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Afternoon Thoughts.

A PLEA FOR DAUGHTERS.

It is the generally received opinion that a daughter should serve her family without a thought of pecuniary recompense. If the family be in moderate or embarrassed circumstances, she is, by turns, teacher, nurse, housekeeper, laundress, cook, and drudge in general; and, in the event of marriage, she is expected to furnish a place of sojourn for her relatives, and to push their fortunes with her husband's means and influence. The majority of women accept this social bondage with the constancy and devotion of martyrs, and when a woman has a sensitive conscience and an affectionate disposition, self-immolation is the almost inevitable consequence.

In the abstract, this self-immolation is beautiful; but in the "concrete," to the patient victim, it is pitiful to an extreme. If she remain single, it generally results in a laborious, thankless, and dependent life; and if she marry, in the sacrifice of the comfort and perhaps the happiness of her husband and children. It is said that an approving conscience and the affection of her friends should be her reward. Affection, or even an acknowledgment of her services, is not always won; and the approving conscience is not to be expected where self-duty is ignored. She provideth for her "own kindred," but not for her "own household," and her religious status is often "worse than an infidel's."

A few girls have an unconscious prescience of their fate, and evade or rebel against the family Juggernaut; but it generally crushes them at last.

Many parents would remedy this injustice if a feasible rule could be adjusted to the case. It has been suggested that because a daughter is ineligible to remunerative employment, she should inherit a double portion of her father's estate. It might be added, because the sick and dependent of the family are generally left to her care. In the January number of **DEMAREST** is a suggestion which may apply: the writer says, "Let us offer our daughters the inducements to cook, sweep, dust, and make home happy, that our husbands do our sons in the shop, store, and counting-house."

This may meet the evil. Let the daughter feel that daily toil will bring the consideration for the present and the provision for the future that it does to the son, and many dreary homes would now be comfortable and happy.

The lofty soul that is beyond the necessity of work or thought in "this weird world" may scorn such low considerations, and the devoted daughter may recoil from the suggestion of interested ser-

vice; but the just, the chivalrous, and the loving of the family would rejoice in shielding the sister from "outrageous fortune."

MODERN EXTRAVAGANCE.

THE charges against women of extravagance in dress must be taken with many grains of allowance. An English writer sensibly says: "The pretty little woman clothed in gorgeous apparel, who is so shocked at the extravagance of dress 'nowadays,' is only speaking from her own experience, having been originally 'raised' in a home of small dimensions, and set to dress on a small allowance, till she married a rich man, since when she has 'risen to the occasion,' and thinks nothing now of spending on one dress about half of what formerly was enough to clothe her entirely. On the other hand, the quietly dressed gentle lady who defends the present day from the charge of greater extravagance than former times, is one who was born to wealth and high position, but left it of her own accord in order to 'marry for love;' and to such as her it is very amusing to witness the surprised tone of 'les nouveaux riches' at the cost of the accessories which would come naturally to her, but which, nevertheless, she has learnt to do very well without. The truth is that dress now, as in former times, depends mainly on the disposition of the dresser. All this cry and lamentation about the extravagance of dress presupposes exactly what is the real mischief of the age—namely, the desire for equality; the insane thirst for everybody appearing alike, which is at the bottom of much sorrow and not a little sin. Why, because A is rich and spends \$350, must B, who is poor and has a family of children, spend \$100? We see this in nearly every form in which this subject is treated; the great idea is not how to dress quietly and respectfully on a little, but how to look as if you spent as much on your clothes as far richer people spend. There again is the real evil of the age—the spirit of *shams*. If you have not real jewels, do not go without, but wear *sham* ones; if you have not enough hair to look magnificent, wear *sham* (if it were only to prevent the effect of baldness and enable you to 'pass muster' we would not say anything, but it is far beyond this). And so it goes on: buy cheap finery, in order to look as if you bought it at twice the value somewhere else; exchange your clothes with somebody else; have them altered, retrimmed, anything to produce variety. And why? Surely if we appear on each given occasion in a proper and suitable costume, it ought not to signify how often we may have worn the said costume before. This love of variety is one of the worst cravings of modern times; and this is a modern characteristic."

The great want of our day is women who will go into their own kitchens, who if necessary will do their own cooking, who know how to go to work to make and keep a house clean, who are not afraid of washing and dressing a baby, who will take the principal care of their own children for the first year at least, and consider themselves responsible for the comfort and happiness of their homes.

It is not the highest class or the lowest class who can do this, it is the great middle class, the class who are now always complaining about the want of good servants, whose children are sent to cheap boarding-schools away from home, or are allowed to grow up in the society of

ignorant servants at home; whose money is spent and substance wasted with no adequate result, whose youth of labor should bring an abundant and happy old age; who are, or ought to be, the dependence of any country, the upholders of its best institutions, yet from whom, mainly because of the failure of women to do their duty, come efforts which tend to social anarchy, confusion, disruption, and ruin. But whether the fault lies with women or not, in their hands is the remedy. Let them take the bull by the horns, reduce the amount of their work as much as is consistent with comfort, and either do it themselves, or stay at home and see that it is properly done. If they have not been taught how to work, it is their misfortune; but if they do not teach themselves when the necessity arises, it is their fault.

Social Copies.

A Picturesque Room.—Much artistic and useful advice has been given to ladies of late, by Eastlake, Mrs. Stowe, and others, on home decorations and the furnishing of rooms. But on attempting to follow the directions of these teachers, one often produces an unpleasing effect; because the house or room is a hired one, and the owner will not permit certain changes to be made, necessary to the arrangement of the furniture.

Sometimes, however, the landlord can be circumvented, the incongruities of the commonest looking rooms overcome, and a very pleasing effect produced, by aiming at picturesqueness only.

But what is picturesqueness?

Let us study cabinet pictures of interiors by the best makers, and we shall soon learn.

They are of all schools; perhaps the French and the Flemish are in greatest contrast.

Here is the boudoir of the Parisian *grande dame*—here the humble sitting-room of the Flamanade who knits her own stockings of gray yarn.

But however these pictures differ in mode of treatment and representation of objects, they invariably agree in certain particulars.

The light always comes strong and clear from but one point. There is always a central object or group of objects placed to receive the strongest lights and shades, and all the other objects in the room are subordinate to this group.

In this city there is a room which so well illustrates what I am trying to say, that I wish every person interested in the subject could see it; but most of my readers are so far away that I must try to describe this one picturesque room.

It is the home of an English lady, who, having enjoyed luxury during all the earlier years of her life, found as much discomfort in unpleasing and commonplace surroundings, as many would find in actual want and privation. When, therefore, destiny placed her in a "hired second story front room and bedroom," of an ordinary house in New York, she could not be satisfied to furnish it in the stereotyped fashion. There were of course two front windows, with a pier between for a mirror or a dressing bureau. Opposite the door was a fireplace, with a black, wooden mantelshelf, broad and ugly, a deep recess on either side of it. On another side of the room were two doors, one fastened up and no use to her, the other leading into a large closet,

a narrow pier between them. The walls were of a dull, dark yellow, and the woodwork of the room, formerly white, was now much soiled and defaced. There was no furniture.

Our new tenant, when left to herself, had first of all "a good cry;" then she washed her tears away, and studied what to do with this forlorn apartment. She had a few pieces of furniture, including two sets of bookshelves, high and broad, with books to fill them; and some handsome curtains. One window—the farthest from the fireplace, and nearest the bedroom door—was nearly opposite the corner of a street, and gave a full, broad light from the east. She closed the other window and put one set of bookshelves there, and the other set close beside it, in the pier intended for a table and a mirror.

She hung a handsome dark-blue curtain over the door of the bedroom, near the open window, and having taken away the door of the closet, hung a curtain there. All the dirty white woodwork that now was seen she painted a dark brown, without any attempt at graining, and by repeated coats of varnish gave a high polish. On the door that was fastened up, she hung a number of small paintings, and in the narrow pier, fastened some ornamental bracket shelves, and placed on them small busts and groups of statuary. She pasted paper in imitation of green marble upon the black wooden mantelshelf, and on the panels and the sheet-iron fire-board below, going over the cracks and small mouldings with black varnish; and finishing the ugly hearth in the same way. Over the mantel-shelf she hung her mirror, which quite covers the entire space, hiding the smoky wall, and reflecting the entire room; a few bronzes are in front of the mirror. In the recesses she hung her large paintings, and also over the crimson sofa that stands opposite the fireplace. Below the pictures, in the recesses, are a large arm-chair and work-table, and an Indian cabinet and writing-chair. A standing portfolio of choice engravings stands in front of the closed door, and near the cabinet. A handsome carpet, woven in one piece, with a border, covers the greater portion of the floor, leaving a few inches of the boards to be seen all round. The boards that show have been painted dark brown and varnished; and as the colors in the carpet are dark green and black, with a little brown, the effect of the floor is soft and pleasing.

At the open window she hung lace curtains, and placed there a pretty table covered with blooming plants—these get the morning sun, and constant, judicious care, and are always thriving. The lady herself is generally found sitting near the plants, with a book or some delicate sewing, and forms the central object of this most picturesque room. Strangers entering and being seated upon the sofa, from whence they can survey the whole pleasant scene, are surprised and delighted, often without knowing why; the lady's old friends and most frequent visitors are freshly pleased at each visit, the effect of this room and its occupant is so unique and out of the common.

And so little money, so comparatively little labor was needed and expended, while every article which the owner possessed was carefully studied that it might be used in the best possible way, that I can truly assert this room to have been furnished as many thousands of splendid apartments never are—with brains.—**ELIZABETH DUDLEY**, in *Pliny Smith's Magazine*.