

HOME DRUDGERY.



"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me."
—Luke x, 10.

The man of the house is dead, and his widow is taking charge of the premises. This is the widow Martha of Bethany. Yes, I will show you also the pet of the household. This is Mary, the younger sister, with a book under her arm and her face having no appearance of anxiety or care. Company has come. Christ stands outside the door, and of course there is a good deal of excitement inside the door. The disarranged furniture is hastily put aside, and the hair is brushed back, and the dresses are adjusted as well as, in so short a time, Mary and Martha can attend to these matters. They did not keep Christ standing at the door until they were newly appareled or until they had elaborately arranged their tresses, then coming out with their affected surprise as though they had not heard the two or three previous knockings, saying, "Why, is that you?" No. They were ladies and were always presentable, although they may not always have had on their best, for none of us always has on our best. If we did, our best would not be worth having on. They throw open the door and greet Christ. They say: "Good morning, Master! Come in and be seated." Christ did not come alone. He had a group of friends with him, and such an influx of city visitors would throw any country home into perturbation.

I suppose also the walk from the city had been a good appetizer. The kitchen department that day was a very important department, and I suppose that Martha had no sooner greeted the guests than she fled to that room. Mary had no worriment about household affairs. She had full confidence that Martha could get up the best dinner in Bethany. She seems to say, "Now let us have a division of labor. Martha, you cook, and I'll sit down and be good." So you have often seen a great difference between two sisters.

There is Martha, hard working, pains taking, a good manager, ever inventive of some new pastry or discovering something in the art of cookery and housekeeping. There is Mary, also, and of conversation, literary, so engaged in deep questions of ethics, she has no time to attend to the questions of household welfare. It is noon. Mary is in the parlor with Christ. Martha is in the kitchen. It would have been better if they had divided the work, and then they could have divided the opportunity of listening to Jesus. But Mary monopolizes Christ while Martha sweats at the fire. It was a very important thing that they should have a good dinner that day. Christ was hungry and he did not often have a luxurious entertainment. Alas, if the duty had devolved upon Mary, what a feast that would have been! But something went wrong in the kitchen. Perhaps the fire would not burn or the bread would not bake, or Martha scalded her hand, or something was burned black that ought only to have been made brown, and Martha lost her patience, and forgetting the proprieties of the occasion, with besweated brow, and perhaps, with pitcher in one hand and tongs in the other, she rushes out of the kitchen into the presence of Christ, saying, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" Christ scolded not. If it were scolding, I should have his scolding than anybody leasing. There was nothing knew Martha had almost self to death to get him to eat, and so he throws a sternness into his intonation as to say: "My dear woman, let the dinner go. Sit this ottoman beside Mary's sister, Martha, Martha, careful and troubled about things, but one thing is needful." She throws open that kitchen door in and see a great many perplexities and anxieties. Here is the trial of nonapprehension. That is what made Martha so hasty. The younger sister estimates of her older sister's. As now, men bothered with duties of the store and office, coming from the Stock Exchange when they get home: ought to be in our factory while! You ought to have eight or ten or twenty berdinates, and then you know what trouble and anxiety Oh, sir, the wife and the mother conduct at the same time a unit, a clothing establishment, a restaurant, a laundry, a health officer, police and press if her realm! She must do a hundred things, and do them well, in to keep things going smoothly in her brain and her nerves are to the utmost. I know there are keepers who are so fortunate that an sit in an armchair in the li or lie on the belated pillow and off all the care upon subordi who, having large wages and experience, can attend to all o fairs of the household. These ar zealous. I am speaking now of great mass of housekeepers—the ten to whom life is a struggle, and at 30 years of age look as though were 40, and at 40 look as though

of the kitchen. You go out to the cemetery and you will see that the tombstones all read beautifully poetic, but if those tombstones would speak the truth, thousands of them would say: "Here lies a woman killed by too much mending and sewing and baking and scrubbing and scouring. The weapon with which she was slain was a broom or a sewing machine or a ladle."

You think, O man of the world, that you have all the cares and anxieties. If the cares and anxieties of the household should come upon you for one week, you would be fit for the insane asylum. The half-reated housekeeper arises in the morning. She must have the morning robe prepared at an irrevocable hour. What if the fire will not light; what if the marketing did not come; what if the clock has stopped—no matter, she must have the morning repeat at an irrevocable hour. Then the children must be got off to school. What if their garments are torn; what if they do not know their lessons; what if they have lost a hat or sash—they must be ready. Then you have all the diet of the day and perhaps of several days, to plan, but what if the butcher has sent meat unmarketable, or the grocer has sent articles of food adulterated, and what if some piece of silver be gone, or some favorite chalice be cracked, or the roof leak, or the plumbing fail, or any one of a thousand things occur—you must be ready. Spring weather comes, and there must be a revolution in the family wardrobe, or autumn comes, and you must shut out the northern blast, but what if the moth has preceded you to the chest; what if, during the year, the children have outgrown the apparel of last year; what if the fashions have changed! Your house must be an apothecary's shop; it must be a dispensary; there must be medicines for all sorts of ailments—something to loosen the croup, something to cool the burn, something to poultice the inflammation, something to silence the jumping tooth, something to soothe the earache. You must be in half a dozen places at the same time, or you must attempt to be. If, under all this wear and tear of life, Martha makes an impatient rush upon the library or drawing room, be patient, be lenient! O woman, though I may fail to stir up an appreciation in the souls of others in regard to your household toils, let me assure you, from the kindness with which Jesus Christ met Martha, that he appreciates all your work from garret to cellar, and that the God of Deborah, and Hannah, and Abigail, and Grandmother Lois, and Elizabeth Fry, and Hannah More is the God of the housekeeper! Jesus was never married, that he might be the especial friend and confidant of a whole world of troubled womanhood. I blunder. Christ was married. The Bible says that the church is the Lamb's wife, and that makes me know that all Christian women have a right to go to Christ and tell him of their annoyances and troubles, since by his oath of conjugal fidelity he is sworn to sympathize. George Herbert, the Christian poet wrote two or three verses on this subject:

The servant by this clause
Makes drudgery divine.
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes this and the action fine.

A young woman of brilliant education and prosperous circumstances was called down stairs to help in the kitchen in the absence of the servants. The doorbell ringing, she went to open it and found a gentleman friend, who said as he came in: "I thought that I heard music. Was it on this piano or on this harp?" She answered: "No, I was playing on a gridiron, with frying pan accompaniment. The servants are gone, and I am learning how to do this work." Well done! When will women in all circles find out that it is honorable to do anything that ought to be done?

Again, there is the trial of severe economy. Nine hundred and ninety-nine households out of the thousand are subjected to it, some under more and some under less stress of circumstances. Especially if a man smoke very expensive cigars and take very costly dinners at the restaurants he will be severe in demanding domestic economies. This is what kills tens of thousands of women—attempting to make \$5 do the work of \$7. A young woman about to enter the married state said to her mother, "How long does the honeymoon last?" The mother answered: "The honeymoon lasts until you ask your husband for money." How some men do dole out money to their wives! "How much do you want?" "A dollar." "You are always wanting a dollar. Can't you do with 50 cents?" If the husband has not the money, let him plainly say so. If he has it let him make cheerful response, remembering that his wife has as much right to it as he has. How the bills come in! The woman is the banker of the household. She is the president, the cashier, the teller, the discount clerk, and there is a panic every few weeks. This 30 years' war against high prices, this perpetual study of economies, this life-long attempt to keep the outgoes less than the income, exhausts innumerable housekeepers.

Oh, my sister, this is a part of the Divine discipline! If it were best for you, all you would have to do would be to open the front windows, and the ravens would fly in with food, and after you had baked 50 times from the barrel in the pantry the barrel, like the one of Nazareth, would be full, and the shoes of the children would last as long as the shoes of the Israelites in the wilderness.

catering for appetites, and in the land of the white robe they never have to mend anything, and the air in that hill country makes everybody well. There are no rents to pay; every man owns his own house, and a mansion at that. It will not be so great a change for you to have a chariot in heaven if you have been in the habit of riding in this world. It will not be so great a change for you to sit down on the banks of the river of life if in this world you had a country seat, but if you have walked with tired feet in this world what a glorious change to mount celestial equipage! And if your life on earth was domestic martyrdom, oh, the joy of an eternity in which you shall have nothing to do except what you choose to do! Martha has had no drudgery for 18 centuries! I quarrel with the theologians who want to distribute all the thrones of heaven among the John Knoxes and the Hugh Latimers and the Theodan legion. Some of the brightest thrones of heaven will be kept for Christian housekeepers. Oh, what a change from here to there, from the time when they put down the rolling pin to when they take up the scepter! If Chatsworth park and the Vanderbilt mansion were to be lifted into the celestial city, they would be considered uninhabitable rookeries, and glorified Lazarus would be ashamed to be going in and out of either of them.

There are many housekeepers who could get along with their toil if it were not for sickness and trouble. The fact is, one half of the women of the land are more or less invalids. The mountain lass who has never had an ache or a pain may consider household toil inconceivable, and toward evening she may skip away miles to the fields and drive home the cattle, and she may until 10 o'clock at night fill the house with laughing racket. But oh, to do the work of life with worn-out constitution, when whooping cough has been raging for six weeks in the household, making the night as sleepless as the day! That is not so easy. Perhaps this comes after the nerves have been shattered by some bereavement that has left desolation in every room in the house and set the crib in the garret because the occupant has been hushed into a slumber which needs no mother's lullaby. Oh, she could provide for the whole group a great deal better than she can for a part of the group, now the rest are gone! Though you may tell her God is taking care of those who are gone, it is motherlike to brood both socks, and one wing she puts over the flock in the house; the other wing she puts over the flock in the grave.

There is nothing but the old-fashioned religion of Jesus Christ that will take a woman happily through the trials of home life. At first there may be a romance or a novelty that will do for a substitute. The marriage hour has just passed, and the perplexities of the household are more than atoned by the joy of being together and by the fact that when it is late they do not have to discuss the question as to whether it is time to go. The mishaps of the household, instead of being a matter of anxiety and reprehension, are a matter of merriment—the loaf of bread turned into a geological specimen, the slushy custards, the jaundiced or mealy biscuits. It is a very bright sunlight that falls on the cutlery and the mantel ornaments of a new home.

But after awhile the romance is all gone, and then there is something to be prepared for the table that the book called "Cookery Taught in Twelve Lessons" will not teach. The receipt for making it is not a handful of this, a cup of that and a spoonful of something else. It is not something sweetened with ordinary condiments or flavored with ordinary ovens. It is the loaf of domestic happiness, and all the ingredients come down from heaven, and the fruits are plucked from the tree of life, and it is sweetened with the new wine of the kingdom, and it is baked in the oven of home trial. Solomon wrote out of his own experience. He had a wretched home. A man cannot be happy with two wives, much less 500, and he says, writing out of his own experience, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

One of the most affecting reminiscences of my mother is my remembrance of her as a Christian housekeeper. She worked very hard, and when we would come in from summer play and sit down at the table at noon I remember how she used to come in with beads of perspiration along the line of gray hair, and how sometimes she would sit down at the table and put her head against her wrinkled hand and say, "Well, the fact is, I'm too tired to eat." Long after she might have delegated this duty to others, she would not be satisfied unless she attended to the matter herself. In fact, we all preferred to have her do so, for somehow things tasted better when she prepared them. Some time ago in an express train I shot past that old homestead. I looked out of the window and tried to peer through the darkness. There was the country home. There was the secondary table. There were the children on either side of the table, most of them gone never to come back. At one end of the table, my father, with a smile that never left his countenance even when he lay in his coffin. It was an 84 years' smile—not the smile of insatiation, but of Christian courage and Christian hope. At the other end of the table was a beautiful, benignant, hard working, aged Christian housekeeper, my mother. She was very tired. I am glad she has so good a place to rest in. "Blessed are

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