to heaven, more than one heart, Willie's especially, breathed the prayer, that the whole might one day be seen there unbroken, and the father and mother's souls joined in the unspoken petition. But this was an earthly Sabbath, and as such, liable to earth's distractions. The little ones were growing sleepy. Baby tired of the nursery carpet, Jamie and Joe rubbing their eyes and wanting to get down. So while the mother and Annie cleared the table, William Wright took the little restless ones on his knee, and the second girl began the honourable task of undressing baby for the first time, a rich treat to her, and therefore reserved, like many other simple pleasures, for Sunday.

The father told pleasant baby stories to his boys, and Annie and her mother divided the labour of washing up. Meanwhile, one of the most mischievous of the family, and one at the most mischievous age of four years, little Polly by name, was providing amusement for herself in imitating her elders, and with cloth in one hand and blue plate in another, was fancying herself a very useful personage. So long as her labours were confined to the blue plate, all well and good, and Annie took no notice of the little maiden, beyond an occasional injunction to "*take care.*" But soon the child, made bolder by success, exchanged the plate for a mug, and this mug bore a name now almost sacred in the family—the name of Nelly. It had been a birthday gift to Nelly from her grandmother, and was a dying gift to her favourite brother Charley, to be used, as she had used it, only on Sundays; and no small store did Charley set by the treasure. Soon a loud cry from Polly, and an expression of anger from Charley, brought the mother to the scene of woe. The little possession of her buried one lay on the kitchen floor, broken into numberless pieces, and Polly stood aghast, whilst Charley's anger, exchanged for bitter grief, broke forth in passionate tears.

Mrs. Wright was a quick-tempered woman, but one accustomed to self-control, and she had need of it now; for between vexation at Annie's carelessness in allowing Polly to touch the precious relic of the little sister, sorrow at its loss, and sympathy for her boy Charley, the conflict was very great. Annie, like most conceited people, never for a moment thinking of herself as to blame, began to scold Polly, and Polly to cry, so that the whole household was in a short storm. Nothing could replace the mug, that was certain; and at this unlucky moment Mrs. Grey came in to borrow a Sunday book which Willie had promised her eldest boy, and which she only hoped was "proper;" and hearing of the misfortune, joined her voice against the luckless Polly, who stood perfectly confounded at the grave importance attached to that which she said she could not help. "I should whip her soundly if she were mine," said the disciplinarian, that's the only way to teach children care."

"I never whip my children, and I don't like punishing for an accident either," said Mrs. Wright, picking up the scattered pieces; "I should not have been vexed, if Polly had broken a plate, and she does not know that she has broken something of greater value; so if I were to scold her, it would only be to give way to my own temper without doing her any good.

"Come, Polly, you are sorry, I know, leave off crying so loud and I will kiss you, and so will Charley, I'm sure;" but Charley was not to be brought round.

His father drew him aside, and they went into the garden together.

"Your mother is as sorry as you that the mug is broken, Charley. She loved Nelly better than you can do; but see what an example she sets you, my boy, and think how you add to her grief by giving way to a temper which would grieve Nelly too. Go quite

alone there behind that shed, where Nelly used to sit and think and pray, and see if kind gentle thoughts don't come:" and the child went, but the struggle was a hard one.

Annie's conscience began to tell her, that she had, perhaps, been a little to blame; but she was still too proud to confess that she had seen the child take up the mug, but knew she should have a battle if she tried to take it, and was in fact gazing at the moment at the smart Miss Panks, who passed gaily dressed for their summer's ramble. It was now half-past six. The storm was hushed at last, baby fed and asleep in its cradle, and Joe and the youngest of the children in bed; but Charley would not yet be reconciled, and still sat behind the shed on an old wheelbarrow, trying hard to persuade himself that it was all love for Nelly which made him hold back forgiveness from his little sister.

The father and mother were going together to worship that night, leaving Willie and Annie in charge; and as they passed the nook where Charley sate, the mother turned and sighed. He looked up tearfully in her face.

"I shall pass Nelly's grave to night," she said, "and I shall join in singing with 'Angels round the throne,' her favourite song, you know; don't let me carry a heavy heart to God's house, Charley." He kissed her, and she knew that he was softened.

Her example of patience had been of more value than many a precept; and thus, believe me, my sisters, will you find it in the training of your children. Be self-denying yourselves, and your little ones will follow your example; be calm in reproofing sin; shew in your manner, rather than by many words, that while you are displeased with the offence, your heart pities the offender, and the child will be won to penitence—will be softened to confession, more than by volumes of sharp reproofs and bitter upbraidings. Mothers! a solemn thing it is to deal

with children's sins. Be tender and compassionate, therefore; think of Him who wept over Jerusalem, and, as he patiently bore with the sin and frailty of his followers, hath left us an ensample that we should walk in his steps.

I have dwelt long on Sunday—its duties and its privileges, because I believe the day of rest to be peculiarly a day for the sowing of that good seed which it is the mother's to scatter. Some of the happiest and holiest memories of the best and most useful of men have been connected with their childhood's Sabbaths. The sailor on the blue sea, amid many who fear not God nor keep his commandments, or landed on some heathen isle, where Sabbath bells are never heard, and the glad tidings of the Saviour's love are unknown, will remember, perhaps, some calm Sunday evening in England, when he stood a little child, with brothers and sisters beside him, at his mother's knee, and listened to her simple teaching, or heard her voice in the soft hymn of praise. And he cannot shake off the thought that it is the Sabbath still, and that the lesson learned in his cottage home to keep the one day in seven holy to God yet bound him, and that though the waters of the great ocean divided him and that home, the eye of God was upon him. The servant-girl in her place of many duties and hard work, will not forget, though others may, that the day is still the same, though the scene is changed; and that although she no longer hears her father's kindly teachings, or pours out her troubles and anxieties to his patient ear, the God whom her father loved would be her God; and that though her fellow-servants might laugh at her scruples when she turned from their foolish mirth and silly show to her quiet Sunday thoughts and her little Bible; the Saviour marked her, and saw in her remembrance of the day which he had blessed, love to his name, and to his service. A very important piece of news was brought to the Wrights a few weeks after the Sunday I have described. It was brought by Mrs. Pank.

A lady whom she nursed, wanted a girl in her nursery to assist the upper servant, and she had thought of Mrs. Wright's Annie, who had often told her girls how she should like to go out to service. A capital place it was; plenty of good living, a mistress who was easy, and troubled herself very little in the nursery, if the children were only kept quiet; and the upper nurse was her own daughter Sophy. Mrs. Wright did not look so grateful as the eager Mrs. Pank expected, however, and only said, after she had finished, "I don't know what to say."

"Not know what to say! oh, very well; hundreds would jump at it; but pray why shouldn't the place do? I'm a mother, Mrs. Wright; and do you think if the place wasn't a proper one, I should recommend your girl to it?"

"I believe I am very particular, Mrs. Pank; but I think one can scarcely be too careful what sort of place we put our daughters to at first going out. Annie is young, and, like all girls, needs some looking after. I don't fancy the idea of her first place being where the lady is so easy."

"She would be under my girl Sophy; but perhaps you are too proud for that."

"Not too proud; but still I don't think that servants are always good mistresses over one another. Your daughter has not much experience, and perhaps Annie might get into careless ways, which would be hard to cure."

"Well, I can soon find a girl, I dare say," said Mrs. Pank at last, rising in some dudgeon. "I shall try at the Greys; they are tidy people, and I have no doubt in times like these, when food is dear, they will be glad enough to have one of the many mouths filled. These are no times, I say, for over nicety."

Again, Mrs. Wright thanked her neighbour and apologised for her seeming ingratitude; but Mrs. Pank made a very cold answer, and left the house in evident displeasure.

"Oh, mother," said Annie, as soon as she was gone, why didn't you let me go to Mrs. Russell's? I do so want to get out to service, and Jenny can do in my place at home, why mayn't I, mother?"

"I will tell you, Annie. First, and chiefly, I did so because you are not fit for it; and secondly, because Sophy Pank is no fit companion for you. You are very young, Annie, and need to be with girls wiser and better than yourself, not with those even more giddy and less anxious to do right. You know nothing of service. I mean your first place to be one where you are taught to do everything in the best way. I might have put you out a year ago to common places, where you would have learned nothing well: but I liked better to keep you with me till I could find a safe, fit place for you, my dear, with some good mistress who will teach you your duty, and watch over you strictly. My mother, Annie, had, as you know, a large family of us, and she always said, that a great deal of girls' well-doing in life depended on the first start in service. I had an aunt who thought nothing of that, and so long as she could get her girls out, she did not trouble much where. She used to say we must put up with a few things we don't like for them, because they have never been out before, and it won't do to be too particular; but I hold we can't be too particular. If you don't learn to be a good servant in your first place, you are far less likely to be one in your second."

"Oh mother, live and learn, they say."

"Yes, live and learn, Annie; but let first lessons be good ones. Now sit down and mend that stocking; baby is asleep, so lay her in the cradle; that is one lesson for you which will serve you in a lady's nursery as well as your mother's cottage. Nursing a child when it is asleep does harm in two ways. It teaches you idle habits, and is an excuse for laziness. You sit dreaming with the baby on your knee, when you might be doing something better—

needlework, dusting, half-a-dozen things; but I want to tell you about my cousin. You like a tale, you know; and Annie, don't be sorry dear about this place; 'tis likely you feel a bit disappointed, but don't you think I know best?"

The girl was touched with the tone of sympathy; she saw that whilst her mother's wisdom crossed her will, her mother's love pitied her disappointment, and she looked up cheerfully and said, "Yes mother, I *know* you do."

So Mrs. Wright began her story. She was not idle, I must tell you, for the tale was often broken by her walks to the fire-side to take out another heater, and the click of the ironing-box (for it was the day after the weekly wash) mingled with her pleasant voice; and Annie, seeing her mother so busy, darned the while in sober earnest. "There was not much wonderful in Lucy's story, my girl; only as I said my aunt put her out to service too young. It was a hard winter, and there were several of them, and a place turning up as nurse-girl in a tradesman's family, Lucy went. She was a clever, handy girl enough, but she had as yet many things to learn. Well, she was pleased enough to get into this tradesman's house, where the work seemed easy compared to that of home. There were only two children, the youngest a child of six months, and she used to have to take them out every day into the country, and keep them out as long as they would be good. Her mistress was busy all day long in the shop, and saw very little of them; and Lucy thought it a famous thing to be so much of her own mistress. So she liked the life well enough; and being used to children, it never came into her head that she had anything to learn. But she got into sad idle gossiping ways with other nurse-girls; and when they all got clustered together in the fields, I'm afraid they did not think much of their charge. There they used to sit telling their silly tales to one another, and letting the children play together, pick up stones, and grass,

and dirt, and make themselves as dirty as possible; and then if they tumbled down, or began to cry, or made their clothes very bad, up used to jump Lucy, shake and scold the little dears because they did not take care of themselves, and keep out of the harm from which it was her business to keep them. The youngest of these children was very fat and heavy; well, I have seen Lucy sitting on a seat in one of those fields, and let that heavy child bear its whole weight upon its legs, long and long after it got tired and fretful; and soon the mother wondered why the legs grew out, and why the child, though it used to be so healthy and active, showed no signs of standing alone at thirteen months old, as the other child had done. It was no wonder at all, nor was it astonishing either that it was always catching colds, and having its stomach out of order caused by sitting on the damp grass, or having sweet things given it to keep it quiet.

“In a year, Lucy left that place and got another, and very much disappointed she was to find she could not keep it. Not only had she learned no good, tidy servant's ways in her first place; but by being left to herself, she had got into a great many bad ones. Her new mistress, who was a good manager, and looked well after her nursery, lost patience; the nursery was dirty, the children only half washed and attended to, the linen unmended, the baby always fretting. It was no use to tell the lady that she was never found fault with in her last place, nor called idle and dirty, and muddling there. She was dismissed, and could not persuade her mistress to give her a character as a nurse; for the lady, who, though a little strict, was a wise woman, very truly said, ‘A little dust on our tables, a little carelessness to our furniture, indeed, may not matter so very much; but one act of neglect to a child may peril its life, and I will not recommend you as nurse again. So Lucy went out as housemaid; but bad habits again followed her. She had learned in that one year of service

to slight her work, and do nothing well; and what was worse, she had learned to like her own way best, and to be unwilling to alter. So she went on changing places, but never changing her conduct; married at three and twenty;—and oh, Annie, may you never know the miseries of a home like hers! She does nothing well; she loves her children and her husband, for she is not a bad-hearted woman, but she is what may be well called a muddler; and from her dislike to trouble, and her love of gossip and small talk (learned, I believe in those nursemaids' walks), she is as bad a manager, as shiftless a wife, and as unhappy a mother, as any one I know; and I should not like my girl to be such a one. But come, lay the cloth, dear, and make haste; father will be here in no time."

Ellen Grey, shortly after this conversation, went to live as fellow-servant with Sophy Pank; and there was no lack, you may be sure, of good advice on this occasion of first going to service; but, unfortunately, Mrs. Grey often wasted words, and by the very profusion with which they fell from her lips, they were counted of small value. Better are the few words fitly spoken, seasonably given, and uttered in a loving spirit, than those long orations, full of sharp, hard, biting truths, which fall on the ear, irritate the temper, but never reach the heart. I am afraid you would not even read Mrs. Grey's parting counsel were I to write them—and I am very sure that her daughter's thoughts were far away, long before the lecture was concluded. A great mistake, and one into which we mothers, in the mid-day of life, frequently fall, is that of setting up our own youthful doings as models of imitation to our daughters. "I never did so and so when I was a girl." "When I was your age, I had learned to make every article of dress I wore;" or, "Before I was old as you, I had made my father and brothers a set of shirts each, and knitted all the children's socks." Or if it be a matter of obedience

—“I never dared to answer my parents, or to question their orders;” or of indulgence—“I was never craving to go out and about;” or of dress—“I never wore any thing but dark-blue cotton printed frocks when I was a girl, and a lighter one of the same material for Sundays;” and so on, through a long list of acts of self-denial, and other domestic virtues, which our girls will take the liberty of doubting, let us boast of them as we may. The fact is, that although we have lived long enough to learn a great many things, we have also lived time enough to forget a few, and it is very possible that a great many of our deficiencies in early life have passed from our memories; and whilst experience has taught us a few useful lessons, and has shown us how much the practice of the duties we enjoin adds to home comfort and peace, we are in danger of drawing pictures for our children’s instruction, not of ourselves as we really were, but as in our present advanced state of sobriety and propriety, we see that we ought to have been. “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” may be a useful text for us mothers.

Well, Ellen Grey went home to her place with abundance of wise maxims in her head, and with a secret feeling of relief in her heart at the comparative freedom which she could not but anticipate in her new life. And in the mean time, Anne Wright was looking out for a safe asylum for her dear child, and dropping “here a little, and there a little,” as occasion offered, of sound practical advice, which was sure to be remembered, because it was advice suited to the time, and always given in a cup sweet and rich with sympathy. Mrs. Wright did not, moreover, choose a nursemaid’s situation for Annie, although one or two offered as tolerably eligible. She knew that in the choice of a business for a boy, taste and fitness for the peculiar work he had to do would be considered, and she saw no reason why the same rule should be overlooked in the choice of service for a girl. Ac-

cordingly, when Mrs. Fletcher, the silversmith's wife, in Park street, who knew and respected the character of the family at Barker's Buildings, came to her cottage one afternoon in autumn, and offered to take Annie as nursemaid to her first child, Anne Wright respectfully declined. Seven pounds a year, to become eight on the second, did not tempt her, nor did the easy pleasant face of the young mother in all its inexperience and freshness, nor her kind, fair promises, alter her resolution.

"You see, ma'am," she replied, "Annie is as good a girl as most, and has, as you say, been used to children; but I don't, for all that, call her particularly fond of them; and if a girl isn't in her heart fond of little ones, not only when they are good, and healthy, and pretty behaved, but loving them when they are tiresome, and fretful, and restless, with that sort of love which will bear all things, and try to make them better, I don't think she can be called *fit* for a nursemaid."

To like a nursemaid's place, and to love little children, strangers' children too, were very different matters, as Mrs. Wright knew; and although it might seem natural to love children, there were other loves quite as natural, and still stronger in girls who were lively and fond of pleasure—love of gossip, love of ease, love of sleep; all of which were not exactly in keeping with earnest love of little restless beings like young children. In short, Mrs. Wright summed up all her objections in these words,

"I am afraid, ma'am, that my girl might fail in her duty to your baby, because I know her disposition well, but I am more afraid she might come to harm herself. Few girls of fifteen can stand the temptations to idle talk and gossip which are placed in a nurse's way, at least, mine could not; but I know a neighbour's daughter, ma'am, who is really fit for the place; she is two years older, and a steady, thoughtful, good girl, who has known trouble early, and who, ever

since she was ten years old, has been her ailing mother's right hand, and almost a mother too to her brothers and sisters—she does love children. Many a time when she has put the little ones to bed at her mother's, she has come in here to ask if she could lend a hand, and has been quite disappointed if the baby were in her cradle, and of her own accord she has come and carried it out for me, when her little sisters (for they have no baby) were going into the fields, and says, she is so sorry their children are now getting so big; for she couldn't live, she thinks, away from children. The mother can spare her now, and asked me the other day if I heard of a place, to let Milly know; but it must be a nursemaid's." To Milly's home Mrs. Fletcher went accordingly, and soon engaged the stout, plain, but good-tempered looking lass, whose eyes overflowed with joy on the news, and whose tones were those of unmixed delight as she answered the question, "Do you like children?"

"Oh, dear, yes, ma'am, indeed I do."

Mrs. Fletcher suggested, that "some children, babies especially, were troublesome; would not always be quiet when we were tired; wanted to be danced and played with when our arms and backs ached; disturbed our rest at night; and as they grew older, did not exact less patience and attention, but more."

"Yes, I know that, was the reply; we were all babies once. It is not children's faults that they are young and helpless, little dears. It is so nice to think we can take care of them, and keep them from danger; and I hope," she added very humbly, "God will help me to do my duty to the baby, and to love it so well, that I shan't think about what I like, but what is good for that, bless it."

Mrs. Wright judged very rightly in recommending Milly Parkes to the lady with her first child, as years of faithful service proved, for Milly not only loved children, but she loved and feared God, and God was her guide in guiding them. Annie was, therefore,

not to be a nursemaid ; and one day in the Christmas week, after having waited so long for the right place—that Mrs. Pank laughingly told her neighbours, that Mrs. Wright was looking out for a situation for Miss Annie, where she was only to be kept to be looked at, and was not expected to work—William Wright and his eldest daughter stood on the step of a large house on the Downs, a ladies' establishment it was called, thus contradicting Mrs. Pank's somewhat spiteful assertion ; for certainly, as under housemaid in a school of twenty young ladies, there was not likely to be much idle time on the hands of Annie Wright.

A staid, demure servant of forty opened the door, and spoke a few civil words to the father, expressive of her hope that his girl would be happy, which she was sure to be, if she did her duty ; and he committed her to the care of the old domestic, whose character had stood the test, as he knew, of many temptations for a long course of years, with his fatherly blessing, and left his child, for the first time, beneath a stranger's roof.

Poor Annie, she cried very heartily as she unpacked her things and took out her mother's parting gift, a new Bible, in which the loving hand had written her name, no great specimen of penmanship indeed, but it was her mother's writing, and there was a slip of paper too within its leaves, with these words in the same hand—"Dear child, never forget to read this book every day, to pray God for help and wisdom ; and if you are in trouble at any time, remember you have a loving mother." Ah, and a Christian mother Anne Wright might have added, who, when her child was gone, went into the little bed-chamber in which death had already made one blank, and poured out her soul in prayer for the absent one ; never perhaps, so fully thanking God for Nelly's safety in heaven, as in that hour when Annie was first launched out from the haven of home-shelter on to the sea of life.

As William Wright was returning to comfort his wife for the loss of her eldest girl, he had to pass through the crowded streets, busy with preparations for Christmas, and thronged with passengers whose errands all appeared to be the same—that of purchasing some Christmas fare for the morrow. His good wife's preparations were all made, he knew; the yearly gift of the white farm-fatted pork from Berbury was even then hanging in his Anne's clean larder; and the plums, not many in number, it is true, were then in the course of stoning by the honest little children, who consoled themselves for Annie's departure in this sweet service. He had nothing to buy, good man, nor if he had, was there money to spare for Christmas dainties; but it needs not rich Christmas fare to make joyous hearts at that glad time. He rejoiced that the Saviour was come into the world, and he realised the blessings which the Redeemer had purchased for him, and which the angels had proclaimed at Bethlehem, even peace and good-will, and he was going to meet those happy spirits even now in his cottage home. He cared not for the treasures of those lighted shops then, nor coveted for his children any gifts at Christmas tide, but gifts of Heavenly price. The day of rest from his hard labour was right welcome in prospect, and his step was light as he turned it on his homeward way.

Standing beneath a lamp-post, his hat slouched over his face, his arms folded, and his whole appearance one of reckless misery, stood a tall, thin, pale, and ragged lad, who now and then asked charity of the passers by; and as William Wright could discern by the gas-light, looked almost appealingly in his face and seemed half to ask alms of him, poor man as he was; but there was that in William Wright's face, which was in itself a gift; he had a loving, kindly, compassionate look, and was like his Master, who went about doing good. He seldom passed by on the other side if there were sorrow to relieve, and Sama-

ritan-like he stopped now. Silver and gold he had none, but he had that which sometimes does more to comfort than coin—kindness, and he said,

“Poor lad, it’s cold work standing there, with a cough like that too; hadn’t you best go home?”

“Home!” how bitterly the lad laughed “home.”

“You have got one, I hope,” answered William.

“Not as I know of, was the answer; perhaps you can tell that best, I hav’nt been in Riston this two years, and I’ve had no home this long while, but such a one as is no particular honour to speak of, yet as good as any I ever knew too.”

“Surely,” cried William Wright, recognizing at length in the poor outcast’s voice a familiar tone, “surely you can’t be John Wilmot!”

“Aye, but I am; and perhaps you can tell me where my folks are, for I’ve heard nought of them since I came out of Riston bridewell a year ago.”

“And where have you been since?”

“Oh, seeing the world a bit, living as I could, sleeping as often on the road-side as under a roof, and hungry oftener than you ever were, I warrant.”

“Your mother has left our parts and is living down somewhere by the water-side; my good woman knows, and if you will walk along with me, she will direct you; come, it isn’t far, and I should like to know you were safe at home before Christmas morning dawned, any how.”

“Where’s the governor?” he asked shortly.

“Your father left (he would not say “home” this time) a twelvemonth since. Your mother is very poor; and oh, John, what a comfort her eldest boy might be to her!” He did not answer; and William Wright felt how little there was to work upon in a heart which had been early chilled by the evil influences of a bad and neglected home; no softening memories, no holy, tender associations were his, poor lad; and they walked on silently. They reached the

old scene of the Wilmots' struggles and strifes, when John paused at the door of his childhood's dwelling.

"Mr. Wright" said the lad, "you think me very bad. I know you do; and if it was broad day instead of dark night, you would blush to walk by my side, and yet you urge me to go *home*; home, where I never learned good, where, from morning to night it was all quarrelling, and crying, and sobbing, dirt and misery. I tell you, in the place they put me last, I was better lodged, better taught, better cared for than there. Don't send me *home*."

Childish voices now fell on their ears; the little Wrights were singing some Christmas carol in their cottage kitchen, and the sound was softening and sweet, even to the prison lad. When William Wright entered, he saw his first-born's arm was round his mother's waist, for there had been tears in that mother's eyes, tears for the two absent ones from the Christmas hearth. What a contrast between those two boys, once play-fellows together in the green meadow lands near Riston. The one, with all the freshness of childhood, and the budding strength of the man, supporting and cherishing her who had once so cherished him, and she rejoicing in his support. The other, with all the sad premature experience of one familiar with vice, standing on the threshold, as though scarcely worthy to enter such a home. Poor fellow! Anne Wright bade him welcome, gave him the best of the coarse meal, wrapped, with her own motherly hands, an old scarf of her Willie's round his neck, and sent him on his way, with a few kind words, but without one reproach. And had he no sermon preached to him, think you, that sin-hardened lad? Ah, yes, the sight of those loving-hearted ones, the voice of that kind matron, the unity of that Christian home, spoke powerfully to the wanderer; and as he followed the directions to his wretched mother's dwelling, he wept like a child.

It was but going home to die, and the bed of death

was not to be smoothed by the hand of love, nor the passage to immortality cheered by the voice of hope and peace. Amid squalid, neglected children, and sounds of anger and disunion, where the little spark of mother's love which still outlived the wreck of domestic joys scarcely suffered to lighten the darkened dwelling, where one elder sister had already begun to tread the path of infamy, and where the sound of the Saviour's name was never heard, did the youth linger out a few days of his suffering life, cheered only by the visits of the kind-hearted Willie, or his mother, who, from time to time, sate by the dying bed, and spoke of Jesus; or Anne Wright told of Nelly, of her humble walk, and of her peaceful death, when the boy's eyes would moisten; and he began to wonder, and at last to hope, that Nelly's Saviour would be his. And so he died.

"He is gone," said Willie to his mother, one bright day in early spring, on his return from the daily visit to the dying boy. "Oh mother, mother, what do I owe you and God for my home! It seems to me that Nelly's heaven must be sweeter than his can ever be, even if he is there; for mother"—and the boy spoke reverently—"Nelly's will but be a continuance of her old home life, better and happier, of course, because holier; but he will have to learn those home feelings there; and it seems it is wicked, mother, to say that he will feel more like a stranger there, than a child at home."

That very night, trouble came to two houses in Barker's Buildings. Sophy Pank and Ellen Grey both came home from their place in disgrace. It was in the twilight, and the poor paralytic old man—now almost confined to his bed, more from the difficulties which always seemed thrown in his way by his giddy daughters when he proposed to rise, than from actual inability to do so—was alone when his daughter Sophy, flushed, and in a state of great disorder, entered the cottage, and announced the fact of her dismissal.

Violent spasms, which always attacked her poor father on any sudden excitement, followed, and Mrs. Wright was called in to assist in his recovery. He remained so ill, however, through the evening, that she proposed sending for his wife, but he resisted it.

"No use, no use," he murmured. "Oh, Mrs. Wright, what shall I do? My girl's character lost, she were better dead. Sarah was out in the country at work," he said "she was often out now, and there was only the youngest girl at home, who was out on an errand, and always staid so long; would Mrs. Wright sit a little longer?"

She complied cheerfully, her heart ached for this broken-spirited father; and after a little talk with Sophy—who seemed far more angry than penitent at her dismissal—she returned to the sick man, who could not even look at his disgraced daughter with composure. It was not a first error; those walks with the children had been temptations too powerful for Sophy to resist. Meetings had been appointed continually with one of the soldiers in a regiment quartered at Riston; and whilst Sophy was amusing herself with her lover, poor Ellen was compelled to take charge of three children in addition to the baby, and to keep them happy and quiet. This was all very well, she thought, once now and then; but when it became a settled thing, she resisted, and had to be bribed into compliance. If she could, at this critical time, have made up her mind to confide in her mother, and to seek her counsel, much future evil might have been prevented; but she feared her mother more than she feared sin. Oh, woful result of an education of *fear*! And thus, from very timidity, the evil grew, and Ellen was daily weaving around her a web of deceit and concealment. A fortnight previous to her dismissal, the nurses had gone out for their morning walk; and Sophy, according to her almost daily custom, had left the children on the Downs, whilst she stole to her usual appointment with the soldier. It was a cold,

blustering day, the children became fretful, and Ellen, to pacify them, took them into the cottage of a charwoman—formerly in her mistress's employ—who had, on several occasions, for value received in her master's property, rendered services to the cook, from whom Ellen now bore a private message. Only two of the charwoman's children were in the kitchen; but one of them directed Ellen upstairs, where she said her mother was, and leaving the three elder of her charge to amuse themselves with the Watsons, Ellen hurried up with the baby in her arms to execute cook's commission. Mrs. Watson sate on a low chair with a child in her arms, breathing heavily, its face crimson with fever, and its head rolling restlessly from side to side; another child was in bed, and Ellen hurriedly asked if the children had anything catching; and being assured it was only a cold, despatched her errand, and went down quicker than she had come up. The little ones below-stairs were not in such a hurry to leave, however. The elder boy was particularly amused in dressing himself up in an old red woollen shawl, which hung on a chair, and would not obey Ellen's frightened summons. At length, they were fairly out of the house, but were met at the gate by the parish doctor.

“You have not been taking those children in there, I hope! for they have scarlet fever; one child is dying of it. Go home, tell your mistress the truth, and let us hope no harm will come of it.”

Poor Ellen, she did not confess the truth, till her sin found her out. Scarlet fever appeared among the children shortly after, and terrified at her own share in the cause of the mischief, she owned her faults to her mistress, and Sophy's misdemeanours to their full extent, at the same time. Dismissal was the consequence, and the ruin of one girl at least confirmed.

Mr. Pank never recovered the stroke; his death-bed was a mournful scene. His daughters, one and all, and in greater or less degree, left the paths of virtue

and respectability. He died, bitterly lamenting the neglect of small evils in his children's early days. And as soon as the grave closed on his sorrows, the home at No. 4 was given up—a home, alas, only in name—when Mrs. Pank betook herself to lodgings during the few intervals of leisure which her busy and outwardly prosperous life permitted. She is still in high favour as a nurse, still receiving ample payment for her services; but her money is a source of constant dispute between her and her ill-doing children. The married ones are always worrying her for loans; the single ones, disgraced and wretched as they are, working on her motherly compassion, and a dreary evening of life awaits her; no loving daughter, no steady son, longs to bid the aged mother welcome to his hearth. As she has sowed, so must she reap.

The story is, alas, too true; let us lay it well to heart, and see if any of its lessons apply to us. Ellen Grey was received with bitter reproaches to her angry parent's home. It was less the sin, than its consequences, and disgrace, which her mother dwelt upon; and the girl's heart was left hardened.

She obtained in time another place, but whatever her temptations may be in service, she keeps them secret in her own bosom, and there are rumours in the Row, that more than one of those strictly-trained children, are threatening, at no distant time, to break bounds, and to show that fear will never soften one young heart to penitence, or woo one wanderer to the path of truth and rectitude. Many a Mrs. Grey will respond to this assertion.

And Annie Wright was not perfection; her heart was full of folly; her conduct often marred by girlish faults, but she was true. Perfect love had cast out all fear, and if she erred, her parents were sure to know it. Once indeed, and early in her history of service, she was dismissed from her place for a grave error of disobedience and thoughtlessness, but she poured out

her sorrows and her penitence into her mother's bosom, and was forgiven, nay, welcomed home as the prodigal. A new life might be dated from that time, and Annie Wright is a happy illustration of the good effects of a training of watchful love, in a peaceful and well-ordered christian home.

And now, before I lay down my pen, feeling, how much on this subject I have left unsaid; how far better, perhaps, I might have said it; how imperfectly, after all, I have entered into the many secret trials of a poor man's home, and how far easier it is to write or talk wisely, than to *practise*, let me say yet one or two parting words of encouragement and hope.

Yours is a great work, and your hindrances are many; but do not forget that He who made you mothers, and made you poor mothers, too, knows and considers them all, and both can and will help you, if you ask Him. He sees the oft-tried weary woman, with her little flock clustering around her; he knows the temptations to temper and impatience, hasty words and hasty blows, of which, more prosperous and less hard-working parents know nothing. He sees the struggle for daily bread, the hard, hard trial of faith and patience. He knows that all husbands are not industrious, nor just to their wives and families. He knows too, that among crowded neighbourhoods, the children of the best parents will sometimes learn habits and words of those less carefully-trained, at which the poor mother trembles. He sees, in short, that your life is one of difficulties and sorrows; but does He *only* see? "He saw her and had compassion," was said of Him, when He looked at the weeping widow. And so in your trials He sees you, and has pity on *you*. Only go to Him in your difficulties, only ask His help in your up-hill path. Tell Him *all* your trials, yes, even the least, and see if you are not helped and strengthened to bear them. Ask Him for patience, He will give it; for wisdom, He will not deny you; for a blessing on your efforts with

the children, He will not break His word, for He has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive," "Only believe, and all things are possible." He who taught us to ask for daily bread, will never scorn the least or humblest petition, so fear not to make your requests known unto God.

And oh! what a day will that be, when, with all your children, you shall be gathered into the home which the blood of the dear Saviour has purchased for all His believing ones; a home, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor sighing.

Mothers, let us take courage. Ours is a high privilege, that of leading our beloved ones to such a home. And let us remember, that in our earthly homes, whether in hall or in cottage, the education for Heaven must begin, for home is the training-school for Eternity!

Finis.



