

OUR BELONGINGS: THE FATHERS.



W. RALNEY

"A STARE THROUGH THE PARENTAL
PINCE-NEZ" (p. 590).

THE head of the household! We approach this topic with a feeling akin to awe. The attitude the lord and master chooses to take, the line it pleases him to walk in, his likes and dislikes, his wishes, whims, fads and fancies, and his will, dominate the homes of nine-tenths of English people. He is sometimes a despot from whose fiat there is no appeal, and he is intensely feared. Sometimes he is the prime mover in every delight for the children, the helper in all that can promote their happiness and welfare. We all know the father who is his sons' chief friend and adviser, to whom Reginald and George apply in every difficulty that comes across their paths. Others there are who shut themselves up, and are, as it were, hedged about with such a majesty, that for all they know of their household, and their belongings of them, they might as well be separated by half a continent.

But between these two extremes come the great bulk of the patresfamilias who have to earn their daily bread, and spend the best part of their days in the City, coming home jaded and weary, with little chance of influencing, helping, or directing the children's



"SUBJECTS FOR EXPERIMENTS."

lives. To these, who spend so small a part of their existence at home, the rapid development of their boys and girls is an ever-recurring surprise; and when young Robinson comes for that interview in which he asks the hand of Gwendolen, his request shocks her parent into the perception that his eldest girl has been grown up for a year or two. To these fathers the women of the household are kind, petting and caressing them, putting out of sight and sound annoyances and worries, while they talk brightly at the dinner-table, and devote themselves to making the evenings pass pleasantly; and we venture to say that when pater thinks of his family during the day, he always pictures his girls well dressed and with happy faces, and their mother a lady of leisure without a care.

Fathers there are who, when they close their office doors shut within them all the cares incidental to their work, and who never mention at home the interests that absorb so much time and thought; to the families of these "what father does" is a sealed book, and the wife who does not know the address of her husband's place of business is not a creature of fiction only.

Fathers there are who look on their children as so many subjects for experiment, and who bring up Mary and Alphonso perhaps by a system of stern repression and continual thwarting, while they educate Jenny and Paul with gushing indulgence, expecting the same good results to follow in each case. Naturally this course leads to disaster, *if* it be not guided by a study of the several characters, but from the mere whim of the ruler. Then again, there are fathers who make it a point of duty to treat all their children exactly alike, and make no allowance for the force of temperament, physique, or intellect; who are as harsh to Harry and Lucy for follies they commit through high spirits and being easily led

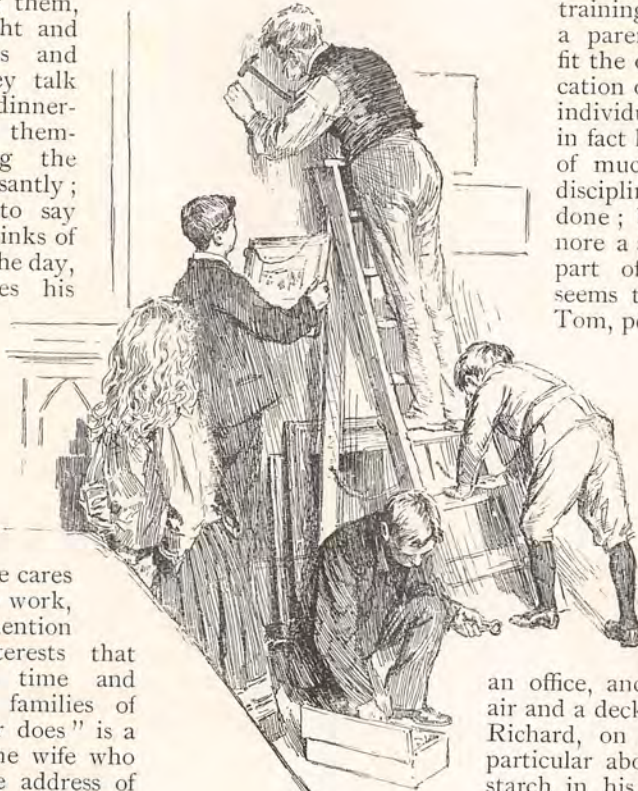
away, as they would be if they were committed by Robert or Mary, whose dispositions prevent them from being betrayed into similar misdoings.

Then again in education or choice of occupation, who does not know the parent who has mapped out each child's position and calling for it directly it was born? and who does not remember with sadness the endings that too often follow such training? It is true that a parent cannot always fit the occupation or education of each child to the individual disposition: and in fact life would be bereft of much of its necessary discipline if this could be done; but entirely to ignore a strong bent on the part of a child always seems the worst of folly.

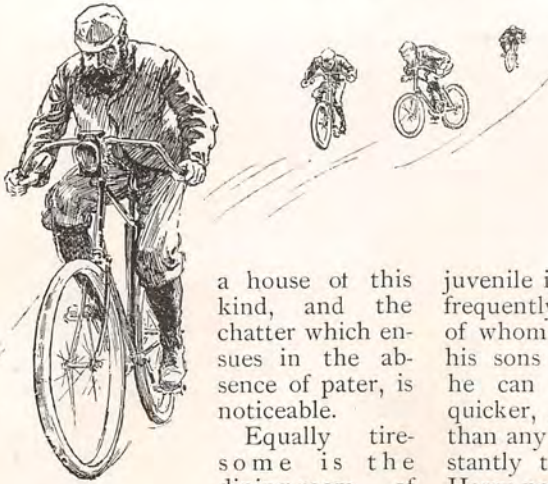
Tom, perhaps, adores the sea, and finds stormy nights and hard work "up aloft" have for him neither terror nor discomfort, but he feels stifled if he has to live in a small house, and loathes gas-lit rooms. To make him a clerk in

an office, and deny him fresh air and a deck walk, is cruelty. Richard, on the contrary, is particular about the amount of starch in his shirts, and hates to lift his umbrella because of the trouble of properly refurling it. What is the use of sending him on board a merchant-steamers to learn the ways of mariners? He loves his desk and his work, and finds tennis and golf clubs supply him

amply with fresh air and exercise. The father who never expects his boys and girls to be provided with opinions of their own, or to offer remarks during breakfast or dinner, is not an adorable specimen of the race; it naturally paralyses William or Amelia if their feeble comment on the fate of Lobengula, or the history of the Home Rule Bill, are met only by a stare through the parental *pince-nez*, which is adjusted for the purpose, and a scornful "humph." The contrast between the silence in which meals are taken in



"WHO CANNOT HANG A PICTURE WITHOUT THE AID OF THE WHOLE TRIBE."



"HE CAN GIVE HIS SONS POINTS
AND BEAT THEM."

a house of this kind, and the chatter which ensues in the absence of pater, is noticeable.

Equally tiresome is the dining-room of the father who encourages his children to absorb the conversation, and whose perpetual "What do you think, Jack?" "What

do you say to that, Emma?" elicit nothing but the crude opinions of untaught minds, and render a rational discussion of anything impossible.

We rather love the parent who constantly requires all his family to be in his sight, who cannot bear that they should go away to stay or be absent in the evenings, and who, as Mr. Jerome so graphically describes, cannot hang up a picture without the aid of his

juvenile is also often to be met with—more frequently indeed than the frisky matron of whom we used to be told; he can give his sons points in games and beat them; he can walk further, ride better, cycle quicker, get up earlier, and work harder than any of his boys, and does not fail constantly to tell them so. Jack, Tom, and Harry not infrequently discover that the one thing in which their parent does not excel them is in a race uphill, and they have been known to incite him to that form of amusement on purpose that they may for once "break his record."

But wandering in and out of English houses, must we not all confess that the British paterfamilias is a person worthy of admiration and esteem? He works hard, he grumbles little, he is contented, unselfish, earnestly anxious for the true well-being of his boys and girls, and filled with affection for them; he is honest, cheerful, hopeful, and true, and if his children sometimes consider him wanting in a taste for high art, or an appreciation of real literature, yet they may be congratulated if they in their turn become as useful members of society.

M. R. L.

FOGO SKERRIES.

BY GRANT ALLEN.



O I know the Skerries? Well, I'd ought to know them, I reckon, if anybody does. They're away to starboard, sir. It's the loneliest lighthouse on the Newfoundland coast; clear out of the beaten track of ships—only put there owing to the fog, through vessels getting belated, as you may say, when it's thick on the Banks, and mistaking their right course for the Straits of Belle Isle, a good hundred and fifty miles to norrard. You wouldn't think a navigator'd go a hundred

and fifty miles out of his right course, now would you? Well, all I can say is, you don't know the Banks in the dead of winter. Feeling your way, that's what I call it—like a hansom in London streets in November; and worse still in summer, when the ice is about. Glad to find sea-room anywhere, then, out of the way of the icebergs. They don't carry no pilot, that's where it is, don't you see; icebergs is irresponsible. It's all very well with Atlantic liners, going their sixteen knots an hour, and full steam ahead; they've a skipper and a look-out man. But a berg—why, she runs under all sail before the strongest wind, and don't care a red cent for