

many of my treasures," thought Elsie, putting in her hand. "And here are some old papers, quite at the back! I will take them out to make room for other things."

The papers were not old nor discoloured by time, although the dust had settled upon them pretty thickly. They looked like pages torn out of a diary, and were covered with writing which struck Elsie with a sense of familiarity. This handwriting, firm, black, legible, was like her own.

"How interesting!" she said to herself. "I have always flattered myself that mine was an uncommon hand. But somebody—a woman evidently—has stolen my e's and b's and g's and y's. I should like to know a little more about her."

She forgot all about the open desk and unanswered letters, and sat down on the edge of the sofa near the window with the papers on her lap. The shadow had vanished from the delicate expressive face, the dark eyes had brightened; Elsie had the happy temperament which is charmed with every little bit of novelty that it can find. She loved, as she had often said, to investigate things, and always caught eagerly at the slightest clue which might lead to a delightful labyrinth of mystery.

The manuscript began abruptly. The

first words on which Elsie's glance rested were these:

"If I could only be sure that someone would be kind to little Jamie!"

This sentence was written at the top of the first page, and then came a vacant space. Lower down, in the middle of the leaf, the writer had gone on—

"What a new life came to me all at once when I met Harold for the first time! The path was so flowery and bright that I had no fear of the turnings of the way. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that we should meet, and walk on together all our lives. No, we did not meet; he overtook me as I was sauntering along, and looked into my face with that look which a man gives the woman who is to belong to him for ever and ever."

Elsie paused in her reading and lifted her gaze thoughtfully to the evening sky. Her face had changed again; the expression of eyes and mouth was wistful and tender.

"No man has ever loved me in that fashion," she mused. "I've had lovers, but I was never meant for them nor they for me. I wonder why this unknown woman had the joy of finding her spirit-mate when such a joy has been denied to me? Are they married? Where is she now? I wish I knew her."

No one who had seen Elsie at that

moment would have doubted that she had had lovers. She was very pretty to-day; prettier at twenty-eight than she had been in the days of girlhood. Some new feeling of peace was creeping into her heart and hushing all its turmoil into a sweet rest. Some new interest was beginning to stir in her life; much was quieted within her, and much was awakening. She felt as if she had roused after an uneasy sleep and tasted the first freshness of a fair morning.

She sat a little while in silence, thinking about the unknown writer and her Harold. Although she had read only a few lines she felt drawn towards this woman whom she had never seen. It would have been good to have had her for a friend.

Where was she now? Living somewhere with Harold, perhaps far away in the country. Elsie could fancy the pair coming homeward through ferny lanes in the first shade of the twilight. She pictured the woman dark-eyed and dark-haired, like herself, and the man tall and fair, with a grave, yet gentle face. They had a great deal to say to each other, as those who are one in spirit often have. They answered each other's thoughts; there was the fulness of a calm content in every tone.

And then she turned again to the manuscript.

(To be continued.)



THE IDEAL DAUGHTER.

BY THE REV. C. H. GRUNDY, M.A., Vicar of St. Peter's, Brockley, Kent.

It is often my duty and privilege to assist at the prize distributions of the excellent day-schools in my parish, and I have lately been struck with the thought that the young girls who have just left school might like to hear something about the new life opening upon them, with its possibilities for education, usefulness, service and happiness. Those of you who heard a charming address delivered by that gifted authoress, Miss Sarah Doudney, to the members of one of these schools, on "Day-Dreams," will remember that she said that day-dreams within limits are not wrong, and she expressed belief that the best of them come true in the best and highest way. Golden girlhood is the most delightful time in a young woman's life. It comes only once and is quickly passed, but the way in which it is spent affects the whole of the after life. The interval in a girl's life between the time of leaving school and the time when her work in life becomes definitely settled, either as a domestic career or as a business one, is to be regarded as a life of preparation. Be careful as to what shall be your mental attitude towards study and self-improvement. Do not be like certain public-school boys who burn

all their school books on the day they leave school, and in wild glee declare their satisfaction at the thought that never again shall they be obliged to learn anything. But our education is never done, and we ought to love to learn to the latest moment of our life. You may find special effort required, after the help of school routine is removed. At school the bell rings and the task must be commenced at once. You have not the trouble of making up your mind. It is made up for you, and thus you are saved much uncertainty as to what you shall do. Start the new home-life with its fresh freedom with a determination to make your life real earnest, busy and useful. I say, be real; there are many shams about; girls whose only attractions are due to the rouge-pot and the milliner, and whose idea of pleasure is flirtation and gossip, and who fritter away the precious lovely period of early womanhood. Allow me to give you some homely advice, not because of its novelty, but because the time of life through which you are passing is novel to you. What is A B C to those who are older may still be most salutary to the young. One caution is needed on the thresh-

old. Don't ape the man. Keep to woman's kingdom; it is a domain large enough for any queen. Men may pretend to admire the loud talking, the slang phrases, and the forward manner of the "mannish" girls, but it is not among them that honest sensible men desire to find their wives. If some of you, who imagine you can by such ways fascinate and attract, could only hear the criticism the very men pass upon you, who, only an hour ago, posed as your willing slaves, you would understand how all men in their hearts despise the girls who ape the sterner sex. There are enough empty-headed girls already in existence, let us hope that you will not join the silly brigade, now that the choice is yours as to what sort of girl you intend to become. Will you allow yourself to drift into frivolity and nothingness, or will you deliberately, persistently train yourself to do good, honest, unselfish work in the world assigned to you by circumstances?

Secondly—Avoid discussions as to whether women are or are not superior to men. The sphere of each is separate. The two can never be properly compared. Man and woman are mutually supplemental and com-

plementary, and to argue as to which is the nobler, the superior, the more intellectual, the more admirable, is to mistake the meaning of manhood and womanhood. It is not a question of rivalry, but of respective excellence. There is far too much thoughtless talk nowadays on this point, and I would advise any young girl to avoid the modern type of flippant conversation which is always proclaiming the "equality of women."

Thirdly—Shun what has been called the "Fiend of Idleness." In nine cases out of ten, in family life, idleness means quarrelling. Being busy means being happy. Surely no girl, just emerged from the school-room, could be content with idleness! To look forward to having nothing to do, as though such a condition were an advantage, seems to me something despicable. To waste the years from, say, sixteen to twenty-five in aimlessness and self-indulgence, instead of in vigorous systematic self-culture, is absolutely wicked. How young people can be content with merely living, merely existing, without any attempt to become first-rate in any department, or to do anything really well, passes my comprehension. God gives work to those who fit themselves for it, and He rewards work with more work, and thus, as we render ourselves more apt and capable, greater opportunities come to us. Now the ideal daughter will be one who abhors laziness, but she will have powers of adaptation. There are many varieties of homes, and each will modify the conduct of the daughter. It is clear that in the home of affluence, where there are servants in abundance, there will be no need for the daughter to betake herself to household drudgery; but still, if wise, she will acquaint herself with all the methods and details of a well-regulated house, so that, should circumstances change for the worse, she may not be ignorant of what it would then be her duty to attend to. Still, in the home of affluence, there will be more time for self-culture, and what are called "accomplishments" will occupy a larger portion of time. To be able to please people, and to give pleasure by one's talents, thoroughly cultivated, would then take a prominent place in the self-training of the daughter. But the home about which I would speak particularly is that where there is only just enough income to maintain the house, and with care to educate the children; where numberless little economies have to be practised, and where little acts of personal self-denial and unpleasant deeds of thrift are habitual, with a view to "making both ends meet," as the phrase goes. In such a case the father works very hard, supplementing the ordinary day's work by extra labour in later hours. He is passing through a phase of home life, we all know well either by experience or observation, where the children growing up make each year larger demands upon the father's purse, and where the struggle with scanty means is very real and very wearisome. But if the father works hard, so also does the mother; very hard indeed, from morn till eve, and sometimes on into the night, not to mention the hours during which she lies awake, puzzling her tired but over-wrought brain as to how and where still further reductions of expenditure may be contrived and carried out. In such a home the help of the eldest daughter, who has just left school, becomes invaluable, and the ideal will require great self-sacrifice, skill, energy and tact, if it is, even dimly, to be realised. In such a home one question will be asked over and over again by the

ideal daughter within herself; one thought will abide daily in her heart—"How can I help mother? how can I share her burden, ease her toils, relieve her mind, and lift some of her cares out of the way?" Why should girls dress themselves up and walk about to be admired, while their mothers are kept indoors doing the rougher work of the house? Let me impress upon the daughters in homes where money is scarce, and labour abundant, the paramount duty and the noble pleasure of lightening the weight of care pressing upon the mother. Let a loving motive overcome any distaste for menial work, and then all domestic toil will be elevated into a kind of heavenly pleasure, and nothing will seem degrading, if the doing of it is for the sake of the mother who has done so much for you—who fed you, nursed you, clothed you, prayed over you, and who has literally given herself for her children. Your first thrilling thought of pleasure as you leave school will be, "Now I can help mother." There are many somewhat prosaic things to be done, such as cooking, dressmaking, also the weekly attempt to reduce that heap of things to be mended—a heap which grows with sad rapidity. There is the nursing of that little brother or little sister; then there are the various duties which come under the general head of "cleaning"; these and the like will not be thought derogatory to the dignity of the ideal daughter, but will form an important part of that useful life, to be lived cheerfully and energetically in the hard-working economic home, by the girl whose chief aim is to be on the alert for acts of kindness, especially where the mother's life can thus be made the easier.

Again, this young girl, whose life I am endeavouring to sketch, will often have to consider a second question—"What is my influence upon my younger brothers and sisters? They naturally look up to me. I have left school; they have not; hence, in their eyes, I am an important personage. Am I guiding them well and wisely by my example? They will be sure to imitate me. Am I fit to be an example for them?" Moreover, where brothers are nearly the same age as yourself, you will have many opportunities for good. To keep a young man out of mischief, and away from doubtful amusements, by taking a keen interest in his music and singing, and by patiently playing his accompaniments, is often a very real benefit. Girls can do far more good than they are aware of, by making home bright and attractive to their big brothers. The sweet influence of an unselfish girl, forgetful of self, thoughtful for others, and devoted to the home circle, is immense.

The third question is—"What can I do to brighten father's life?" On his return home each evening after the toils of day are over, I will qualify myself to be his companion. Let me learn what he likes. Let me interest myself in the topics he cares for. He shall feel that I can talk sensibly, even on business subjects, and that when he bids me I can, at his dictation, write a good business letter. I will read books to enable me to understand subjects worth the knowing. Father and I shall have much in common in music, literature, art, business, or whatever else he wishes me to pursue. When sensible men are talking I will learn to listen, and will not start some silly talk in another part of the room, as though what was going on were too deep for me. If I have not time to be highly accomplished, at any rate I will take my share in everything intellectual in the house. I will live for my parents; I will dress to please

them; I will work to save them; I will sing to them, read to them, talk to them, and listen to them, and study their comfort and happiness in this joyous interval between school and that wider range of duty and pleasure possible in a few years' time." Say to yourself—"Let me now do two things: first, let me repay to my parents a little out of their past loving care and kindness; and secondly, let me gather up all experiences and all incidental knowledge now which may render me more capable, more efficient, more useful, in the years before me."

Space will not permit me to deal with the question of the modern girl's career, but one or two remarks may not be out of place. What is to become of you? Shall you marry? Perhaps so, but perhaps not. No doubt a happy marriage is the best of lives for anyone. St. Paul said, "I will that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully;" but let me protest against the idea that a girl's aim in life is to be "matrimony at all risks." A miserable marriage is the most miserable of all miserable things, while many unmarried women are thoroughly happy and contented.

We are meant to do something good in this world. Work of some kind is the blessing all are to enjoy, the privilege all are to share, the reward all are to obtain; it may be in your father's house, it may be in a sweet home of your own, it may be in some business or profession, where your energies will have full opportunity, and where a healthy career lies before you. I am the last to countenance the slightest approach to neglect of the duties of home, but I think it folly for a number of daughters to all live at home and do nothing, until, when the father dies, they are obliged to try and earn a living somehow; especially, as in cases known to me, their only apparent qualification is that "father is dead."

My last word shall be upon the one great essential which must pervade all your work. For want of a better term, let us call it heavenly-mindedness. Like the atmosphere, it will be felt rather than seen. There will then be a tone of thought, and a sweetness of motive easily recognised in even the most ordinary things. Love to the Saviour, and a way of viewing the home as He would view it, and of helping as He would have helped, will make all work willing and pleasant, and will cause you to avoid that disastrous spirit of discontent which is very prevalent in some quarters. The sight of young girls, full of hopefulness and romance, believing in human nature, determined to enjoy themselves, simple in their ideas, unspoilt by society, amiable and warm-hearted, yet inexperienced and impulsive, is pathetic and beautiful. None of us who are older can fail to see how delightful are your views of what life ought to be from your point of view; but here and now, before you step forth from school-life into this newer and freer world, let me beg you to value, employ, use, and profit by the next few years and their inestimable opportunities.

With the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the continual pardon of Christ, and the honest resolve to serve Him in your present bright happy home, you ought so to conduct yourself in that inner, loving circle, that your parents shall look upon you as the best daughter in the world, and as they gaze into other homes and observe other girls also living noble and gentle lives, shall still regard you as better than the rest, saying, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

