

# HER LESSON

Love Found a Way to Cure a Woman's Selfishness.

By BAKER B. HOSKINS, JR.

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A big man and a little boy came wearily in from the corral at sundown, where they had just unsaddled their horses after a very hot day of hard riding. They had been in the brush, and the scratches on their leather leggings told the history of the ride. They paused at the little back gallery and mechanically drew off their boots and drew on a pair of house slippers. The leggings were hung upon nails in the wall. The man then took down a tin basin and washed his hands and face. The boy followed his example like a perfect model. "Hurry up, you all!" came an impatient voice from the little kitchen. "Supper is ready and has been for half an hour. You all poke around so it will be 9 o'clock before the dishes are washed." Later they took their places silently at the table, where sat the woman waiting for them. She wore a clean white dress. There was an expression of discontent written plainly upon her rather full face, spilling what would otherwise have made a pretty home picture. They ate in silence, as they usually did. There seemed to be a suppressed something about the woman's manner, which the man's keen eyes noticed, but it brought no comment from him. When he silently passed his cup for more coffee the tension seemed to give way, and the woman spoke bitterly. "Have you forgotten that the tenth anniversary of our wedding comes next week?" "No, I haven't forgotten it." "Well, I have decided to spend it with friends back in my old home." The woman spoke half defiantly. The husband looked at her with a startled air. "Yes, I have made up my mind to go," she continued, "and there's no keeping me from it. I've slaved here on this ranch for you for ten years, ten long years, without ever once going back, or going anywhere, for that matter, except to the little town for supplies. Here I am, as isolated as the heathen, and if it were not for the fashion magazines I'd be ten years behind the styles. I never see anybody except ranch folks; never hear anything except ranch talk." The man looked at his wife in hurt silence. When she paused and seemed waiting for him to speak he began slowly. "It's been kinder hard on you, mamma, and I had hoped next spring to take you and the boy off on a visit. But this year it is impossible. The

There's nothing short of death that can keep me from it. You'll have to make more money to buy stock with or borrow money." The man's face went pale, and he attempted to moisten his dry lips. His red, heat-inflamed eyelids seemed to get redder. He spoke low: "If you take that money it'll be like robbing me and the boy." Grace's face flamed, and she spoke roughly. "You are a fool, Sam McKnight! Every woman has got to have a change once in a while—once in ten years, at least." The boy looked at his parents in wide-eyed astonishment. Never before had he experienced anything like this. His mother afterward ate little and sat with forced patience until the hungry man and boy had finished their supper. Then she rose wearily and tied her apron about her waist. She cleared the table and began the irksome and seemingly never ending task of washing and drying dishes, while the discontent of continuous household drudgery was plainly written upon her face. The father silently took the milk bucket from the shelf. "You needn't pull off the calves tonight, boy," he said huskily. "Just make down your pallet and go to sleep. Tomorrow will be a hard day for us." The man had gone to the pen where the hungry calves were bawling. When he came back he strained the milk and washed the bucket. Then, taking his pipe, he went out and sat by the creaking windmill and smoked. He slipped into the kitchen when the morning star came up and kindled the fire. While the coffee was boiling he went to the cowpen to milk and feed the horses. When he came back the wife, with the same weary, discontented look in her eyes, was putting breakfast on the table. When breakfast was on the table Sam went out and touched the boy on the shoulder. He rose and dressed quickly and went into the dining room, where his father was already eating. He took his place silently and gave his attention to his food. Before the sun was up they rode away. There was a strange comradeship that existed between this big man and little boy. They rode stirrup to stirrup for a long time; then the boy asked: "What does she want to go off for, dad?" The man turned away his face. "You will understand some day, son." "Why don't you tell her what we are going to have on the anniversary?" the boy queried. "Bet she'd stay then." "I don't want to try to buy her love, son." The minds of both were filled with thoughts of this during the entire day. It was dark when they returned home. They went through the same routine as on the previous night. If the man had hoped the woman would change her mind during the day he was disappointed, for he saw when he entered the room that she had got out her little trunk and had packed it. He asked in a very quiet, very calm voice: "When are you going?" Her reply was not so calm. "In the morning. The boy will drive me to the station. You will give me a check for my part of the money." "You needn't be in no hurry to come back!" rejoined the man bitterly. When the day that marked the anniversary came the two did not go off on the range, but lazed around the house doing up odd jobs. Toward the middle of the morning a wagon with a heavy load came creaking up to the house. "Back up to the gallery and unload her, boys," said Sam. The wagon was backed up accordingly, and the huge, heavy thing was unloaded. By the exerted strength of all the men it was moved into the house and placed in the front room. The boy hustled around with considerable importance, getting the hatchet and other tools for opening the box. When the front of the box was removed the room in the isolated little ranch house was illuminated by the presence of a piano. "It's a dandy, if shine counts for anything," Sam remarked. When the piano man went away the best horse on the ranch was led behind the wagon. The bargain had been made months before, and it was one that had cost Sam something. Days slipped by, and the piano remained silent. Weeks went by, and nothing was heard from the mother who wanted a change. The man grew restless, and the boy asked questions. Then the man fell sick. Drinking from the stagnant water holes over the prairie gave him fever. The boy begged him to write for the mother to come, but the father shut his lips tightly and said no. "She left of her own accord, and of her own accord she must return, if return she does." The sick man took to his bed, but still he would not let the boy write. Sam was so sick that the boy had to stay with him all the time. When the little fellow could stand the strain no longer—while his father was asleep—he scrawled a letter to his mother: "Dad he's sick, and we've got a piano for you. Won't you please come home?" The letter was written, but how to mail it was a problem. A neighboring rancher rode over the next morning, bringing a letter that had lain in the postoffice for several weeks. The boy instinctively knew that it was from his mother, and he opened it with trembling hands and tried to read it, but he could not for tears. The rancher took the letter to read it to the boy, but soon folded it and placed it under the pillow of the sick

man. Later the man was able to read it: "Why don't you write for me to come home? Don't you want me—don't you really care whether I come back or not after the years you have loved me so faithfully? Don't you miss me—don't you need me enough to write for me to come back?" The father experienced the same difficulty in reading that the son had. He, too, cried. The fever cooled somewhat, and the neighbor went home. He promised to return on the morrow. After he left the boy went to the front door and looked out. He saw the figure of a woman struggling along the dusty trail. The distance then was too great for him to recognize her. He watched as she drew nearer. It seemed to him, yes, it looked like—it was his mother! He sprang from the gallery and ran toward her, crying: "Mamma! Mamma!" The woman saw him and quickened her weary pace. She held out her arms, and he threw himself, sobbing, into them, hiding his little dry, red face against her bosom. The mother wept. In his joy at her coming the boy forgot the piano. "Dad—he's sick. He's been mighty sick, but he's better now, 'cause he's asleep." The woman released her son and ran, panting, to the house. When she reach-

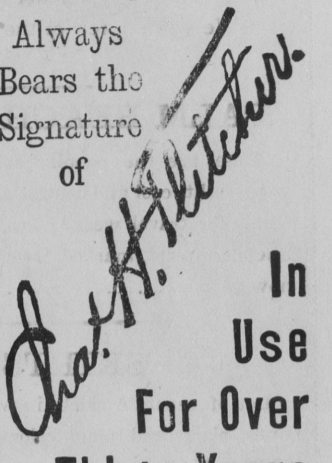


How Weather Makes Us Work The ideal climate is said to be found in many parts of the world, but no one knows exactly what it is. The whole matter depends on our definition of "ideal." If we are looking simply for rest and pleasure a warm and sunny climate is probably the best. If we want to go fishing something different is preferable. The most essential fact in the lives of the majority of mankind is work. Therefore the climate which is best for work is ideal from that point of view. If we take efficiency in the daily work of our life as our standard it is possible to measure what people actually do under different climatic conditions, and thus to form an estimate of the best kind of climate. From the work of about five hundred factory operatives in southern Connecticut and of about eighteen hundred students at West Point and Annapolis I have prepared curves showing the relative efficiency under different conditions of temperature, humidity and storminess. These curves, based on investigations among a large number of individuals, agree with similar curves prepared on the basis of two Danish psychologists—Lehmann and Petersen, in Copenhagen. The two sets of data show that the physical activity of the races of western Europe is greatest when the average temperature is about 60 degrees—that is, on days when the thermometer goes down to perhaps 50 or 55 degrees at night and rises to about 65 or 70 degrees by day. Mental activity, on the other hand, is greatest when the average is a little below 40 degrees—that is, on days which may have a frost at night. Since life consists of both mental and physical activity, and each is essential to success, the most favorable conditions would seem to be those where the temperature never falls far below the most propitious point for mental work or rises above the optimum for physical work. In other words, if the mean temperature were the only thing to be considered, the best climate would be one where the average in winter is about 40 and the average in summer about 60 degrees. Only a few parts of the world are blessed with such conditions. The most important of these, both in area and in population, is England. Next comes the northern Pacific coast of the United States, from Oregon to the southern part of British Columbia. Here, unfortunately, the mountains rise above the sea, and so prevent the favorable conditions from penetrating far inland. A third highly favored area is found in New Zealand, especially the southern island. This, like its two predecessors, is recognized as one of the highly advanced parts of the earth. The fourth and last of the places where the mean temperature is particularly favorable is not generally so recognized. It lies in Patagonia and the corresponding part of Chile between latitudes 45° and 50° S. Few people live here, and we are apt to think of it as of relatively slight value. It differs from the other three regions in having a deficient rainfall except in the western part, which is extremely mountainous. From what has just been said it must not be inferred that the climates of England, the northern Pacific coast of the United States, New Zealand and Patagonia are necessarily ideal. Mean temperature is by no means the only important condition. In the first place, not only a deficiency of moisture, as in a large part of Patagonia, but an excess, as in the mountains of southern Chile or in Ireland, which otherwise is almost as favored as England, may hamper a country. Such conditions produce not only an adverse economic effect by making agriculture difficult, but also a direct effect upon people's capacity for work. A moderate degree of dampness—that is, a relative humidity of from 65 per cent. in summer to 90 per cent. in winter—is favorable, but when the summers are wet or the winters very dry people do not work so well.—Ellsworth Huntington, in Harper's Magazine.

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