

## DECREED

BY MARY ANGIE DE VERE

A STORM swept over the land  
And a mighty tower went down,  
But a nest, the size of a baby's hand,  
That a wise little mother-bird had planned,  
Held safely its eggs of brown.



\*II.—ALICE FREEMAN PALMER

BY KATE UPSON CLARK



It has been said of Alice Freeman Palmer that "she probably represents to more mothers the kind of person that they wish their daughters to resemble, than any other living woman." Fine looking, dignified, full of fire and energy, yet essentially gentle and womanly, she is perhaps

as good an exemplar as our modern life has furnished of Solomon's model of feminine excellence.

It was, therefore, eminently fitting that she should have been placed at the head of one of the chief colleges for women. It was almost equally to be deplored that she should have resigned that position three or four years ago, even though it was to marry so distinguished a scholar and so estimable a gentleman as Professor George Herbert Palmer, of Harvard University. As a trustee of Wellesley Col-



MRS. PALMER

lege, and as a part of the social life of Cambridge and Boston, she may be doing more for women and for the world than in her former station; but the girls in the college cannot have that close personal contact with her that pupils enjoy with a teacher, and which is worth so much in the formation of character.

Mrs. Palmer's life, like that of so many of our foremost men and women, was spent in the country. Her father, the son of a farmer, filled a small farm in Windsor, Broome County, New York. Her mother was a farmer's daughter, and was married at the age of sixteen. At seventeen she was the mother of the little Alice, the eldest of her four children.

Her father was a delicate man. He toiled faithfully at his vocation, but he did not love it. He had always had a decided bent for the study of medicine. The village doctor, who lived only a few miles away, discovered this, and encouraged the young farmer to develop his natural taste. Books were lent him, and at last he went to study in the medical school at Albany. Dr. Freeman celebrated during the past year the twenty-fifth anniversary of his graduation from this institution.

Mrs. Freeman in the meantime took charge of the farm, and when Alice was ten years old the family moved into the village in order that the children might be educated in the academy there. The village doctor was growing old, and little by little he was handing over his practice to the care of Dr. Freeman.

After a few years of hard study Alice was ready for college. With such parents—for her mother had kept pace with her father in his advances—it was not strange that she was determined to excel. She had intended to enter Vassar; but it was one day remarked to her that the standard required for admission to any woman's college was lower than for men's colleges. Exasperated with the young man who told her this, she was debating what she should do when a friend informed her that Michigan University was open to women, and that the preparation needed to enter it was more complete than that of the eastern college represented by the student who had ridiculed the institutions for women. Investigation confirming the truth of this assertion, she became an applicant the following autumn for admission at Ann Arbor, where she graduated four years later.

During the long period of mental training, her domestic tastes had not been neglected. When she was only five years old her mother had left home for a few days' visit, and Alice had considered herself the housekeeper during

her absence. She early learned to do all kinds of housework thoroughly; and now her pride in the smooth ordering and artistic fitting of her home is as great as in her intellectual triumphs.

She has always been fond of horseback riding, and of all out-door sports. To the active life in the open air, insisted on by her father when she was a country girl, she attributes in large part the strong constitution and excellent health which have enabled her to accomplish so much in the world. These are especially remarkable, as she has inherited a tendency to weakness of the lungs. Thus another is added to the many weighty arguments in favor of the "survival of the fittest" in brains rather than in mere physical development.

When Miss Freeman first went to Ann Arbor (in 1872) she found there a flourishing society called the Young Men's Christian Association. The girl-students, who had been admitted to the college only in 1870, were permitted to attend the meetings of the "Y. M. C. A.," but were not invited to join it nor to take part in its exercises.

"I was obliged to remain away from Ann Arbor during 1873," writes a classmate of Miss Freeman. "When I left, the 'Y. M. C. A.' was stiff and forbidding in its attitude toward women. When I returned, one brief year later, a revolution had taken place. The name of this influential organization had been changed to the 'Students' Christian Association,' and the girls were as much at home there as the boys. Alice Freeman had worked this miracle. Her classmates and the faculty had been captivated by her fine scholarship, her charming lack of self-consciousness and her brilliant personal qualities. The young men felt that they could not do without her at their meetings. They wanted her to speak. They wanted her to hold office. Accordingly they convened a special session, altered their name, and made all their arrangements so that the girl-students were from thenceforth as free to enjoy all the privileges of the society as the boys.

"No woman who ever studied at the University," continued this classmate, "has ever done so much to make women respected and honored there as Alice Freeman Palmer."

She pitched the keynote, and pitched it high. Fortunately there are noble women rising now on every side to keep it up, and there is no danger that a lower note will be struck.

In 1879 Miss Freeman went as Professor of History to Wellesley College. In 1881 she became acting president, and in 1882 she accepted the presidency of the College. As in the days when she was a student at Ann Arbor, so her popularity was unbounded in her new field of labor. Possessing infinite tact, a masterly executive ability, a clear and keen intelligence, and above all a nobility of nature which is supplemented by the deepest religious inspiration, it was not strange that her corps of teachers and professors cherished in common with her pupils as profound a love and respect for the young college president as has ever perhaps been vouchsafed to one in such a position. For eight years she enjoyed the honors and discharged the arduous duties of her office, seeing in the meantime the college of her love waxing constantly in popularity and usefulness.

"She was always thinking of her girls," testifies one of her friends. "Wouldn't this be a good thing for my girls?" "How much the girls would enjoy that!"—such was the burden of her thoughts wherever she wandered.

On one occasion she met an elderly gentleman of large fortune, who seemed deeply interested in her description of the needs of the college. He was evidently ready to bestow a handsome endowment upon the institution, and she was enthusiastically grateful for his generous intentions. Her chagrin may be imagined when she discovered that it was herself in whom the elderly gentleman, like scores of others before him, was chiefly interested, and that the money could not be donated to Wellesley College unless its young president became his in return. It was a hard position for her—but the rich man's funds were finally invested elsewhere.

One of Mrs. Palmer's pet ideas when at Wellesley was to have a "child-party" once a year, when all the little ones under four or five years of age in the vicinity of the college were invited to spend the day there.

"Our girls see too little of the children while they are studying," she explained. "I want to do what I can to awaken in them that love of infancy and of childhood which is too apt to be dulled during the years of college training."

A member of the Massachusetts Board of Education, Trustee of Wellesley College, President of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Association, President of the Association of Intercollegiate Alumnae, President of the Woman's Education Association, and member of many important educational and benevolent committees, it may be readily imagined that the time of this gifted woman is fully occupied. As a lecturer upon historical and classical subjects she has also achieved a marked success, and it is impossible for her to begin to comply with the requests for her services in this direction.

A devoted wife, a model housekeeper, a consistent Christian, unspoiled by the praise which is lavished upon her, and apparently unconscious of it, modestly but efficiently discharging the heavy duties which are laid upon her, an ornament to the most cultivated society, capable of filling with honor the most exacting place, Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer is perhaps as near what we would like foreigners to consider a typical American woman as will be found throughout our broad and progressive land.

The degree of Ph. D., was conferred on her by the University of Michigan in 1882, and that of doctor of letters by Columbus College in 1887. In the latter year she resigned from all active duties to marry, in December, Professor Palmer.

\*This series was commenced in THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL for February with an article on Kate Greenaway, by Ethel Mackenzie McKenna, and will be continued in forthcoming issues, presenting a succession of interesting sketches and portraits.