

The Bee's Home Magazine Page

Writing Our Own Price Tags

(Cost of Mother's Sacrifice)

By DOROTHY DIX.

I have received a letter from a woman who writes these words:

"I have two daughters. They are handsome and intelligent girls, and from their birth it has been my ambition to give them every advantage of education that was possible. We are people in moderate circumstances, and in order that my children might go to schools and dress well, I have toiled like a slave and come without every comfort for myself."



"My daughters have had pretty frocks. I have not had even decent clothes. They have had masters in music, and language, and dancing. I have cooked, and washed, and sewed to pay for it. Neither one of my girls has ever cooked a meal or washed a dish, or done without anything she really wanted. Now my children are grown. They are ungrateful, unappreciative; they are impatient to me; they scorn me, and are always threatening to leave home."

"Have I done my duty as a mother to my daughters, or have I been a fool?" A fool, dear lady. A double and twisted, eyed-in-the-wood fool. So is any mother who makes a slave of herself to her children, and sacrifices herself absolutely to them.

She has put her children up on a pedestal and prostrated herself before them, and they naturally look down upon her. She has made of herself a doorman, and she must of the common fate of doormats, which is to be walked upon. A great deal of alshy sentiment has been expended upon the beauty of mother sacrifice, but nobody yet has ever seen it appreciated by the recipients of it.

Of course, every mother thinks she's going to be the exception to this rule. She deludes herself with the fond fancy that her children are going to be different from everybody else's children, and that the time will come when they will take her work-knotted old hands in theirs and kiss and bless them for the toll they have undergone, and when they will crown her gray old head with the halo of their worshipful devotion.

But the dream never materializes. Instead of reverencing the mother's callous palms the children are ashamed because they are not pink and manicured like their own hands, and in place of crowning her with floral devotion, they bestow upon her their year before last hat.

As for work, why, mother just dotes on it. It is her religion, she's busily old-fashioned and out of the style. In the same manner they account for mother's staying at home when every one else goes a-peasering by the cheerful assumption that mother's just wed to the kitchen and the washboard. And as for work, why, mother just dotes on it. It is her religion, she's busily old-fashioned and out of the style.

Haven't you heard a thousand times boys and girls ridiculing mother's sublime sacrifices for them, as just her peculiarities? Haven't you heard them tell how you couldn't pry mother away from home with a crowbar, and laughing at her shabby old clothes? It brought a lump into your throat, because you knew that mother was offering up her very life itself on the altar of her children, and they didn't have sense enough see it or gratitude enough to give her one thank for it.

The truth of the matter is—and it's one of the most unlovely things about human nature—that everybody, our own children included, gives us exactly the sort of treatment that we demand of them. We write our own price tags, and we are cheap or dear, as we assert ourselves to be. We get just exactly what is coming to us, no less and no more.

If a woman teaches her children by precept, if not by word, that they are to be preferred before her, that they are to have the best of everything, that she is to be nothing but a servant to them, it is her own fault if they are selfish and arrogant and despise her as an inferior. She could equally well have taught them to be dutiful, respectful and appreciative of her.

It is the woman who demands the most of her children who gets the most, and if you want proof of this just observe that it is never the mother who has made a martyr of herself for her children who is the best loved or the most considered. Invariably it is the mother who has made her children think for her who is petted and doddled and adored by her sons and daughters. Indeed, it is an axiom that trifling mothers make smart children and selfish mothers good children, and it is a rule that seldom fails.

The mother who thinks that she is doing a kindness to her children by saving them every hardship makes a terrible mistake. We grow stronger morally by using our soul muscles just as we grow stronger physically by exercising our bodily muscles, and the children who have their part of the family burden laid upon their shoulders instead of mother bearing it alone, make the men and women who are champions in the battle of life.

Often virtue leans to vice's side, and the woman whose unselfishness makes her daughters so selfish they are willing to sit about in idleness and see their poor old mother work for them, has not done her duty by her children. She has committed a crime against them.

Motherhood, at best, is full enough of sacrifices without committing the folly of giving up everything on earth for her children.

More Wearers of the Laurel

—LITTLE SHE'S—

By NELL BRINKLEY
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A little while ago I made a row of little chaps (masculine chaps), the future "great," in all stages of wear and tear, lovable, and beloved I know, freckled and smooth and rough and clear (all good stuff, and to a woman's heart, cuddleable!) So comes along a letter, a very dear letter, from a woman person, and says she: "Please, are there no little women-children who will one day be great also? You know better, so please don't leave them out."

So here they are—woman's woman! All in a row for you. And surely there are great among them. These little chaps (feminine). Little girls are dainty—so I cannot show you the grubby knees of them, the scratches and mars and bruises, the poverty, as I could on the little boys. But it's there most surely!

Who could believe that crop-headed, boyish Sara, with the squint and the Teddy-bear, will discover more magic in the scientific world some day—something that will set the world by the two pricked ears! Barbara, with the steadfast gray eyes and the "er-plain face," who speaks at the Explorers' club on the far places she has gyped through, was once this little beauty with the pale brown curls, the blue baby-ribbon wound in them, and the frothy dress. Then she was a professional beauty! Julie, with the stockings that were knit to last, the old-fashioned apron, and the hair ribbon faded and glossed with the washings and ironings that have been its lot—Julia, with the gallant little smile—any one might dream here is a great comedienne! Cissy, with the boyish hair and socks, scuffed shoes and ravaged knees, all boy save her heart—becomes a great mother. And there are famous mothers—many.

The mother of a great suffragette and orator, a woman with a silver tongue and voice of gold, brings out her baby picture. And lo! it's a bit of a girl with a blue sllp, soft hands, soft face and demure, long, soft, brown curls! Just a baby girl named Dorothy Jane!

Here is Joan. Fat and smiling, dimpled and golden, clutching a dower with all her soul. A "snap"—the sun in her eyes and her hair

ablow. The material in her sllp is cheap and not new. But the light in her eyes is rich and alive to sound. And one day you will pay joyously your five or ten or twenty round dollars to hear her sing! And you will sit wrapped in a magic cloak, drowned in the diamond stream of her voice. And your eyes will ache with tears and your heart beat glad and sad. Just the same Joan wore blue-print and did it not cost very much!

And Mary, the dreamer, with the slow, soft eyes and always the best love for her velvet frock, the little girl with a lonely way with

her, who saw the sunset in the heaven before she did the toy at her feet—a little chaser of hoops and obscure fancies—perhaps she'll paint and write and give great dreams to the world from the head under her thatch of fine dark hair. Who knows!

Look into the eyes and heart of your little daughter—and wonder and reverence and be afraid. For something looks back at you of greatness and splendor! And if you will search and help—you may sense the dim glow-glow of Fame's halo 'bove her hair.

—NELL BRINKLEY.

The Real and the Ideal

By BEATRICE FAIRFAX.

There is just one danger in having ideals—they may blind you to the possibilities of the real. Ideals are specifications to guide you in building dwellings, both material and spiritual," says a clever writer. She goes on to liken ideals to blue prints and realities to the brick, stone and mortar of which the building is to be made.

Ideals are far more than blue prints—they are the spirit of the builder. An ideal to be worth anything should mean the vision splendid of the completed dwelling. Constantly working toward an ideal means dealing with reality, of course—but it means more than that. It means dealing with reality purposefully.

Suppose I am a stenographer—a good stenographer—but that I merely turn out my day's work as well as possible, with no picture in my mind of where I mean to be carried a year from now by the work of each day. I am likely to become a plodder—an earnest, capable plodder—if you like—but one who never becomes capable of more than plodding. Don't get into the habit of looking rapturously at your ideal and scorning the real. Mansions have to be built of brick and mortar—not of gold and Jasper. But brick upon brick may be laid so well that the finished structure is quite as lovely as if it were built of quarried marble.

The common duties of every day have to be done. The point is, how well you do them. You can't help doing your absolute best with a seam when you have a vision of a lovely finished garment in your eyes; for you know that one awkward and bulging seam will spoil the beauty of the whole. Because your spiritual eyes have the vision of the beautiful whole, it does not mean for one minute that the

eyes of your body shall fail to look with honest directness at the section of sewing just before them.

It is never necessary to leave the ideal or to forget it. It is never possible to worship it blindly or falsely. It is never possible that a real ideal shall lure you from the path of duty or cause you sorrow. For a true ideal is not an impractical, floating, nebulous thing, in the pursuit of which you excuse yourself from all the actuality of the present. It is instead a vision of the reality to which you may attain.

If I were a clerk in a shop, measuring off 8-cent laces, I should have an ideal of myself as a future buyer of the most exquisite and valuable lace. That wouldn't mean that one day I would absent-mindedly cut thirty-five inches to the yard and the next thirty-seven.

It would mean that I should be conscious of the fact that I had to do the task at hand very well indeed in order to merit promotion. It would mean that I should study patterns and values; that I should go to the counter, where the expensive laces were sold, and study

them lovingly; that I should go to a public library and borrow books on lace, and that all the while I should be training myself to be an efficient business woman with a special knowledge of my subject.

An ideal is no good to you unless you absolutely hold to it. You must be conscious that in the very process of working toward it you are on the way to success—nay, more—that in the evolving of the ideal you have begun to succeed. If, in a sordid world, you can look above facts of the present to possibilities of the future, you have in you the making of greatness.

Abraham Lincoln, lying on the mud floor of a wilderness cabin studying the law books he had trudged miles to obtain, was pursuing an ideal—but pursuing it through reality, not through idle dreams. In the pursuit lay promise of success.

An ideal can never hurt you unless, having it, you are too lazy to make it come true. An ideal must ever help you if it is a guide and a beacon to be reached through reality.

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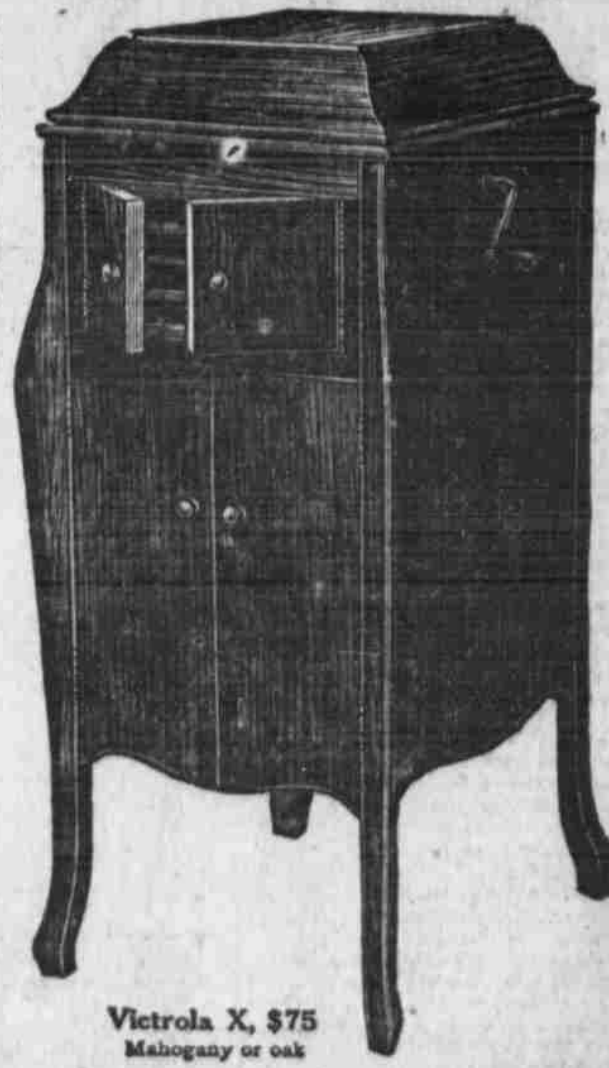
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