



BETWEEN SCHOOL AND MARRIAGE.

By the Author of "How to be Happy Though Married."

THIS time in a girl's life corresponds to that in a man's which is passed in a university, or in learning the work of his profession. Too many girls look on it as a *mauvais quart d'heure*, which may be dawdled through in an irresponsible way until they have a house of their own. Marriage represents a home, a position; sometimes even less than that—a trousseau, or a wedding tour. So they hasten through the years of adolescence as well as may be in order to reach the end of a wearisome task.

And yet if the girl is mother to the woman—that is to say, if the woman will be what the girl now is, this time, which is essentially one for settling habits, cannot be anything less than the most important in life. If the girl spend it in thoughtless idleness and discontented trifling, the result will be seen in the character of the woman. It is well for any of us when our work is cut out for us, so to speak, and we have not to look about for a profitable way of passing the time; but this last is the miserable condition of many girls belonging to daughter-full houses in easy circumstances. What can they do between school and marriage?

When the financial resources of her father are slender, a girl is quite right to seek for some employment by which she may earn her own living, and perhaps help her brothers and sisters; but when this is not the case, let no feeling of quixotic restlessness induce her to rashly leave home. It may be her plain duty to remain at home, and she may be independent and pay her way quite as much as one who earns and pays current coin. She can pay her way by filling in the little spaces in home life as only a dear daughter can, by lifting the weight of care from her mother, and by slipping in a soft word or a smile where it is like oil on the troubled waters of a father's spirit. What better remuneration can a father have for his ex-

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A HOMELY LASSIE.

penditure upon his daughters than their laughter, good humour, and sympathy? "The laughter of girls," says De Quincey, "is, and ever was, among the delightful sounds of earth," and most fathers will agree with me that their grief-dispelling wiles are far better than gold and silver.

Those girls soon slide into uselessness, and drift aimlessly through their golden girlhood, who have no system in the ordering of their lives. We ought not to be chained to our system, but we should arrange our time so as to improve every precious moment, and find facility in the performance of our respective duties. Especially valuable are the hours between ten o'clock and one. These should be occupied with study, music (if you really have a taste for it), or the learning of some useful art by which you could earn your living if required to do so. Would anybody be worse, and would not everybody be much better, if girls of all ranks were taught to do something so well that they could earn money if necessary? Habits of attention, method, and dispatch, acquired in the study of any fine handicraft or art, lay a better basis for the character of a noble house-mother than the idle sauntering of common girl existence. The daughters of wealthy families need not rush into the labour market simply because they have the power to do so. Because they can engrave they need not be engravers, any more than they need become servants because they can dust a room or cook a potato.

Usefulness of any kind may be kept in store, as well as used as current coin. There is such a thing as adult education, and we may learn from everybody and everything until the day of our death, so that nothing is more ridiculous than to speak of a girl's education being "finished" when she leaves school. She need not keep up the routine of school work, but she may at least try to keep what she has learnt with much difficulty and drudgery. "It is less pain to learn in youth than to be ignorant in age;" and, indeed, it is only the first steps to the Temple of Wisdom that are the painful ones. Every girl ought to "make the most of herself," and gain accurate and general information on the subjects that interest intelligent people. Why should she give up study at eighteen, just at a time when, having got beyond the rudiments, the work of teaching herself would after some time become so enjoyable that it would in many cases be continued even after marriage? When books are looked upon by a girl on leaving school as instruments of mental torture, she is stopping her education just when she has reached its most interesting phase.

But mind and body are co-partners, and while cultivating the one a girl must not injure the other. In after life she will require all the health and vigour of body she can obtain from riding, swimming, tennis, rowing, and the gymnastic exercises which have now been made to suit girls. These games, if practised in moderation, and in suitable clothes without lung-compressing corset, will give a firm hand, a trained eye, a clear complexion, and the light-heartedness which comes of a body unclogged in its machinery. They will confirm health and perfect beauty.

Girls who have been well brought up dress with simplicity; they are occupied, but not

preoccupied, with dress. Two young men, the other day, were heard commenting, *sotto voce*, upon a girl who was attracting attention. "Yes; very pretty," said one, "but entirely spoilt by that terrible hat trimmed with giblets!" The head-covering thus alluded to was decorated with an arrangement of a bird's head, feathered neck, and claws. It is a great help to papa's pocket when daughters make their own dresses and hats—as it is, too, when they undertake the elementary teaching of younger brothers and sisters.

"What can I do to help mother?" This should be a question with all girls. In a large and well-ordered home, the daughters supervise different departments. One becomes responsible for the arrangement of the kitchen and dining-room, and sees that the table is properly furnished with viands and the economy of everything downstairs administered wisely. Another takes charge of the drawing-room or bedrooms. The next week, perhaps, they change employments; and in this way their mother has time to read, to go out, to receive friends, and to take a well-earned holiday.

We agree with Mrs. Warren in thinking that there is no household work such that a girl should deem it beneath her position to know how to do it. To scrub floors, scour saucepans, blacklead and clean grates, to black boots, to clean plate, to wash and iron—all these things may be done in a right or a wrong way, and it is only by learning how they ought to be done that a woman can teach others. Whether her destiny lies in the old country or in the colonies, her knowledge of home matters will be the greatest of blessings to herself and to others. Every day a young lady should do a little bit of household work thoroughly, so as to be a pattern of perfection to the servants, who are only too ready to be satisfied with half-done work or "That'll do."

Daughter (home from school): "Now, father, are you satisfied? Just look at my testimonial. Political economy, satisfactory; fine art and music, very good; logic, excellent!"

Father: "Very much so, my dear, especially as regards your future. If your husband should understand anything of housekeeping, cooking, mending, and the use of a sewing-machine, your married life will indeed be happy."

All girls cannot marry moneyed men, nor can they be sure, in the uncertain conditions of modern life, but that men who are rich to-day may be poor and struggling in a short year or two; and, surely, these men have a right to expect that the women they place at the head of the homes they have, in many cases, toiled hard to make shall be able to teach servants to carry out their plans, or, if need be, to throw themselves into the breach, and, unassisted, carry on the household machinery without a jar.

Nor is this incompatible with culture and accomplishments. Writing of university life for women in *Cassell's Family Magazine*, a scholar of Newnham College says: "Nowhere have I heard it more consistently and reverently asserted that a woman's true sphere is the home. Most of the ladies rather pride themselves on their domestic accomplishments. Among my own contemporaries were some whose nimble fingers could wield the needle

as well as the pen, and produce with equal ease a copy of Latin verses or a fashionable bonnet. Others could send up a dinner not to be despised by the most fastidious of College Fellows."

As soon as a girl comprehends what duty really means, and attempts to do it, she first tries to do her work at home, and then looks out for work abroad. She does her best to relieve the indigent, to teach the ignorant, and to bring joy to the sad. There are benevolent societies established in every district to carry out these benevolent enterprises, and the directors are very glad to receive offers of help, and willingly give work to those who will undertake it.

But all work and no play will make Jill, as well as Jack, dull and dispirited. There are "between-times" when serious work does not call for us, or when we are weary of it, and for health's sake must indulge in recreation and light employment. Because a life of pleasure is a life of pain, that is no reason why we should have no pleasure in our lives. Is not happiness indeed a duty as well as self-denial? A girl could not have a better guide on the subject of amusement than Mr. Ruskin, who says: "Never seek for amusement, but be always ready to be amused. The least thing has play in it—the slightest word wit, when your hands are busy and your heart is free. But if you make the aim of your life amusement, the day will come when all the agonies of a pantomime will not bring you an honest laugh."

We have heard of an Eastern custom which enjoined that on the day of her marriage the bride should sit all the afternoon with her face to the wall. If any one spoke she was not to answer. This was supposed to typify her grief at leaving the state of single blessedness. An English girl may not feel this poignant grief at getting married, but if she can make her girlhood happy by putting it to a good account, she will be able to wait in dignified tranquillity until the right man comes to claim her, instead of throwing herself away upon the first worthless person who desires to marry and make a woman miserable.

When Mr. Wilberforce, years ago, was a candidate for Hull, his sister, an amiable and witty young lady, offered a new dress to each of the wives of those freemen who voted for her brother. When saluted with "Miss Wilberforce for ever!" she pleasantly observed, "I thank you, gentlemen, but I cannot agree with you, for really I do not wish to be Miss Wilberforce for ever."

We do not blame Miss Wilberforce or any other young lady for not wishing to be a "Miss" for ever, but she ought not to disturb herself if other girls have been preferred before her, and she remain unsought in marriage. As to what she can do to make herself more attractive, it depends on the kind of man she wishes to attract. If, however, she desire a good, worthy husband, she had better use no art, but simply be her own natural self. Let her cultivate the powers of her mind, engage in good and useful work, both within and without the home, study to acquire practical knowledge of domestic affairs, and trust that, if it is most expedient for her, God, the best Maker of marriages, will send a husband worthy of her choice.

