

Married Life
in
Sacred Story.

Carson.



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BY

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“And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, ‘Wilt thou go with this man?’ And she said, ‘I will go.’”—
GENESIS 24 : 58.

CHAPTER I.

WOOING AND WEDLOCK.

THE story of the Wooing and Wedlock of Isaac and Rebekah occupies the longest chapter in the book of Genesis, a chapter containing sixty-seven verses. Apart from its spiritual significance, the story is interesting and valuable as a narrative of early social and domestic life.

Six persons are brought to our notice, and the essential elements of their characters are revealed. Abraham, the tall, sun-crowned man of his age, is represented as an active, authoritative, positive man. Even in his old age the assertive traits of his character predominate. In the narrative he appears as old and lonely. Sarah had died a little while before and he is stricken in heart as well as in years, and yet he is thinking and planning for the marriage of his son. Isaac does not appear to have given the subject much thought, but his father was so concerned about it that he sent Eliezer to select a wife for him.

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The incident reveals the positive character of Abraham, but, at the same time, it discloses the negative character of Isaac: it furnishes a pen-portrait of the two men which is true to their prevailing characteristics. Abraham was the strongest character among the patriarchs, Isaac was one of the weakest. He was a good man, but a negative man. He was peaceful, pleasant, harmless; in a word, colorless. He did not have positiveness enough even to look for a wife for himself, or to do his own courting. His father and Eliezer had to do this for him.

But Isaac is not so much to be blamed as he is to be pitied. He was the victim of a home training that suppressed the stronger elements of his character. He was the pet of his mother, while his father thought and planned and acted for him. His weakness grew out of his father's strength. If Isaac was a *nobody* it was because his father was such an emphatic *somebody*. In the beginning of his life Isaac was controlled by his strong-minded father, at the close of his life he was controlled by his strong-minded son, and during the time he was not under the direction of these, he was controlled by his decisive wife Rebekah. Doubtless there was government in Isaac's family, but I do not think that Isaac maintained it. Rebekah was too positive a character to be directed by the easy-tempered Isaac. If Isaac

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stood alone, apart from father, wife and son, a very small niche in the halls of history would hold him. He does not seem to be distinguished for anything, except, perhaps, the digging of wells, which he weakly surrendered to any parties who demanded them. His mildness and peace loving spirit approached very near the edge of cowardice.

The conditions are reversed in the family of Rebekah. Bethuel was the weak character and Laban, his son, was the assertive, positive character. In the portrait of Laban's early manhood, given in this chapter, are seen those characteristics which appeared so prominently in his later life. He was shrewd, plausible, cunning; quick to see what would be of advantage to himself and ready to seize it. In Laban, the boy was father to the man.

The tendencies of childhood and youth are the germs of those forces which determine and control the manhood. These tendencies must be watched and directed if the manhood shall be filled with rectitude and crowned with success. The failure of many can be traced to the fact that their boyhood tendencies were ignored, while the success of others is due largely to the wise encouragement and direction given to those boyhood tendencies. Benjamin West attributed his success as an artist to his mother's kiss. When a youth, he sketched his

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baby sister asleep in her cradle. In the rough outline his mother saw the evidence of genius and in her pride and appreciation kissed her son. In after life West was wont to say, "That kiss made me an artist." It was an approval of the boy's tendency and strengthened it. The tendency of the boy became the ambition of the youth and the achievement of the man.

Indifference to the bent of a youth's mind, thwarting the drift of a boy's life, trying to make a preacher out of one who was built for a blacksmith, or a blacksmith out of one who was destined for a preacher, means failure. A round peg in a square hole or a square peg in a round hole is not a success, and the failure is due not so much to the shape of the peg as to the circumstance or power that placed it. A father was provoked at his boy for spending so much time in making clay figures, and "to take the nonsense out of his head," secured him a position in a grocery store. But never were customers more grotesquely malserved. The young clerk would give lard for butter, and salt for pepper, and vinegar for molasses. He became the toss-ball of alternate mirth and reproach between the customers and employer. One evening he received from the grocer a permanent leave of absence with a recommendation to a patient farmer who had some ditch-

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ing to do. But he did this work no better than the other, and, before a quarter of a day had passed, was given leave to rest from his labors. Sad and disappointed he sat down on the roadside and absently began fashioning out of clay an image of the indignant farmer. A passer-by saw it, was impressed with the lad's skill, questioned him, was moved to champion the awkward young genius, and lived to see him a sculptor, famous and wealthy.

Watch the bent of youth. Repress the Laban traits of deceit and cunning ; give direction to the Isaac traits of trust and conscientiousness. Let the tendency of the boy indicate the direction of the man. Make the youth conscientious and self-reliant. This means future manliness and a future career crowned with respect and honor.

The interest of this narrative centres, however, not so much in its historic characters as in its picturesque unfolding of the early customs of marriage.

The wooing of Isaac and Rebekah was unique. They played secondary parts, their parents being the principals. Abraham does not seem even to have consulted Isaac in the matter, but, of his own accord, sent his servant to procure a wife for his son. I do not know but that this was a worse evil than the present custom of the young people settling the matter entirely

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themselves. Of course the consent of the parents is asked, but it is a mere formality. The usual method is illustrated in the case of the young man who went to a father and said: "I have come to ask the hand of your daughter, sir." The father, desiring to learn something about the young man's ability to provide for a wife, asked: "Well, what are your prospects?" "O, pretty good so far," was the answer, "Minnie has accepted me and we have decided on the day for our wedding." All that was left for the father to do was to give his blessing and foot the bills. Perhaps the old method of the parents settling the matter entirely themselves was not the best. Neither is the modern method. The parents' wishes and experience and hearts ought to be consulted. Parents lovingly and helpfully interested in the future of their children are solicitous for their highest welfare. For those children to enter life-long relationships without the approval of their parents, who have sacrificed and toiled and hoped for them, is a crime that no tears of penitence can ever wash out. The happiest marriages are those that have the parental blessing.

The wooing of Isaac and Rebekah was done by proxy. Isaac was engaged before he knew it. Rebekah was betrothed to a man she had never seen. Abraham was too old to go himself to the land of his people to select a wife

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for his son and, evidently not having much confidence in Isaac's judgment, he sent his trusted servant, Eliezer.

Arriving in Mesopotamia Eliezer took his position at one of the public wells, knowing that the young women would come thither to draw water, and from them he could select a bride for Isaac. He offered a prayer for direction and waited. In a little while a beautiful maiden appeared. Eliezer followed the plan outlined in his prayer. (Genesis 24:14). The girl fulfilled all the conditions and Eliezer concluded that she was to be the wife of his master's son. He went to her home and stated his errand to Mesopotamia. His offer of marriage being accepted, presents were given to Rebekah and her relatives, and the next day Rebekah left her home and kindred on a journey of 500 miles to meet her betrothed. However pleasant and dear the home may be, when a woman gives her love, her home thereafter is where her heart is.

As they drew near the home of Abraham, Rebekah noticed a man approaching and asked: "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" Eliezer answered, "It is my master." Isaac had gone into the fields at eventide to meditate. It is easy to imagine the subject of his meditation. It was not casually that he lifted up his eyes in the direction in which Eliezer would return from Mesopotamia.

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Recognizing Eliezer, Isaac hastened toward him and Rebekah alighted from her camel to greet him. There was a flutter of two hearts at that moment. Isaac had been wondering what kind of a wife Eliezer would bring him and Rebekah had been picturing to herself her future husband. Each was pleased with the other. Rebekah was a damsel of surpassing beauty. Isaac was an amiable man of forty. The name Rebekah means "a noosed cord." Soon the noose was around Isaac's heart. He took his beautiful bride into his father's tent and the two lived happily together for many years.

Such is the story of a happy marriage where the wooing was done by proxy. It is not necessary to express any deprecation of this method of courtship. The young people of to-day are not likely to follow the example of Isaac and Rebekah. They want to do the wooing for themselves and they are right. It is pleasant business and the probabilities are that the wedlock will be the happier where the wooing has been done by the wedded couple. Marriage is too serious a matter to be dealt with by attorneyship. The only condition on which the wooing can be done safely by proxy is where the angel of the Lord directs as definitely and as clearly as he did in the case of Rebekah. But even in such a case the services of an Eliezer had better be dispensed with.

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This whole narrative beautifully illustrates the perfect harmony between the Divine direction and the human action. Eliezer's mission having proved successful, he bowed his head and worshipped the Lord, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth; I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." What a terse description of divine and human co-working is the phrase, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." God's action and Eliezer's action supplemented each other. Eliezer surrendered himself to God's control and God led him. There was nothing forced about the leadership, nothing unusual. Eliezer saw no visions, dreamed no dreams, heard no voices, and yet the Lord led him. Doubtless Eliezer travelled the ordinary route from Hebron to Haran and in the usual way. Arriving at Nahor toward evening, he stopped outside the city at a spring, which was a natural thing to do for his camels were thirsty. The women came out from the city to draw water, which, the narrative naively remarks, it was usual for women to do at that hour. It is not surprising that among the women who came out to draw water was a cousin of Isaac's, for this was Abraham's home-
stead and that is why Eliezer went there. Rebekah's giving water to the stranger and his

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camels was only in line with the general and generous hospitality of the Orient. Every detail of the story shows the naturalness of the Divine leading. There was nothing irregular to suggest interposition. Everything came along quietly, naturally, and yet, says Eliezer, "the Lord led me." And so He did and so He leads men to-day in the steady and ordinary events of daily life. Being in the way the Lord leads us. Devoutness does not take the place of sagacity. Sagacity is not a substitute for devoutness. The Lord points out the way for those who look to Him, but He usually points out the way through our sagacity and obedience.

A third Oriental custom of marriage revealed in this narrative was the paying of a marriage price. This marriage price was regarded as a compensation due the father for the loss of the services of his daughter and was always exacted in labor or in money. Our Western customs have reversed the practice somewhat, without materially changing the principle. Instead of the girl being paid for she now often pays for a husband. Foreign fortune hunters with a title seldom fail in the American matrimonial market. It has become the laughter of the world that American women of wealth and culture will sell themselves and give their fortunes to boot for a foreign title. Americans are fast becoming the worshipers of rank and station

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and mammon. Married life cannot thrive on mere titles or money. A marriage, according to God's ordinance, is a union of hearts and not of purses. I do not underestimate the purse, but money must not be put in the place of love. The purse as a substitute for the heart means misery. When Cupid has changed his name to Cupidity marriage becomes a mockery.— A marriage for anything else than love is a humiliation to the dust and a crime crying to high heaven for vengeance. Marriage is a glad, free, loving surrender of heart to heart. This is the vital lesson taught in this old narrative of wooing and wedlock.

Stripping the story of its Orientalisms, I find that it suggests the essential conditions of true courtship and the basal elements of happy marriage. It emphasizes the place of religion in marriage. Isaac's wife was not to be chosen from among the women of Hebron. She must be a Jewess. She was not to be a worshiper of idols but of the true God. Many have made shipwreck of married life at this point. I know that Cupid does not study theology, but in marriage one cannot be indifferent to religion. God's word clearly indicates that a believer should marry only a believer, one who has the same faith in Almighty God. The marriages that have proved failures and the homes that have been blasted because of indifference to religion

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in the matter of wooing and wedlock emphasize the warning of God's word. Job's experience is an illustration. His tormented life was worse tormented by a wife who had no faith in his God and "whose only prescription for his carbuncles was allopathic doses of profanity." In later years the experience of John Wesley, whose wife used to sit in City Road's Chapel and ridicule while he preached; the experience of blind John Milton, who, on being told that his wife was beautiful as a rose, answered: "I believe you, for though I cannot see the beauty I constantly feel the thorns"; the experience of Frederick W. Robertson, the great preacher, whose wife had no sympathy with his religious life and work; the experiences of hundreds whose lives were embittered by wives out of sympathy with them in the highest concern of their being, emphasize the sacred duty of considering the matter of religion in wooing and wedlock. God's warnings cannot be ignored with safety. His directions cannot be discarded with impunity.

A second condition of true courtship and happy wedlock, emphasized by this story, is that Divine direction should be sought. Eliezer prayed fervently that the Lord might direct him in the choice of a wife for Isaac, and prayer is just as necessary where the wooing is done personally. There have been so many

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wrecks on the matrimonial sea that every one embarking on a new courtship ought to secure Divine pilotage. But the prayer for guidance should precede the wooing. A young minister going to the foreign field was concerned about his marriage. He was engaged to a beautiful and cultured young woman but was not certain that she would make a good wife for a missionary. Going to his room one evening, and finding his room-mate apparently sleeping, he knelt and prayed audibly for direction. The room-mate was much impressed with the young missionary's faith and piety, but greatly amused when, after a petition asking God to send him a good wife, he fervently added, "But, O Lord, let it be Betsey." To this the room-mate heartily responded, "Amen." Eliezer was wiser than the young missionary. Eliezer prayed before he saw any of the women of the land. The prayer for direction should be offered before one has become fascinated, magnetized, won.

After prayer, judgment is to be exercised. Sentimentalists may ridicule judgment in wooing, but a marriage based merely on sentiment has a weak foundation. Eliezer prayed, but did not depend wholly on prayer. He exercised his own best taste and judgment and his decision was influenced by four considerations. The first was the girl's personal appearance. Eliezer noted that she was "fair to

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look upon." Beauty of person has always had a charm. A beautiful face, lit up by the light of a good conscience and a true heart, will never lose power in the world. The beauty that secures lasting admiration and continues to sway men after the face has withered and the lustre of the eye has grown dim, is beauty of soul, loveliness of character. Bayard Taylor, in his poem, "The Quaker Woman," has put the thought in this pleasing paragraph :

"I once heard Jesse Kersey say : 'A spirit clothed
with grace,
And pure, almost, as angels are, may have a homely
face ;
And dress may be of less account ; the Lord will
look within—
The soul it is that testifies of righteousness and
sin.' "

Eliezer looked beyond the beauty of the girl to her personal character, as we learn in Genesis 24:16. One of the basal conditions of marriage, in the thought of Eliezer, was purity, and that is a basal condition to-day. Purity in the woman and no less purity in the man. The man has a right to demand that the woman he marries shall give to him a pure, white life, and he has no right to offer the woman anything less than he gets. It is an unrighteous sentiment which condones certain offences if committed by one sex, but which, if committed

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by the other sex, means social ostracism. Morality knows no sex. A Delilah is no more to be condemned than a Samson. A Messalina is no more to be ostracised than a Don Juan. The brush that paints the one black cannot paint the other white.

The conduct of Rebekah was a third consideration that weighed with Eliezer. She was a practical, working girl. This was seen in her coming to draw water. The life partner, man or woman, ought to be one who is capable and not ashamed of honest work. An idler is unfit to marry. A young fellow expressed to his friend the regret that he could not marry her because of his inability to properly support her, and she answered: "Do not worry about the support. I would rather live in a cottage on bread and water with you than in a palace with any one else." He met the heroic love of the girl with the answer, "Well, if you can get the bread, I will manage to get the water." What a farce it makes of a marriage ceremony when a young man, unable to support himself, puts a ring on a girl's finger and says: "With this ring I thee wed and with all my worldly goods I thee endow." What a mockery! A man of honest work, of hand or brain, is the only one who has a right to marry. And equally so of a woman. A woman has no more right to be an idler than a man. The trend of senti-

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ment is fast changing and the day has passed when it is considered more fitting that a young woman can make candy than bake bread, more becoming to paint poor pictures than keep books, more seemly to embroider slippers that no one can wear than to make dresses. I have no quarrel with the arts. I like them. I love the woman who has a bit of poetry in her make-up and gives thought to the cultivation of the artistic in her life and home. But I protest against the demeaning of honest toil by the sentiment that those employments which are the least useful are the most lady-like. Rebekah was an accomplished girl, according to the standard of that country. She could not play the piano, nor the guitar, nor do we know that she could paint; but she could work, and, as Mr. Beecher suggests, "that was an accomplishment very much in vogue at that time."

The family of Rebekah was the fourth consideration that weighed with Eliezer. Being satisfied with her personal appearance, assured of her purity of character and pleased with her practical life, Eliezer enquired as to her family and was greatly pleased when he learned that she was of the family of Abraham. (Genesis 24 : 23, 24). Blood counts. The aristocracy into which every man and woman ought to seek an entrance by marriage is not the aristocracy of

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wealth, or social rank, but the aristocracy of character and godly ancestry.

This whole narrative emphasizes the value of sincerity, frankness, downright honesty in all the relations between man and woman. Eliezer told at once his mission and explained the circumstances of his master, then he learned all about Rebekah and her family and everything being satisfactory to all parties the marriage contract was sealed. There would be less misery in wedlock if there were more honesty and frankness in the wooing. Courtship is the vestibule to marriage. The wooing is as sacred as the wedlock. There should be no deception nor assumption. A young man and young woman meet. She is beautiful and accomplished. He is genial and generous. She sees a saint and he sees an angel. They sit down in the lover's seat with rare delight. They have roses for meat and dew for drink. There is a rainbow in the morning and a rainbow at noon and a rainbow in the evening. The wedding-day arrives. A brilliant company has assembled. There is joy and expectancy everywhere. The bridal party approaches the altar, the ceremony is begun, the vows are spoken, the ring is placed upon the finger and the minister says: "By virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of the commonwealth, I pronounce you husband and wife. Ye are no longer twain, but one flesh and what

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God hath joined together let not man put asunder." A new bark has put out on the sea of life freighted with high hopes. God grant that it may escape every rock and shoal. There is one rock that it will escape if the wooing has been frank and honest—the discovery of uncongenial traits. It is a crime for one to conceal his real character and misrepresent himself in wooing. —Honesty and frankness in the wooing days mean happiness and joy in the years of wedlock. When young people marry as sinners they are more likely to live as saints than when they marry as saints and find out afterwards that they are only sinners.

In wedlock each should live for the other and seek the other's interest. Marriage is based on the principle of sacrifice. On the morning that fair Rebekah was asked, "Wilt thou go with this man?" and she answered, "I will go," she took her life in her hand and laid it on the altar of love. No true woman has ever gone to the marriage altar who did not make a sacrifice. She gives up all to be guided and controlled by another and even loses her name in his. She gives herself to the man and the man should not give less than himself to her. The deadly canker of domestic infelicity, which is destroying so many homes, would itself be destroyed if husbands and wives lived each for the other. "Two souls with but a single thought,

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two hearts that beat as one." Thus would every home become a temple of love and joy and peace, a Bethel, a dwelling-place of God.

The great unifying and joy-making power in every home is Jesus Christ. If the home shall be radiant with joy and joyous with love, Jesus must be enthroned in every heart and reign in every department of the home life.

This incident of early home life is a picture portraying the way to Christ. The question asked Rebekah, "Wilt thou go with this man?" is the message to every one concerning his attitude toward Jesus Christ. "Wilt thou go with Him?" The response which Jesus requires must be a response like that of Rebekah—free, full, loving, a response of mind and heart and will—I will go.

It is an intense, throbbing moment when a young man and young woman stand before the marriage altar and plight their love one to the other till death do them part. But what after death? Will death write the decree of eternal divorcement? It need not. By the grace of God every couple who stand side by side at the marriage altar, may stand side by side at the throne of God. "Wilt thou go with this man?" and she answered, "I will go." The Holy Spirit, the waiting angels are listening for your answer. Wilt thou go with Jesus? and let everybody answer: I will go.

CHAPTER II.

THE PATRIARCHAL HOME—ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A HAPPY HOME.

“And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.”

—GENESIS 21 : 33.

GOD called Abram to leave his Haran home in order that through him He might form a people for Himself. Abram became a wanderer on the earth in order that the purpose of God might be fulfilled. During twenty-five years he pitched his tent from place to place and had no permanent residence until he came to Beer-sheba where he planted a tree, erected an altar and settled down to the enjoyments of home life. This is as near an approach to the home as we can find in patriarchal times.

The home is not a tent or cottage or palace. The home is the centre of family life. Instead of being lonely wanderers on the face of the earth God has ordained that men shall be grouped together in families. It is a violation of Divine no less than of human law for one to

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be born into this world outside the pale of the family. "God setteth the solitary in families." The family is the unit of society. The human race is not divided into individuals, but into households.

In its essential characteristics the home is the same to-day as it was in the time of Abram. Civil government has changed. There is a vast difference between the democratic forms of government of to-day and the paternal governments of patriarchal days. The church has changed. Between the home-made altar at which Abram worshipped as priest of his family and the system and life and worship of the church of to-day there is a difference even greater than the stretches of years between the two. But the home, in its essential characteristics, is the same. In its inception, the home is the union of one woman and one man in holy wedlock. Back of the home lies marriage. Marriage, according to God's institution, is the union of two persons to the exclusion of the third. The first marriage ceremony was performed by Almighty God amid the fragrant flowers of Eden and is the model for all marriages. It was the union of one man and one woman. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone and He made woman, and brought her unto the man, and the Divine edict went forth that a man shall "leave his father

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and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." All the teaching of the Bible by direct precept and historical incident is in line with this ordination of marriage. It is only quibblers of the Ingersollian type who can find any support for polygamy from the teaching of the Bible. Any theory or practice which tends to weaken the mutual life-long loyalty of one man and one woman to each other is an unmitigated curse to the community. The foundation of a happy home is the marriage and life-long union of one man and one woman.

Such being the foundation of the home, we pass on to note the elements out of which a happy home is built. And as the beginning, middle and end of all, I name love.

"For a woman—tender, beautiful, buoyant with bright anticipations of the future—to leave father and mother and give herself to the one man of her choice, is love's sweet surrender. For a man—strong, brave, noble, full of high resolve—to link himself with the one woman of his choice, is love's precious victory. And for these two to take each other for better or for worse, is love's blessed union." Around this loving union of two lives in holy wedlock, which alone renders possible a pure society and a permanent state, the law should build its utmost safeguards, and upon this union the

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Gospel should pronounce its most sacred benediction. But the happiness of married life is not secured by legal protection nor by church benediction. It is the result of the reign of love in the home. Keep the fire of love burning and there will be a cheerfulness and a glow and a warmth in the home. To keep that fire burning you must feed it. The fire of love, like that of fuel, will burn out unless you give attention to it. The courtesies and attentions of life, which cost so little but mean so much, are the best fuel for love's fire. George Esmond well says: "It costs but a little effort to open the door daily for the coming husband by the hand he loves the best in all the world, but it will make that hand a sceptre, and fill the womanly heart behind it with a peace more than earthly." Those sweet courtesies, little refinements, charming attentions which made the wooing days so sunny, will make the marriage days just as sunny.

Love in the home. Love between husband and wife, love between parents and children, love between brothers and sisters. It ought to be that a young man will receive from no one that help which will enable him to live nobly so much as from his own sister, until the time that he stands beside the sister of another who is willing to become more than a sister to him. A young woman ought to be

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able to turn to her brother as the nearest one in all the world to her until a betrothed, lover or husband stands at her side. The world has been deeply touched by the tender, pathetic story of the love of Charles Lamb for his sister, Mary. In an insane moment Mary had taken the life of her mother. During all her subsequent life she was subject to periods of frenzy, and at times became so violent that it was necessary to confine her in an asylum. She lived with her brother, who watched over her with all the love and care of a mother. The violent fits of insanity were always preceded by symptoms which both recognized and at their first appearance the two would start off for the asylum. A friend of their's relates that on one occasion he met brother and sister weeping bitterly as, hand in hand, they slowly paced together a little foot-path across the fields, and joining them he found that they were on their way to the asylum. This occurred frequently. But despite the black shadow over it, the home was a happy one. For thirty-five years the unselfish devotion of that brother and the loving appreciation of the afflicted sister made the home of Charles and Mary Lamb a paradise. Love is the foundation of a happy home. Home ties are made secure and home life is made happy by the patient knitting of soul to soul, by the gentle growing of life into life.

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A second essential element of a happy home is unity of interest.

The home of John Wesley was not a happy one because of his wife's lack of sympathy with him in his life-work. It was a divided home. The home of Charles Spurgeon was a model of happiness. It was a united home. Mrs. Spurgeon was deeply interested in her husband's life-work and cordially co-operated with him. Herein is the secret of a happy home—husband and wife entering into each other's plans and work. Marriage means that husband and wife shall walk arm in arm through life, up the rugged way and down through the dark ravine, and if one trembles the other ought to be reinforcement.

This unity means that there shall be nothing in the life of either from which the other shall be shut out. A New York broker shut his wife out from his business plans and methods and the end was suicide. A Brooklyn bank cashier shut his wife out from his business life and methods and is now in the penitentiary. Many of those who now fill dishonored graves or occupy felon cells might have been saved if they had admitted their wives into all their plans and projects. "I do not know where my husband gets all the money that he spends on his family and home," said a wife, "but he deals it out bountifully to us." That wife

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should have known where her husband got the money. She should have been so indented with his life-work that she would have known the sources of his income. The home ought to be a cabinet where the affairs of life are talked over. Franklin used to say, "a man who would thrive must ask his wife." A Scotch clergyman, while going through a village, was requested to officiate at a marriage, in the absence of a parish minister. Just as he had told the bridegroom to love and honor his wife, the man interjected the words, "and obey." The clergyman, surprised, did not heed the proposed amendment. He was going on with the service, when the groom again interposed, with emphasis, "Ay, and obey, sir—love, honor and obey, ye ken!"

A few years afterward the clergyman met the hero of the wedding incident. "D'ye mind, sir, yon day when ye married me, and when I wad insist upon vowing to obey my wife? Weel, ye may now see that I was in the richt. Whether ye wad or no, I hae obeyed her, and behold, I am the only man that has a twa-story house in the hale toun!"

This unity of interest means that there shall be a cordial sympathy between husband and wife. The ambitions, plans, successes, failures, burdens, struggles of the husband should be shared by the wife. By her sympathy and

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cheer and by the inspiration of her love, she should be strength to his heart, helping him in the fierce struggle of his daily life. Here are true words from another :

“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 a loving welcome. To the artist at his easel come fairer visions to be transferred 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, tranquilizing 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

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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."

Unity of interest is at once secured and manifested by cordial sympathy. That sympathy leads to co-operation. The great scientific authority on bee life is the Geneva naturalist, Huber. He was blind from his seventeenth year, but so thoroughly did his wife enter into his life-work that he was able to master that branch of natural history which demands the keenest eyesight. Having no eyes, his wife became eyes for him. His mind was able to work through the eyes of his wife as well as it could have worked through his own. All the world has read and praised Tom Hood's lines of beauty and power, but all the world does not know that not a sentence was given to the public until it had been read, criticised and re-read by his wife. Robert J. Burdette, America's honored humorist, says concerning the help which his invalid wife gave him in his work: "Each manuscript was read to her before it went to the paper. She added a thought here and there, suggested a change of word or phrase, struck out entire sentences and pet paragraphs. How well she knew what not to

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print!" By the example of Mrs. William E. Gladstone, who is so one with her husband that he is absolutely dependent upon her, by the example of Mrs. Roebing, who so thoroughly entered into her husband's life and work that, when his health failed, she was able to take up and carry to completion the work on the great bridge that now makes New York and Brooklyn one; by the example of ten thousand women who have been cheer and inspiration and help to their husbands, I plead with wives to enter into the life plans and work of their husbands with all the sympathy and judgment and love of their womanhood.

A third essential element of a happy home is that it shall be a place of rest, refuge and joy.

Dr. Talmage says: "Life is the United States army on the national road to Mexico, a long march with ever and anon a skirmish and a battle. At eventide we pitch our tents and stack the arms, we hang up the war-cap, and with our head on the knapsack we sleep until the morning bugle calls us to marching and to action. How sweet it is to rehearse the victories and surprises and attacks of the day, seated by the still camp-fire of the home circle!" There is immense comfort in the free abandonment of home. This spirit should prevail. There are some homes which are everlastingly in order. There is no graceful abandon, no easy pose,

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no busy, joyous life with its living rivulets running into parlor and dining-room and library and hall. Everybody is afraid to talk above a whisper ; for a boy to whistle is a crime and to step heavily is an unpardonable sin. It is no wonder that the inmates of that home find happier places outside its doors. A dark home makes dark lives. Let the spirit of joy reign in the home.

A fourth essential element of a happy home is that a spirit of culture shall dominate it.

The home is the great school of life. Here the men and women of the future are trained. The life of manhood and womanhood is only the unfolding of the training of childhood. Dr. J. R. Miller has beautifully said: "The poet's song is but the sweetness of a mother's love flowing out in rhythmic measure through her child's life. The artist's picture is but a touch of a mother's beauty wrought out on the canvas. A grand manhood or womanhood is only the home teachings and prayers woven into life and form." The parents' life appears in the lives of their children. Children are the second edition of their parents. There may be something in the second edition which is not in the first, but the general scope is the same.

The home must be a place of culture. That is not a home which is four walls. That is not a home which simply provides one a place in

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which to eat and sleep. The duties of the home-provider are not done when the rent is paid. The duties of the home-keeper are not discharged when the beds are made and the meals are cooked. The home should be a place in which parents and children alike will grow in beauty of character, in refinement, in kindness and in all the christian virtues and graces. To this end the house itself should receive careful thought. The furniture, the arrangements, the decorations should be a matter of concern for all these work themselves into our lives and reappear in our characters. If the home consists of only two rooms crowd into it as much educating power as possible.

Attention should be paid to conversation. The home should not remind one of a deaf-and-dumb asylum. Nor ought its chatterings to remind one of an insane asylum. Conversation should be enriched by thought, influenced by love, enlivened by wit, seasoned with piety. Thus will it become instructive, elevating, in every way helpful. Backing up conversation there must be example. Home culture should not be so much concerned with the development of the mind as with the building up of the character in those graces and virtues that will make the life beautiful and strong. The most potent influence in character building is ex-

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ample. The children will follow where the parents lead. If a father wants his boy to lead an upright, straightforward, christian life, let him set the example. Nineteen-twentieths of the christians in this land to-day are the children of christian parents. The old slanders about the parson's son and the deacon's daughter are not true to fact. The majority of ministers are sons of ministers. Example tells. The boy's ideal is his father. He longs to be with him. He wants to be like him. At a public dinner a father had just ordered wine, and the waiter asked the son, who sat in the next chair, what he would have. It was the boy's first attendance at a banquet ; he was a little puzzled as to what he should order and finally said : "I will take what father takes." The father overheard his son, called back the waiter and said : "Bring me water, not wine." All fathers may not overhear the words, but all boys are daily saying : "I will take what father takes." The boys follow where the father leads. Parents often wonder that their children drift out of the church, and they come to the minister and urge him to get their children interested in church life and work. The best way to get the children interested is for the parents to become interested themselves. The boy sees his father so absorbed in business that he cannot give any attention to the church or its work, and, by and

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by, the boy will come to have such pressing engagements that he, too, will have no time for church. When parents make the path, they may expect their children to travel it. My father was in a business that absorbed his attention from six o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night, but he kept the prayer-meeting night sacred, and every Wednesday evening found him at church. Had he stayed away, his two boys would not have been there very often. It was the same way with the church. I never remember him being away from church. He set the example and it was easy to follow. Parents would give their lives for their children. Let them give the benefit of an uplifting, saving example. Let them be what they would have their children become.

I have pressed this point especially on fathers because there is a tendency to relegate the training of childhood to the mother. If it must be that either father or mother shall do this work alone, then, for the sake of earth and heaven, let it be done by the mother. Her influence is tenfold that of the father. But it is wrong, dangerous, and often fatal, for the father to neglect his duty in home training. It is unfair. It throws upon the mother burdens that two can hardly bear. About all that some fathers do for their families is to provide food and clothing and a house and to do that they

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are away early and home late, so that they are practically strangers in their own home. One Sabbath afternoon a little fellow was crying very bitterly. His mother ran to him, asked what was the matter and was told: "The man who lives here on Sundays hit me." That is about all some children know of their fathers. It is a caricature, but every caricature has some foundation in fact. If the store is more important than home, if dollars are more precious than souls, then men can afford to give all their time to their business interests. Parents should enter into the life of their children. Know where your boy spends his nights. Get acquainted with your daughter's companions and friends. Be poor, if necessary, but have the enjoyment of a genuine home life and make your home the most attractive, the most joyous, the brightest spot in all the earth.

The last element of a happy home, that I mention, is religion.

Wherever Abraham went he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. The family altar, as an expression of the faith and religion of the family, is an essential element in the making of a happy home. "Without religion the family will be as a splendidly-furnished parlor on a midwinter's day without a fire to cheer and comfort." The pervading spirit of the home should be religious. I plead for an altar in

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every home around which the family may gather morning and evening and render to their God prayer and thanksgiving and praise. The hurry of modern life, the eager demands of an increasing business, the cares and distraction of social life, all combine to overthrow the family altar. With the abandonment of household prayer and Bible reading there goes out one of the great elements of a happy home. Do not allow the family altar to be broken down. I know that in this dawn of the twentieth century busy men are hard pushed. They have to get up early and return home late. But get up earlier rather than go forth to the day's duties without seeking Divine guidance and blessing. Dr. H. M. Wharton says that about the only objection he ever had to the farmers of his native state, Virginia, was that they got up before day and took breakfast by candle light. He tells of a Northern man who spent a few days among them, and when he returned home reported that the Virginian farmers were the most hospitable people he ever saw; they would wake him up in the night and give him something to eat. If you cannot do otherwise, wake your family up in the night and have prayers.

But the worship is not enough. There are homes where the prayer is never omitted, and still there is no happiness. It is only when the

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spirit of Christ reigns in the home that there is abiding happiness.

The home, the foundation of church and state, is the centre of these influences which mould character from the cradle to the grave, is the place of preparation for the eternal home in the heavens. The earthly home should be the vestibule to the house of many mansions. A brave fellow was carried into the hospital at Gettysburg. The surgeon saw that the wound was fatal and that the man had only a little while to live. Learning that he had a wife and mother living in Philadelphia, the surgeon asked if there was any message that he would like to send to his mother. "Can't I get better, doctor?" asked the wounded man. "No," was the reply, "the wound is fatal and you have only a few hours to live." After waiting a little while the doctor repeated his question: "Is there any message that you would like to send to your mother?" "Yes," came the answer as the tears rolled down the hero's face, "when I have died, tell my mother that I have gone home." A little later the doctor asked: "Is there any message you would like to send to your wife?" At the mention of that loved one the tears flowed the faster and there was a little more tremble in the voice as he answered: "Yes, tell her that I have gone home." Waiting until the doctor saw that the end was near

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he assured the dying man that he would deliver the message, "but," added he, "is there no other message that you would like to send?" "No," was the reply, "they will understand it all when you tell them that I have gone home." "*They will understand it all when you tell them that I have gone home.*" There is no word that I would rather speak to those who stand about my death-bed than this, "I am going home."

"When breaks each mortal tie
That holds me from the goal,
This, this can satisfy
The cravings of my soul—
I'm going home."

Heaven is home! The path into the heavenly home leads through the earthly home.

"When soon or late you reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May you unite, no wanderer lost,
A family in heaven.

The hope, prospect, anticipation of that home gathering sanctifies and makes happy the earthly home.

"From the sweetness of home will our spirits arise
To the "home of the soul"—sweeter home in the skies!
There, there with our loved and our lost we shall meet,
The circle of home be forever complete."

CHAPTER III.

MARITAL RELATIONS PERVERTED.

“But there was none like unto Ahab, who did self himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel, his wife, incited.”—1 KINGS 21 : 25.

IF there ever was a case of crowned imbecility it was that of Ahab, the seventh monarch of the kingdom of Israel. And the crowning act of his imbecility was his marriage to Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. The history of that marriage is only melancholy. It is darkness without a ray of light.

Ahab was the son of Omri and succeeded his father to the throne of Israel. The inspired historian condenses the history of the reign of Omri into two sentences: “Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him.” The same historian thus condenses the history of Ahab’s reign: “Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.” Given an Omri you may expect an Ahab. “A man is a quotation from all his ancestors.” The

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child is the prolongation of his parents. A man lives in the grooves that were cut for him before he was born. Before Omri gave the throne of Israel to his son Ahab he had given him the inheritance of a weak character. He had bequeathed to him a selfish, capricious disposition, loose principles of morality and a bad example. Omri did worse than all that were before him, and Ahab, following his father, wrought evil above all that were before him.

The fatal blunder of Ahab's life was his marriage. It was a dark day for Israel when Jezebel left the palace of Tyre to become the consort of Ahab. Nothing is known of the early life or the home training of Jezebel, but from descriptions of Oriental palaces, in which the harem was the chief attraction, we can readily imagine the influences by which she was surrounded. The Oriental palace was the centre of the debauchery of the kingdom. Jezebel was a child of the palace and she grew up to be one of the most licentious women whose history is recorded in the Old Testament. She was a beautiful woman, gifted and possessed of a strong mind and a positive will. She combined with the reckless and licentious habits of an Oriental princess, the fiercest and sternest qualities inherent in the old Semitic race. The daughter of a man who held the throne of Tyre by fraud, brought up in the palace of a corrupt

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Oriental monarch, and trained to worship at the altar of a licentious god, it is easy to account for Jezebel's character—crafty, designing, unscrupulous, cruel.

The story of Ahab's life after he met Jezebel might be condensed into four words : Fascinated, married, ruled, ruined. We are not told when or how Ahab met her, but he was fascinated at once. He could not resist her beauty and her blandishments, and stronger men than Ahab have fallen before such powers. Cæsar and Antony conquered the world, but were themselves conquered by the fair Cleopatra. Some of the darkest crimes that have stained the annals of the world have been wrought by strong men under the spell of cruel and depraved women.

Fascinated by Jezebel, Ahab next married her. Against that marriage the history of God's dealings with the race, the law of the land and the warning voice of God all protested. Ahab ignored this threefold protest, married Jezebel, and was henceforth her slave. She was a woman of imperious spirit, was resolute in carrying out her will and so ruled Ahab with a sovereign sway. The twain became one, and Jezebel was that one. If she had been a good woman it might have been well with Ahab. Some one has said that "Deborah would have made a hero of Ahab, and Ruth would have led

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him along the virtuous paths of peace." But I doubt if there was anything in Ahab on which a good woman could have worked. It is hard to make bricks without straw. A man to be saved must be savable. It is pretty hard to find any savable traits in Ahab. Jezebel had a willing victim and so an easy conquest.

The first attempt of Jezebel to rule was in the matter of religion. She was an idolater of the worst type. Her father's name, Ethbaal—man of Baal—indicates the religious belief and practice of the family; they were followers of Baal. Jezebel determined to substitute in Israel the worship of Baal for that of Jehovah, and very astutely set about accomplishing her purpose. The first move was to introduce idols for her personal use in worship. Surely Ahab would not deny his wife that privilege. There is a plausible liberality which puts all religions on the same basis and regards adherence to one or the other as merely a matter of education. The theory rests upon the assumption that there is no distinctively divine religion. That assumption is un-biblical. Judaism was an intolerant religion. Christianity is an intolerant religion. It will admit none other to an equality with it. The most characteristic feature of the Christian system is its exclusiveness. To surrender that would be to surrender everything. There is but one true religion. A

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pantheon of religions in Rome or a parliament of religions in America, which grants all religions an equal standing, is un-biblical. There can be no rival of Jesus. There is only one God and only one Mediator between God and man. Christ has a supreme claim upon "every man that cometh into the world." Christianity is an inclusive and an exclusive religion; inclusive of everything that is good in other systems, but exclusive of them as systems. Christianity is intended to be a universal religion, and hence admits no other to a place with it on a common platform. It stands alone as the power of God unto salvation. What Christianity is in our day Judaism was in the days of Ahab. It had the same quality of exclusiveness. Jehovah knew no equal and brooked no rival. Hence the sin of Ahab in yielding to his wife's plea and admitting the gods of Baal to the kingdom, and allowing them to be worshipped. Some might commend the course of Ahab for breadth and liberality, but God stigmatized it as rebellion and apostacy. Whenever Israel dabbled in the false religions of her neighbors, God's voice was heard: "I am God, and there is none else. My glory will I not give to another."

Ahab made a mistake in building a temple for Baal in which his wife might worship her god. That was all Jezebel asked at first. But

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she was not satisfied to worship alone. Her next move was to win her husband to idolatry. This was not a difficult task, and soon an ivory temple was built in Samaria, a colossal statue of the sun-god was placed in it and Baalism became the court religion. Then, as if by magic, temples to Baal and images of Jezebel's favorite gods arose throughout the land. But the people of Israel were not won at once to idol worship. Jezebel reasoned that it was because the priests of Jehovah influenced the people, and she determined to get rid of the priests. The torch of persecution was lighted. In a little while all the priests had been put to death, except the hundred whom Obadiah hid away. Soon the land swarmed with priests from pagan Tyre, and Jezebel's purpose was accomplished. The people of Israel became idolaters, all except 7,000, and they were so fearful that they hid themselves and hid themselves so effectively that it took God to find them.

Thus Jezebel triumphed, but her triumph was a short-sighted one, as the triumph of unrighteousness always is. Sin is a crime, but it is as much a blunder. Sin is guilt, but it is equally a mistake. It is missing the mark. It is short-sightedness. For awhile Jezebel gloried in her achievement. She saw every hill smoking with sacrifices to her favorite gods, she heard the voices of her chosen priests at every altar. The

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altars of Jehovah were broken down, the schools of the prophets were closed, the prophets were banished or murdered. Baal was the god of Israel, but the Lord Jehovah reigned.

There was a time when the Turk swept over the Christian communities of Asia Minor, cast down the cross and erected the crescent. There was a time when Rome sat upon her ebon throne and stretched her rod of cruelty and oppression across Europe. Then the forces of unrighteousness rejoiced as did Jezebel. But those who rejoiced left God out of account. He has something to say in every crisis and when He arises He reverses with one blow all that is done without Him. He called Constantine to rally the Christian forces and in Asia Minor the crescent waned before the cross. He called Luther to lead the forces of truth and the Vatican trembled, Rome shook, the rod of cruelty and oppression was broken, Europe revived and lived. What God did under Constantine and Luther was only a repetition of what He did in Israel centuries before. While Jezebel and the false prophets were busy in removing every trace of the worship of Jehovah from the land, God was preparing a man who would confront them with their wickedness, overthrow their rule and restore Israel to God.

That man was Elijah. No one knows whence he came. A flash of lightning out of a murky

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sky. A new star appearing in the midnight of gloom and despair. God always has the right man ready at the right time. If Moses cannot longer lead the people, there is a Joshua to assume command. If Eli grows old, there is a young Samuel to light the temple lights. If the Philistine champion defies the armies of Israel there is a young David with sling and pebbles to smite him to the dust. If Stephen be slain, there is a young man who will go away pricked in heart and by-and-by Paul will take up Stephen's message, as from his bleeding lips, and bear it afar among the Gentiles.

Let some enemy arise to trample down the altars of the living God to-day and God will have some thunder voice ready. A man of might will appear to break the impious spell. The church historian of the future, as he closes one chapter of terror and dismay, will open the next with the words: "and Elijah said." Whence will he come? I do not know. I would not have looked for an Elijah in the wilderness. I would not have expected a Paul to come from the Jewish Sanhedrim. I would not have looked for a Luther in a Popish monastery, nor for a Wesley in a ritualistic school, nor for a Parkhurst in the pulpit of a rich and fashionable church. Let the occasion come and God will have the man ready.

Through Elijah God appealed to Ahab. Ap-

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pealed by signs and miracles, by promises and threatenings, by famine and fire. But it was not until after the marvelous manifestation of the Divine presence and power on Carmel that Ahab yielded. Then he told Jezebel all that had occurred. As Jezebel listened to the recital she became enraged and when she heard of the slaughter of her prophets her anger knew no bounds. It was not so much the fact that her prophets had been slain as it was the fear that her power in Israel would be destroyed. At once she sent a message to Elijah threatening his life. Elijah fled into the wilderness and Jezebel once more ruled.

This flight of Elijah is the one pitiable incident in his heroic career. His heroism failed him when it was most needed. Elijah's weakness was in his strongest point. So of many others. Abraham's faith was ideal and yet in Egypt he did not have faith enough to restrain him from falsehood concerning his wife. Moses, the meek man of the centuries, was denied entrance to the land of promise because of his rash utterances. And now Elijah, peerless in all the ages for heroism and courage, fled from his country in her time of peril because of the threat of a woman. There is a suggestive lesson in these incidents. These men failed where we would expect them to stand. They were weak in their strongest point. Dr. F. B. Meyer

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says: "The old castle which from its hills watches over the town of Edinburgh, clustering beneath, was captured only once in the whole history of Scotland; and its capture happened thus: its defenders thought that, on one side, the steepness of the rock made it inaccessible and impregnable; and they put no sentries there. And so, in the gray mist of the early morning, a little party crept up the precipitous slopes and surprised the garrison into surrender." There is a suggestive warning in the story. The point in which you deem yourself impregnable, and which you forbear to watch, will likely be the point in which the enemy will assail you. As old Edinburgh castle was entered from the impregnable side, as Abraham and Moses and Elijah failed in the points in which they were strongest, so you may be vanquished in that in which you deem yourself most safe. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The story of the life of Ahab and Jezebel after the Carmel scene is simply a repetition of the former career with now and then a darker page. The incident which led to the overthrow of both reveals their prevailing characteristics. King Ahab wanted to enlarge his gardens. Adjoining his grounds was the vineyard of Naboth and the king determined to buy it. He sent for Naboth. We can imagine the trepidation of the

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plain farmer when he received the message to go before the king. He prepared himself as best he could and with becoming modesty entered the palace. Ahab told him that he wanted his vineyard and would pay him for it or give him a better one in exchange. But Naboth declined the king's request. He could not sell nor trade his little place. It was the old homestead and as a good Israelite Naboth could not let it pass out of his hands. Naboth was resolute and the king dismissed him. Then Ahab disclosed his character. He went to his room, flung himself on his bed, turned his face to the wall and refused to eat. He was in a pout. If he had been a child it would have been easy to determine what to do with him, but being a king the household was alarmed. Jezebel was informed and she hastened to her husband to find out if he were sick. "No," said the king, "I am not sick, but I am disappointed", and you can imagine the pout on his lips. "I had set my heart," he continues, "on getting that vineyard of Naboth, but he will neither sell nor exchange it and his refusal is more than I can stand," and again he turned his face to the wall. Now the character of Jezebel asserted itself. You can imagine her chiding Ahab. "Don't act so foolishly. Get up and eat your dinner. I will see to it that you get that vineyard."

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She wrote letters in Ahab's name, and affixed to them his seal, summoning the elders to try Naboth for blasphemy against God and the king. When the elders assembled two perjured witnesses swore against Naboth, he was convicted and was stoned to death. Tidings of the death of Naboth were carried to Jezebel who went to Ahab and told him to take possession of the vineyard, for Naboth was dead. Ahab went down to the vineyard and while he was walking through it Elijah appeared and read the death warrant of the king: "In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

About three years afterwards that sentence was executed. Ahab was directing his army in a fierce battle with the Syrians when an arrow struck him. He called to the driver of his chariot: "Drive out of the conflict, I am wounded." In the evening of that day he died, and as the blood dripped from his chariot the dogs licked it up. A little while after the death of Ahab, Jezebel, who continued to occupy the palace, saw Jehu approaching to take possession of it. She thought to fascinate him, and resorted to every device known to oriental ingenuity to make herself look attractive, then went to the window to look out at Jehu. But her rich garments, her painted face and braided hair had no attraction for Jehu. He looked at

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the slaves who were attending Jezebel and asked: "Who is on my side?" Two or three of the chamberlains indicated that they were and Jehu commanded them to throw Jezebel out of the window. They doubtless hesitated but Jehu shouted "Throw her down!" Knowing that henceforth Jehu was to be their master they obeyed, seized Jezebel, bore her struggling to the window casement and hurled her out. She fell to the earth just as Jehu's horses came up and they trampled her under their feet. Such was the violent death of the inhuman Ahab, and such was the bloody end of the fair Jezebel—the bloody Mary of Old Testament story.

The whole story is dark and pitiful, but it is simply an emphatic illustration of the domestic tragedies enacted in every case where the marital relation is perverted. Every perverted marital relation may not be as sad nor its end as ghastly as that of Ahab and Jezebel, but it will be as ruinous. This Old Testament story has its warning message. It emphasizes the sin and danger of perverting the marital relation.

It is a perversion of the marital relation to marry without supreme regard to character. Beauty, accomplishments, wealth—all these are considerations, but they are subordinate considerations. Character is the all-important

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consideration. Ahab was impressed with Jezebel's beauty and gave no thought to her character. Jezebel was impressed with Ahab's position and power and thought not of his personality. Though eminently unfitted for each other by temperament, education, and religious convictions, they married and with them marriage was a failure, total, complete, eternal. So it will be in every instance where character has not been a prime consideration in determining the decision.

It is a perversion of the marital relation when it is made to contribute to selfish ends. Jezebel was selfish in every act and Ahab was so selfish that he did not make any attempt to stay her course. There is a selfishness of action and there is a selfishness of inaction. A selfishness which thinks and plans and acts. This was the selfishness of Jezebel. Prompt in decision, ready in resource, ruthless in action—she adopted any means to reach the point at which she aimed. There is a selfishness which is manifested in an easy, indolent, exertionless life. Such was the selfishness of Ahab. He was one of those men who would rather permit what he feels to be wrong, for the sake of a quiet life, than take the trouble of asserting what he knows to be right. The motto of Ahab's life seems to have been the criminal one of "Anything for a quiet life." Active selfishness

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plus inactive selfishness and you have a description of the married life of Ahab and Jezebel, and at the same time the secret of the wickedness and the ruin of that life.

Married life consecrated to selfish ends is a crime against society. Personal ease, comfort, luxury are not the end of marriage. Marriage is a social institution and the home ought to contribute to the comfort, enlightenment and saving of society. It has been from those homes in which husband and wife have been bound together in some grand purpose for society that the crystal streams of salvation have flowed into all the veins and arteries of our social life. The marriage of De Tocqueville with Mary Motley made possible those writings which will be potential while the world lasts. The marriage of George Washington and Martha Custis gave to our country its heroic figure whose fame and honor grows with the advancing years. The marriage of John Adams and Abigail Smith was so far above selfish ends that in Adams's own words "my wife encouraged me to make any hazard for the salvation of my country's liberties." "A man is no better than his wife will let him be." O, wives, swing your sceptre of wifely influence for God and home and country.

It is a perversion of the marital relation when it is invoked to undo the religious convictions

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or to weaken the religious character of either party to the marriage contract. The whole power of Jezebel was employed to win her husband from his religious life and service. The fault of Ahab was in marrying one who was opposed to his religion. Such marriages cannot but be unhappy. If your life partner not only has no sympathy with but reprobates your religion there can be no happiness in your home. The want of sympathy is bad enough, but when the influence of husband or wife is exerted to destroy or weaken the religious convictions of the other it is damnable. Such efforts should be resisted speedily, persistently, determinedly. After many solicitations a Christian woman was finally induced by her infidel husband to go and hear an infidel lecture. With humiliation and sorrow she listened to the tirade against Christianity and at its conclusion said: "My dear husband, I will not go again to hear an infidel lecture, though my declination should result in our divorcement forever." And she was right. It is not only a perversion but an awful crime against marriage when it is used to overthrow one's faith. It was an awful arraignment that a dying man made against his wife. "Harriet," he said, "I am a lost man. You opposed our family worship and my secret prayer. By your influence I was drawn away from every religious duty. I

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believe my fate is sealed and, Harriet, you are the cause of my everlasting ruin." A marriage perverted. What a marked contrast in the case of the aged man who, on being asked what led him to God, said: "My wife was brought to God some years before myself. I persecuted and abused her because of her religion. She, however, returned nothing but kindness, did everything to promote my comfort and happiness, assured me of her solicitude for my salvation and by her conduct and prayers I was led to God." A marriage fulfilling its grandest and noblest ends. It is not an isolated case. I believe that when the saints of God in yonder celestial home shall be telling of the influences that worked to lead them to God, ten thousand times ten thousand will say, "It was my husband," "It was my wife." God's almighty grace alone can save, but the husband may be the instrument which that grace will employ for the saving of the wife, or the wife the instrument for the saving of the husband. Husband on the way to heaven, see that your wife is journeying with you. Wife, journeying to the eternal home, take your husband with you. Let marriage be the means of the salvation and of the upbuilding of husband and wife in spiritual character. And let the saved husband and the saved wife be the means which divine grace will employ for the salvation of the household.

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A father bent over the bedside of his dying child, the tears were in his eyes and the little fellow said: "Father, please don't cry for me; don't cry. I know I am dying, but when I die and go to heaven I am going straight to Jesus, and I will tell him that all my life you were trying to lead me to Him." Parents, if your child should be called out of your homes to-day could he go with such a message as that into the presence of Jesus? I see you at the judgment. You are giving account of all that has been entrusted to you, attainments, money, influence. Then, as in the case of Samuel before Jesse, I hear the Judge asking, "Hast thou not yet a son?" What shall be your answer? Shall it be: "I wot not what has become of him?" or, as you point to your family about you, will you answer, "Lo, here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me."

CHAPTER IV.

HOUSEHOLD TYRANTS AND THEIR VICTIMS.

“When the heart of the king was merry with wine he commanded the seven chamberlains to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look upon. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.”—ESTHER I : 10-12.

THE beautiful drama of Esther has a dark background. That dark background is the sad, pathetic story of the treatment of Queen Vashti by her royal husband, Ahasuerus.

Ahasuerus was the Xerxes of profane history, the Medo-Persian king “who figured so largely, and for himself so disastrously in Grecian history.” He ruled over an extensive and mighty territory, reaching from India in the East to Ethiopia in the West and embracing a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. He was a typical Oriental despot. Not ungentle nor unkind when things and people pleased him, but capable of almost any extreme of atrocity.

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Of Vashti little is known. She appears in but one incident in the book of Esther, but in that incident she reveals such a winsome and womanly character that all generations have sung her praises.

Esther is the heroine of this story. She was God's instrument in delivering His people. The world has not made a mistake in assigning her a prominent place in its galaxy of heroes. She was a magnificent woman, strong in personal character and grand in her heroic achievements. In the splendid galaxy of Old Testament women no name shines with a richer lustre than that of Esther. Yet, while appreciating to the full the heroic virtues of Esther, I feel inclined to give to Vashti the coronet as the queenly woman of this story. She wrought no great achievement, she accomplished no wonderful feat, but she performed faithfully the duties of her place and maintained her womanly virtue though it cost divorcement from her husband and banishment from the palace.

It is hard to find in all history a more heroic figure than that of Esther as she takes her life in her hand and decides to enter the throne-room of the despotic monarch to plead for her people. Her cry of determination, a mingling of pathos and enthusiasm, has sounded down through the corridors of the centuries, "If I perish, I perish!" Esther, the heroic!

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But Vashti is divine as she sends back the answer to her husband refusing to degrade her sex and sacrifice her womanliness by exhibiting herself to drunken revellers. It was more heroic for Vashti to *refuse* to go into the presence of the king than it was for Esther to go. It is harder to live a quiet, upright life than it is to do a splendid, heroic deed. Isaiah teaches that in a very suggestive passage: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." The close of that verse sounds very much like an anti-climax. If some were writing that passage they would put the walking first and make the climax the mounting up. But the climax is in the last clause. It is harder to walk than it is to run or fly. Dr. Dixon well says: "there is an appeal to the heroic in us when we think about mounting up like the eagle," and that appeal to the heroic makes easier the performance. It is easier to perform the splendid deed of heroism than it is to live day by day a faithful life. Elijah on Mount Carmel is not tried as much as Elijah under the juniper tree. It is not the Mount Carmels, but the juniper trees of life that determine the heroic. Not Esther, doing a magnificent deed, but Vashti, living the true life, is entitled to the honor of her fellows. To

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her belongs the crown of queenly womanhood.

The incident which gave immortal fame to Vashti brought everlasting infamy to Ahasuerus. The atmosphere that makes martyrs makes persecutors. The conviction that makes one man die for the truth makes another man kill him. If opposition to honor and truth ceases it will be because honor and truth have ceased to be held. If the life of the church and of the world harmonize it will not be because the world has come up to the level of the church, but because the church has gone down to the level of the world. The only condition on which Vashti could be at peace with Ahasuerus was by accepting his terms. If she rejected, she would be banished. The only condition on which the Christian can have peace with the world is to accept the world's terms. Too many are doing that. Many Christians revise their creed and regulate their conduct by the standard of a world's approval. They are all things to all men if by any means they can win and retain popular approval. A colored man appeared before one of the school boards of the South to apply for a position as teacher. Among the questions asked him was: "What system of astronomy do you hold? Do you teach that the earth is round or flat?" And the complaisant applicant answered: "I will teach

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whatever theory the board desires." There is a good deal of that spirit in the church. For the sake of peace with the world, the world's terms are accepted. But to obtain peace with the world is to lose peace of conscience and peace with God. If Vashti accepts Ahasuerus's terms she will please him, but will displease and dishonor her own womanhood. Vashti rejected Ahasuerus's terms and Ahasuerus rejected Vashti.

The incident introduces us to a brilliant court scene. We enter the palace of Shushan, one of the grandest buildings ever erected. It has been shown by the excavations of Mr. Loftus that the central building was 345x244 feet. The ceiling of this building was supported by seventy-two pillars, each upwards of 60 feet in height. Between these marble pillars, hanging from silver rings, were costly tapestries. The main hall of this central building was 200 feet square, broken by 36 marble columns between each of which was an arch which was a wonder of architectural achievement. On the exterior of this building, and separated from it by walls 18 feet in thickness, were three great porches each measuring 200x65 feet, and supported by twelve columns. These were the great audience halls of the palace. This central building was surrounded by many smaller buildings of equal magnificence, and the whole group was

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built on an artificial mound, nearly square in plan, measuring about a thousand feet each way, and rising to a height of 50 or 60 feet above the plain. Some conception can be had of the grandeur of this Shushan palace when we think of a terraced mound 50 feet high, from the centre of which rose a building 120 feet high, rising out of a group of subordinate palace-buildings interspersed with trees and tropical plants and shrubs. The interior decorations of the palace were resplendent. Money and culture were taxed to make it brilliant. The ceilings were adorned with the rarest gems of the artist's skill. The walls were hung with embroidered work wrought in many colors, all perfectly blending. The wealth of the empire contributed to the adorning of the palace. "It seems as if a billow of celestial glory had dashed clear over heaven's battlements upon this palace in Persia's metropolis."

It was in this palace, and in the royal gardens connected with it, that the feast of Ahasuerus was held. For one hundred and eighty days Ahasuerus had been entertaining the princes and nobles of the land. At the close of this celebration the king made a feast for the people of Shushan, great and small, and for seven days there was great revelry in the court of the garden of the king's palace. The tables were spread under oak and linden and acacia

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trees and were surrounded by bowers of fragrant plants, the fair lily abounding, for it was the plant of the neighborhood. The wine of the kingdom flowed in abundance. Queen Vashti entered with cordiality and sympathy into the plans of her husband and while he was entertaining the men of Shushan she made a feast for the women in another part of the palace. The revelry increased in the king's garden until high above the music of the court orchestra could be heard the voices of the debauchees in their foolish gabbling and their drunken songs. The wine has flushed the cheek and touched the brain of the king. He calls his servants and commands them to bring Vashti, the queen, into the banquet of the men that he may exhibit her peerless beauty and her matchless charms to his guests, and the servants hasten to fulfil their king's command.

The divine narrative does not admit us into the presence of Vashti when the message was received. We can imagine her surprise. "Is the king mad?" Then we can see her resentment. "Is the king lost to honor?" She turns away from the banquet of the women and seeks seclusion in her own room. We would not penetrate its sacred precincts. Vashti is in the presence of the testing moment of her life. How shall she meet it? We hold our breath in the presence of this mighty struggle, a woman

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battling with her thoughts, struggling with her ambitions, striving with her love. What shall be the issue? Vashti comes out from her room. A change has come over her countenance. The agitated look of surprise that passed into the angry look of resentment has been transformed into the calm look of determination. Vashti has reached her decision. What is it? But why ask? It is a Vashti decision. It is a decision which a true woman always makes when confronted with such a crisis, a decision to be true to her womanhood, cost what it may. Vashti knew what it meant to refuse the king's request. She knew that it would cost her place as wife of the king, her position as queen in the realm and, perhaps, her life. But her honor and her womanhood were dearer to her than all these. "In Vashti's soul was a principle more regal than Ahasuerus, more brilliant than the gold of Shushan, more precious than the wealth of Persia;" that principle commanded her to disobey the order of the king, and so all the righteousness and holiness and modesty of her nature rose up into her sublime refusal to go into the presence of the king and his guests.

The king was very angry. At once he called his cabinet together to determine what to do in the crisis of the kingdom, for the king's commandment had been disregarded by his wife. The seven wise counsellors of Persia

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and Media met with their king. The Prime minister, Memucan, was called upon to suggest a line of action. He said: "The conduct of Vashti in disobeying the king will soon be known by all the women of the kingdom and, to prevent them from following the queen's example and treating their husbands with contempt, vigorous action must be taken. The king must divorce Vashti and give her royal estate to another. Then the king must issue a proclamation, signing it with the royal seal, making it one of the unchangeable laws of the Medes and Persians, that wives shall give to their husbands honor, both great and small." Memucan's counsel was approved by his six associates and much pleased the king. He divorced Vashti and sent the proclamation throughout his vast empire that "every man should bear rule in his own house." This edict was the embodiment of the deliberation and wisdom of the seven leading statesmen of Persia and is worthy of a set of drunken revelers. They or their deliverances are not worth the energy of writing a single sentence of condemnation or reprobation. We pass from their unholy presence to the more genial companionship of Vashti.

The decision of the council is conveyed to Vashti, and the handsome queen begins preparations to leave the palace. Her heart is heavy,

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but her conscience is clear. As she and her attendants go about making preparations for her departure there is a strange stillness in the room and all through the palace. Not much is said, and when it is said there is a suspicious quiver and choking in the voice. The preparations are all completed and Vashti is about to go. The attendants can no longer remain silent; they surround her: "Queen Vashti, stop; do not go out into the cold world. Even yet do as the king suggests, enter the banquet hall. He admires your beauty, he is proud of you; make this concession to his imperiousness and you will win him and will remain forever mistress of this palace." There is always a tempter near in every crisis. But Vashti cannot be moved. Her determination is made and you can imagine her answer: "I thank you for your kindly thought, and your well-meant suggestion, but my self-respect is dearer to me than the favor of the king or the splendor of the palace and I must maintain that." She casts one last look about her, speaks one fond word to her faithful servants and out she passes beyond the palace door, a queenly woman uncrowned, but carrying with her the queenly crown of her womanliness.

Let your mind dwell upon that scene until you catch its inspiration. Learn from it that true queenliness is fidelity to your womanhood,

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true kingship is loyalty to your manhood. That secures lasting honor. "The last vestige of yonder feast is gone, the last garland has faded, the last tankard has been destroyed, the last arch has fallen; Shushan is in ruins; but as long as the world stands men and women will come into this picture gallery of God, and admire the divine portrait of Vashti," too good for a king, too noble for a palace, too virtuous for a court, too beautiful for a crown.

Never did the world see a more heroic figure. Some one has said that there are three kinds of courage—a courage to suffer, a courage to do and a courage to be. The last is the noblest courage; it is the courage of the Vashti type, the courage that makes one faithful to truth, loyal to principle, true to his manhood. Such a courage makes one immortal and makes him live after he has died, not in heaven, but on the earth.

"The period of life is brief;
It is the red in the red rose leaf,
It is the gold in the sunset sky,
It is the flight of a bird on high;
But one may fill the space
With such an infinite grace,
That the red shall vein all time,
And the gold through the ages shine,
And the bird fly swift and straight
To the portals of God's own gate."

CHAPTER V.

A TYPICAL SCENE.

THE story of the treatment of Queen Vashti by her husband, Ahasuerus, is only a recital of the conduct and cruelties of household tyrants everywhere. They reign not alone in the palace, but also in the cottage. At the marriage altar they promise to love, honor and cherish till death, but the stirring music of the wedding-march has hardly died away, the fragrance of the orange blossoms has hardly been dissipated, until the tyrannical spirit is manifested.

Ahasuerus exhibits in his character and conduct the prevailing traits of the household tyrant. The first element is intense selfishness. Selfishness is the seeking of one's own gratification, pleasure or welfare regardless of, or at the expense of others. Ahasuerus sought his gratification or pleasure at his wife's expense, and so revealed his innate and intense selfishness. This is, perhaps, the pre-dominating spirit of the household tyrant.

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A selfish man or woman is unfit to marry. Marriage is the bringing together of two halves that have been separated and which, when brought together, make a complete whole. A selfish man is satisfied with and complete in himself. He is not one blade of a scissors, incomplete without the other blade, but is a chisel, made to cut his way through life alone. He should be a perpetual celibate. A selfish man is married to himself, and his marriage to another would be bigamy, a bigamy not prohibited in civil law but which is prohibited by all divine laws of marriage. To marry a selfish man or woman is to marry a household tyrant.

A second characteristic of the household tyrant is indifference. The tyranny of selfishness manifests itself in the exacting demands that are made, the tyranny of indifference is revealed in disregard of the rights and feelings of others. What the wife wants is love and appreciation, and without these nothing can make her happy. You may make her home a palace, you may crowd it with statuary of bronze and marble; you may hang its walls with pictures rich from the pencils of the masters; you may fill her wardrobe with garments of the richest material and newest design; you may present her with jewels as brilliant as Eugenie's, but she will have no happiness un-

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less she enjoys your love. One of the fairest daughters of America married one of the richest men of the country. Their married life was rich in promise, but after a few years the attention and the love which he vowed at the altar to bestow upon his wife he transferred to another. For years the wife bore with his indifference until she could stand it no longer. The marble palace and the palatial city home which he gave her, wealth beyond calculation and grandeur beyond description could not atone for his lack of love and interest. That tyranny was slowly killing her, and to be freed from it she sought and obtained a legal severance of the tie that made them one. Your wife does not want your gifts, she wants you. And she has the right to you. At the marriage altar you promised to make her happy, you pledged her your attention, your kindness, your love. Because of that pledge she took you. It is a wonder, even with all your pledges, that she did take you, but having had the temerity to do so, you should reward her heroism by fulfilling your promises. If you fail to keep those promises you ought to be indicted on the criminal charge of receiving goods under false pretense. Take down the prayer-book, read over the marriage ceremony and fulfil your vows.

Critics tell us that the fictitious characters of Charles Dickens were all taken from actual life.

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Certainly most of them are true to nature, and none is more true than the ex-artilleryman in Bleak House. His wife had thought for him, worked for him and was loved by him, but he never intimated the fact to her. In speaking with his old comrade, George, one day, Mr. Bagnet said: "You know my wife advises me in everything and I always take her advice, but I never tell her so." "Your wife is a treasure," said George. "She is more," replied Bagnet, "she is like a fine day which grows finer as it advances. I never knew her equal, but I never tell her so." "She is worth her weight in gold," said George. "In gold!" responded Mr. Bagnet, "there is no metal that can be weighed against her. Think of her as high as the rock of Gibraltar, and you will think too low of her merits. *But I never tell her so.*" There are a great many Mr. Bagnets in life, men who know that their wives are everything to them and yet who are so indifferent that they never speak a word of appreciation.

Sometimes it is the wife who is indifferent. The husband is cordial, sympathetic, interested in her life, but she shuts herself out from all sympathy with his ambitions and plans. She withholds applause while others cheer, chills his ardor by her indifference and kills his ambition by her coldness. Many men who have been struggling in the world's arena and have

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won their victories, have hastened home with their chaplets to crown their wives and receive from them applause sweeter than that of all the world, only to see their laurels wither on the brow of indifference or droop like dead leaves upon a frozen heart. Many a man lives in himself, in a thought world of his own, because his wife shuts herself out from his life. She is as far away from him as she would be were she in the wilds of Africa, and it is a pity that she is not there. Perhaps she might have a smile for the savage, perhaps she might clap her dainty hands in applauding the wild dance, but she has no smile and no applause for her husband. It is not an overdrawn picture. There are women who have smiles and applause for everybody but the unfortunate men who are married to them. Such indifference is tyranny and such tyranny is destroying. "At the siege of Argus, Pyrrhus was killed by the tile of a roof thrown by a woman; Abimelech was slain by a stone which a woman threw from the tower of Thebes; Earl Montfort was destroyed by a rock hurled at him by a woman from the walls of Toulouse: but without any weapon save that of a cold, cheerless, indifferent attitude many a woman has slain the peace and prosperity and joy of her husband."

Let me introduce you to a brighter scene. The Republican national convention was in

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session in Chicago. Abraham Lincoln was a prominent candidate for the presidential nomination. Surrounded by a circle of friends he awaited the news from the convention at a telegraph office in Springfield. At length the message flashed across the wire: "*Lincoln is nominated for President.*" When the message was read Lincoln was overwhelmed with the cordial congratulations of his friends, which were cut short by the nominee's taking up his hat to leave the room. "A light of peculiar softness, a smile of peculiar sweetness passed over the great man's homely face, as he said: 'There's a little woman over here on——street who would like to hear this news.'" And the newly-nominated president departed from his applauding friends to lay the honor conferred upon him on the breast of the wife he loved. Her sympathy, her applause, her honoring smile, her congratulations were greater to him than those of all others. Slay the tyranny of indifference in married life by resurrecting and giving rein to the attentions and courtesies of the wooing days.

A third characteristic of a household tyrant is a domineering spirit. Ahasuerus did not consult the wishes of Vashti, but issued his order and demanded its fulfilment. The courteous and chivalrous host was the arrogant and domineering husband. Frequently the polished man in

A Typical Scene.

society is the rude husband and the overbearing father. There are men who choose home as the place in which to give vent to their spleen. In the world they are gentle and gracious as a spring zephyr, but in the home they bluster and terrorize as the north-east storm. And it is not unknown that a woman who is sunny, and sparkling, and genial in society may be sullen, and dull, and petulant in the home.

This domineering spirit is not confined to husband and wife. It is often exercised by the children of the household, and they become the real tyrants. Parents who have made untold sacrifices for their children have been brow-beaten, crushed and ignored. An English woman, recently travelling in our country, wrote: "The disrespect which American children show their parents shocks a foreigner more than any other thing in your land. I have found the gentle, respectful, devoted daughter to be the exception rather than the rule in America." The woman, of course, exaggerated. Every foreigner who attempts, after a few weeks' stay in our land, to criticise the failures and foibles of Americans does exaggerate. But the incident which the woman tells to prove her charge is not an unknown thing. It is this. The belle at the summer hotel where the traveller spent a few weeks, was a girl of eighteen summers who was

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watched over and cared for by a mother of culture and tenderness. One day the girl went out with some companions and was away for an unusually long time. The mother became solicitous, and when finally the daughter returned and was told of her mother's anxiety she flew into a passion and greeted her mother with: "Do not make such a fool of yourself. I am perfectly able to take care of myself when out of your sight." A little later in that day the girl was in her room preparing to go out, and her mother went to her to suggest that she take a shawl with her, and received, as her thanks, the retort: "Please mind your own business: I am perfectly able to attend to mine." And the belle went out and was soon all smiles and graciousness to a company of butterfly adorers who would not have sacrificed one hour of comfort or pleasure for her happiness, while the mother, who would have died for her, was left with the memory of her ungrateful words.

A domineering spirit in husband, wife or child makes a household tyrant. If the wife has but one smile, let her save it for her husband. If the husband has but one loving word in his vocabulary let him speak it to his wife. If the children have but one act of graciousness to perform or one word of appreciation to speak, let them save it for their parents. Let the

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spirit of gentleness and love and forbearance rule in the home and all tyranny will be vanquished. Let husband, and wife, and child, control themselves, and peace and joy and love shall be enthroned in the home. The man who leads armies to victory receives the world's plaudits, but greater is he who can rule his own spirit. "The highest mark of nobility is self-control. It is more kingly than regal crown and purple robe."

"Not in the clamor of the crowded street,
Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
But in ourselves are triumph and defeat."

A fourth characteristic of a household tyrant is his assumption and arbitrary exercise of authority. Ahasuerus felt that he had only to command and he would be obeyed. When he was not obeyed by his wife it revealed, if it did not create, according to his thinking, such a grave social crisis that he convened a council of state and issued a royal edict that "every man should bear rule in his own house." The manner in which Ahasuerus sought to enforce this principle showed his tyrannical character. But there is truth underlying the principle. It is the plain teaching of Scripture that wives are to obey their husbands. By divine arrangement the husband is the head of the wife and ultimate authority rests in him. This has been

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recognized in every age by all races of men and has been taught by all religions. All through the Old Testament runs the recognition and the enforcement of that truth, and New Testament teaching is in line with it. Paul distinctly asserts that "the husband is the head of the wife" and that the wife is to "submit herself to her own husband as unto the Lord." Whatever opinion you may have of Paul's theories on women, you must remember that he was an inspired man when he wrote that, as much inspired as when he wrote, "husbands, love your wives."

The scriptural teaching is that the husband is the rightful head of the family. But the wife's duty of obedience is not absolute. The same scripture which teaches that the wife obey her husband teaches that the husband love the wife even as Christ loved the Church. When the husband fulfils that scripture, obedience on the part of the wife is easy. "Never mind that, dominie," said the bridegroom when the bride was asked to promise to obey, "for as long as this wheep hings till me han' and me han' hings till me shouter, I'll gar her obey me." "Na, dominie," answered the lassie, "I would obey him for love, but for his wheep, never; and I'll no' marry him at all," and she whirled on her heel and ran to her mother. Obedience in love and for love is easy.

A Typical Scene.

The wife is to be subject to her husband as the Christian is subject to Christ. That last clause defines and modifies the subjection. The Christian is not subject to Christ in order that he may be kept in an inferior position, sacrificed at every turn to Christ's convenience and to Christ's supposed interest. The subjection is the very opposite of that. Christ laid aside His initial superiority that He might lift the Christian up to His throne and joy. The great love of Christ is not satisfied until the Christian shares His glory with Him. The husband is to love his wife even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That means, that the husband is to place the wife on the throne of his glory and joy with himself. It means that he is to share all with her. A Christian never regards the headship of the loving Christ as oppressive, nor obedience to Him as irksome. No more does a true wife chafe under the headship of a loving husband. The wife can reverence where she loves and respects the influences to which she yields.

It is in such marriages that the divine ideal is realized. Such a marriage defies all circumstances. It stands four square to all the winds that blow, unassailable, unconquerable and emphatically divine. Love is the condition and method of the obedience, and obedience is the fulfilment and the manifestation of the love.

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Such a marriage is the blending of two lives which grow more and more into each other with the advancing years.

“In the long years liker must they grow:
The man be more of woman, she of man
Until at last she set herself to man
Like perfect music unto noble words:
And so these twain, upon the skirts of time,
Sit side by side, full summ'd in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, saving the to-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other ev'n as those who love:
Then comes the statlier Eden back to men;
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm;
Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
May these things be!”

A fifth characteristic of a household tyrant is personal pride or love of display. Ahasuerus had shown to his guests the magnificence of his palace, the splendor of his gardens, the riches of his viands, and finally he wished to exhibit the beauty of his wife. Ahasuerus was swayed by the love of display, and that made him tyrannical. The greatest social tyranny of our day is this ostentation. Men are kept with their faces at the grind-mill of toil and women are kept in the turmoil of anxiety in order that they may live in “as good style” as some social rival. The expenditures of many households are adjusted not so much by what

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the family can afford to have as by what the neighbors have. Hence the forgeries and embezzlements and thefts by those in good social circles. There is no more prolific source of dishonesty than this love of display, and a base sentiment in society condones such dishonesty. It scourges the thief of necessity, and pities the thief of fashion.

This love of display robs social life of its sincerity and domestic life of its peace. Dr. Talmage longed for a new Shakespeare to arise and write the tragedies of fashion, and forthwith the doctor vindicated his right to the title of the new Shakespeare by furnishing the outline of the tragedy.

“Act first: A plain but beautiful home. Enter the newly-married pair. Enter simplicity of manner and behavior. Enter as much happiness as is ever found in one home.

Act the second: Discontent with the humble home. Enter envy. Enter jealousy. Enter desire of display.

Act the third: Enlargement of expenses. Enter all the queenly dressmakers. Enter the French milliners.

Act the fourth: The tip-top of society. Enter princes and princesses of New-York life. Enter magnificent plate and equipage. Enter everything splendid.

Act the fifth and last, winding up the scene.

Married Life in Sacred Story.

Enter the assignee. Enter the sheriff. Enter the creditors. Enter humiliation. Enter the wrath of God. Enter the contempt of society. Enter death. Now, let the silk curtain drop on the stage. The farce is ended, and the lights are out. Will you forgive me if I say in tersest shape possible, that some of the men in this country have to forge, and to perjure, and to swindle, to pay for their wives' dresses?"

The tyranny of display! A tyranny exercised as much by men as by women.

These are the five characteristics of household tyrants: selfishness, indifference, insolence, imperiousness, ostentation.

Wealth and position are no security against these tyrants. Vashti tells us that even queenly station is no protection against them. The brown stone front does not shut out trouble. Luxurious furnishings do not bring peace. Riches in the purse do not always mean riches of heart. Social position does not secure happiness. "The palace floor of Ahasuerus is red with the blood of Vashti's broken heart. There have been no more scalding tears wept than those which coursed the cheeks of Josephine." Joy, peace, happiness are not determined by circumstances. They are conditions of the heart. Instead of having the ambition to make your home surpass in size and beauty the home of your friends, let it be your supreme ambition

A Typical Scene.

to have a home where love shall reign, where the happiness of all shall be the concern of each and where God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit shall be honored, worshiped and served. Be such a home enclosed by the narrow walls of a single room or by the magnificence of a palace, it will be an abode of peace, contentment and joy. In it, husband and wife and children will be strengthened for life's conflict and fitted for life's victory. In such a home husband and wife will grow more into each other's life. The increasing years may dim the eye's lustre and the face's radiance, but they will only increase the beauty and the charm.

“Paint me a picture, master,
And make it strict and true;
Put on the cheeks no brighter red,
In the eyes no deeper blue;
Give to her form no softer grace—
For to each rounded limb
The highest lines thine art can trace
Are shadowless and dim.

Color to life her matchless hair,
And, if thou mayest, portray
The sweetness of those scarlet lips,
The smiles that round them play;
Canst thou produce the radiant light
That beams from out her eyes,
Or make more fair, or pure, or bright
The soul that in them lies?

Married Life in Sacred Story.

Fashion my bride, good painter,
Loving, and kind, and true,
Fair as a wreath of lilies,
Sweet as its perfume, too."

"Paint me another picture,
As in the years before,
Tracing with careful pencil
Herself, and nothing more;
Leave not a single shadow
Out of that snowy brow—
Every thread of silver —
Paint her as she is now.

May be the eye is duller
Far than it used to be;
May be the cheek is paler,
May be the smile less free;
Care has altered them, doubtless—
But, Oh! I tell to you,
The cloud that darkened one life,
Shadowed the other, too.

Paint me my wife, Oh! master,
Now that the years have fled,
And love has blossomed out of
The dust of passion dead.
Place the pictures together,
Side by side on the wall,
Which is to me the fairer?
Give me the last of all."

BY REV. J. F. CARSON.

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