

these authors are not rare among our younger writers. Mr. Lathrop shows both, for example, in that beautiful book of his, "An Echo of Passion"; and I have just been reading Miss Jewett's last volume of sketches with exactly the keen delight with which one would meet her farmer and sailor folk in the flesh and hear them talk. Indeed, one does meet them really in her book; and it would be easy to multiply instances on every hand of the recognition of the principle of realism in our fiction. The books of Mr. Howe and of Mr. Bellamy happen to be the latest evidences, as well as very striking performances apart from this.

W. D. Howells.

A Word with Countrywomen.

LIFE is a succession of choices. As some one has well said, "One cannot often have this *and* that, but this *or* that." We cannot, if we would, gather all the roses. There are too many of them. The question is, which to choose?

To choose and to hold fast to the very best that is within our individual reach — is not this the true philosophy of life? It is not a narrow or a selfish philosophy, surely, for we cannot share with our fellows what we ourselves do not possess. And do not we countrywomen sometimes fail to grasp the best because we are too eagerly striving to seize that which is of less value?

Is it not a mistake to let go of the quiet strength, the repose, the dignity of country life, in a feverish and ill-considered attempt to follow afar off the manners and customs of the town? In the first place, we cannot do it in any satisfactory way, even if we try. The conditions, the environment, as a certain clerical gentleman would say, are so different as to make it well-nigh impossible to ingraft upon the stock of country life the scions of city habits, city hours, city customs.

In the second place, if we could, *cui bono*?

Jenkins seems to have broken out, lately, in a new spasm of industry and enthusiasm. The daily papers — even such as, a very few years ago, would have considered it quite beneath their dignity to devote column after column to "society news," so called — now carry to the remotest hamlets among the hills or on the prairies minute details of Mrs. Midas's ball and Mrs. Grundy's reception, and of what the favored guests ate and drank and did and wore. Nobody finds fault with this. If there are those who care to read these details, thus getting brief and tantalizing glimpses of what they consider "high life," it is the privilege, and perhaps the duty, of the newspapers to supply the demand. But shall we vex our souls and wear out our bodies in vain attempts to copy, in a feeble and microscopic way, the doings of the above-mentioned ladies? Why not have our own ideas, our own standards, as to what is fit and becoming — not, perhaps, for Mrs. Midas, but for us?

Because Mrs. Midas, who dines at seven, finds it pleasant and convenient to receive her friends anywhere from nine to twelve, or later, why should we country-folk, who as a rule dine at one and have our cup of tea at six, think it necessary to yawn until nine or ten o'clock before we put on our best clothes and go to Mrs. Brown's party? Why make a burden of what might be a pleasure? Most people in the country find it necessary, or at least convenient, to breakfast as early as half-past seven. This certainly implies being in bed and asleep before the small hours.

Remember, I am not quarreling with Mrs. Midas. No doubt she orders her life after the manner that experience has proved most easy and comfortable — for her. But I fail to see why we, who are so differently situated, should consider it "the thing" to adopt her hours. Why should we go to parties at nine o'clock, when every mother's daughter of us knows it would be easier and more convenient to go at half-past seven?

Mrs. Midas has her retinue of a dozen servants — more or less. Yet, if she is to give a dinner of any pretension, she does not depend solely upon her household forces, but calls in aid from outside.

How is it in the country? The great majority of the women who read THE CENTURY keep one servant — at the most, two. The country housekeepers who are under bondage to more than two are the very rare exceptions. Why should we not entertain our friends with a simplicity commensurate with the service at our command? Simplicity is not meanness, it is not shabbiness, it is not inhospitality. It means just this: that, time and strength being limited quantities both for mistress and maid, many a woman who would delight to receive her friends cannot afford to spend two or three days in the kitchen concocting an array of delicacies for which, after all is done, very few people care a straw. Every hostess knows that man is an eating animal, and that some light refreshment greatly adds to the ease and pleasure of an evening entertainment. But why is an elaborate supper necessary on every occasion? If a dozen of your friends pass the evening with you, for a little music, or conversation, or whist, or what not, the chances are that not one of them would have thought of tasting anything if they had staid at home.

Since the appearance of a certain "Open Letter" in THE CENTURY for May, 1883, touching upon some phases of country life, many women have appealed to the writer for advice as to forming literary clubs and societies of one sort and another. Ladies, let me say this, right here: Set your faces as a flint against any proposition for having "refreshments."

"Oh, but," says some one, "it would be so pleasant to have coffee and sandwiches, or chocolate and sponge-cake, or something! We might confine ourselves to one or two things."

Yes, you might, if you would. But the trouble is, you will not. First one member will break over the rule and add a salad to the coffee and sandwiches; next week her neighbor will add scalloped oysters to the salad; and so it will grow as it goes, until the main object of your society is overshadowed by the eating business, and your Reading-circle, your Musical, your Fortnightly, becomes a burden. Finally, the members begin to say, "Oh, Mrs. President, I am so sorry, but my cook has given warning, and I can't possibly have the club this week." And, ten to one, the club dies in three months. All which trouble will be avoided if you make up your minds to meet together and study, or read, or sing, or play, without being confronted with the grim necessity of providing something to eat.

Not long ago a journal of wide circulation printed words to this effect (I quote from memory): "Whatever a housekeeper does, or leaves undone, let her remember this: No lady who makes any pretensions to living elegantly, or even handsomely, will allow a

napkin to appear upon her table twice without being laundered. Napkin-rings are banished to the nursery, where they should always have remained.'

Now, no one can deny that a napkin fresh and crisp from the laundry is a daintier object than one that has lost its first freshness, even if clasped by the prettiest of rings. If one has plenty of servants and plenty of napkins, this is without doubt exceedingly pleasant advice to follow. But what if we were to do a little sum in multiplication? The average family is said to consist of five members.

$$5 \times 3 \times 7 = 105.$$

In round numbers, nine dozen napkins a week for a family of five.

Mesdames, who write for the papers, and tell us what must and what must not be done, you may not believe it, but there are women who aspire to living handsomely and daintily, if not elegantly, who have pretty, well-kept houses, and daintily appointed tables, yet who never had nine dozen napkins at once in all their lives, and never expect to have. What shall they do about it? Perhaps as an alternative they would better dispense with napkins altogether, as those stately and dignified dames, our venerated foremothers, did! Elegance and even neatness are terms hard to define. Latitude and longitude have a great deal to do with them. The Japanese lady lifts her almond eyes and laughs with mocking disdain at the Western barbarians who actually wash napkins and handkerchiefs that they may use them a second time. She uses her pretty trifle once and burns it.

This is a very trifling matter? Yes; and if it stood alone, it would not be worth mentioning. But a pound of feathers is just as heavy as a pound of lead. Let those who can afford to indulge their dainty tastes do so, and be thankful. But when it becomes a matter of choice between three fresh napkins a day—or anything else that may stand as their equivalent—and the new book, or the longed-for picture, the leisure to breathe the fresh air and enjoy the June roses, or to take the children out in the wide pastures and watch the changeful lights and shadows on the mountain sides,—then what shall be said about it? It is over-anxiety about matters like these that comes between the soul of many a woman and that higher, calmer, sweeter life for which she really yearns.

It is really true of the great middle class that are scattered all over our land, from Maine to Florida, from Massachusetts to Oregon, that they cannot have this and that. They are shut out from many, indeed from most, of the advantages of great cities. They do not have picture galleries, museums, and public libraries, nor the stimulus of busy, magnetic crowds.

But they may have—they may absorb into their own beings—the strength of the hills and of the sea, the calm of the plains, the peace of the sky, the patience of the earth, that lies waiting through all the wintry hours, assured that seed-time and harvest shall not fail. They may secure time to read and to think. They may pluck the roses of content.

Shall they lose all these in a vain attempt to grasp, not the best things of a far different life, but some of its merest externals, thus adding to all their cares and labors and getting nothing that is worth having in return?

Julia C. R. Dorr.

The Bombardment of Alexandria.

LETTER FROM A UNITED STATES NAVAL OFFICER.

THE CENTURY for June contains an extract from the diary of Miss Stone during the war in Egypt of 1882. The extract is preceded by an introductory letter from her father, Stone Pasha, which I think ought not to be accepted as final.

The Pasha's important position in the Egyptian army, held for so many years, his extensive knowledge of the country and its people, and his own character, combine to give his expressed opinion an almost overwhelming weight. This opinion involves serious charges against the British Government, as represented by its diplomatic and naval officers in Egypt, which, it seems to me, are merely stated and not proved.

I happened to be in Alexandria prior to and during the bombardment, and afterward was accredited to Lord Wolsley's staff as military and naval attaché. My own observations lead me to conclusions opposed to those advanced by Stone Pasha; and as no one else appears likely to question the accuracy of his *dictum*, I venture, very reluctantly, to suggest that the peculiar circumstances of the case may have caused him to say more than is, perhaps, capable of demonstration to others.

The newspapers, during the early part of July, 1882, may be cited as recording the almost universal belief that hostilities were certain to break out at Alexandria—the only difficulty being in fixing an exact date. The stampede of foreigners which followed the massacre of June 11 was largely due to this belief, and was encouraged by the British Government, which furnished free transportation as far as Malta to thousands of its citizens. The bombardment should, logically, have taken place immediately after the massacre. It was, however, delayed for a whole month. I submit that ample opportunity was afforded to all, who *really* desired it, to leave the country.

Furthermore, Stone Pasha is on record in his daughter's diary, under date of July 8th, as expecting Admiral Seymour to bombard Alexandria. Knowing as he did, to use the words of his introductory letter, that "the bombardment of Alexandria by any European fleet would cause the enraged inhabitants to work vengeance on all Europeans who might be in the country, of whatever nationality," his duty to his family seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, perfectly clear. He reached a solution of the problem in singularly full acquaintance with all the elements which entered into it. The responsibility was his own; nor can he now complain if the solution was fraught with discomfort and danger to those near and dear to him.

That a foreign squadron on a confessedly hostile mission should give the extended notice of bombardment, with its possibilities of aggressive preparation, urged by Stone Pasha, is a new doctrine. More notice than the technical twenty-four or the actual forty hours (according to the introductory letter) was, however, practically given to Stone Pasha. On the 6th of July Admiral Seymour sent the following letter to the Military Governor of Alexandria:

"I have the honor to inform your Excellency that it has been officially reported to me that yesterday two