



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts Meyer

Snowed Under

Of all the things that the year snowed under,

The busy Old Year that has gone away,

How many will rise in the spring, I wonder,

Brought to light by the warmth of May?

Will the rose-tree branches, so wholly hidden

That never a rose tree it seems to be,

At the sweet spring's call come forth unbidden,

And bud in beauty and bloom for me?

Will the fair, green earth, whose throbbing bosom

Is hid, like a maid's in her gown at night,

Wake out of her sleep, and with blade and blossom

Gem her garments to please my sight?

Over the knoll in the valley yonder,

The loveliest buttercups bloomed and grew;

When the snow is gone that drifted them under,

Will they shoot up sunward and bloom anew?

When the wild winds blew and the sleet storm pelted,

I lost a jewel of priceless worth;

If I walk that way when the snows have melted,

Will the gem gleam up from the bare, brown earth?

I laid a love that was dead—or dying,

For the year to bury and hide from sight;

But out of a trance, will it waken, crying,

And push to my heart like a leaf to the light?

Under the snow lie things so cherished—

Hopes, ambitions, and dreams of men,

Faces that vanished and trusts that perished,

Never to sparkle or glow again.

The Old Year greedily grasped his plunder,

Covered it over, and hurried away;

Of the thousand things he hid, I wonder,

How many will rise at the call of May?

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

For the New Year

Did you do all the things you promised yourself to do during the year just passed into history? Perhaps not; but the wish to do them made you better and stronger in future, if you will try hard enough. Many things we might do, if we but thought of them, or had them pointed out to us, and there is one thing to which I would like to call your attention and ask your consideration. Do not forget the aged.

One of the ways to scatter sunshine is to strew a little of it along the pathways of the old people. Many an old person is compelled, by the feebleness of age, to live with the younger generation, and in such home, though they may have every kindness and consideration shown them, with all

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material wants supplied liberally, they may yet feel a pitiable sense of dependence and pauperism because nobody thinks to put a little money in their purse that can be spent absolutely unquestioned, as they choose. Often the little things they crave seem so utterly foolish and useless to younger persons, that it seems but a waste; but do not we all waste at times in our money spending? Are all our purchases "bargains?" What of the little wants their loving care so willingly catered to in our helpless childhood?

This withholding of the hand may be but because of thoughtlessness; or it may be because of lack of money on the part of the younger family. If one should suggest to certain people that the old people might like a little spending money, the answer, ten chances to one, would be: "Why, what use have they for money? We get them everything they need." But do you? To be sure, they do not ask—in so many words; but give them a handful of change, and see how their eyes brighten! Do not begrudge them the little sums, even if the giving does cost you some self-denial. Do you think they thought it a waste to gratify your exactions when you were the dependents? Ah, no. To please you was their one thought and joy. What did they not bear in toll and care that you might have your wishes gratified!

Little Earnings

There are many things by the doing of which the old people could earn a little money for themselves, and the doing would be a pleasure and a relief to them. Grandmother could piece quilts, knit little articles and garments, cut and sew filling for carpets, braid rugs, darn, mend, or stay with the little ones while the mother went out for an evening or afternoon, while grandfather would delight to do little tricks of furniture-mending, helping with the garden, doing easy chores, sharpening tools, and many like little services for a neighbor, for which he would be glad—proud, to receive the remuneration, and the work would, in either case, serve to keep alive the waning faculties of the feeble old body. If such little "jobs" are offered them, and they like to accept, let them do so, glad that the stagnation of their lives can be thus broken up.

Just now a letter came to me, written by one of our readers in far-away New England. In the little farm home there are just two old, ailing people, and somehow, I think you might like to read this little extract—perhaps it might set your thinking. Somewhere, near your own home, there may be lonely old people like these. She says:

"The Christmas festivities are in progress all about us, but we are strangers in a strange land—in it, but not of it. The temperature is down almost to zero, and last night we had a howling northwest wind that shook the windows and loose boards with a sound like the Fourth of July. We do not enjoy such weather. I never dreaded the cold of winter so much as I do this season. It is hard to keep warm, now, and it will be much harder when the snow lies two or three feet deep about us. If we had our wood cut and hauled and in the shed, the work would not seem so hard."

And do you know, I thought, as I

read the letter, how grateful these old people would be if their younger, strong neighbors would but meet some day and cut, haul and store their winter's fuel for them, ready to their hand, and thus, with no appreciable loss of time, in a few hours, do what it would cost the old people days of hard work and suffering to accomplish. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these * * * ye have done it unto me." Would it not be well?

For the Girls at Home

"There are many hundreds of young girls who, having finished at school, are at home for the first time, this winter. Before the end of their first year at home many of them will be unhappy and discontented, unless the future has something definite to offer them. Many of them will become simply unsalaried servants in the home," says an exchange, "and will not take cheerfully to the task, while others will go into business, or wage-working, or learning an occupation. But there will be hundreds who have neither the desire nor the aptitude for joining in the struggle, and the problem is, what is to be done with them. One wise mother suggests a course which she hopes to pursue with her own daughter. She is going to turn over the housekeeping to her daughter, and the young lady will, each week, receive an envelope containing the amount which must otherwise be paid to a housekeeper. The young lady will be taught to buy everything that comes into the house, and can, if she buys wisely, save from the amount that is stipulated for housekeeping expenses."

This plan has much to recommend it, as girls would feel much more independent in their own home, and would be less likely to make a loveless marriage, or enter into the struggle with the world, if they could feel that they were earning something by the work they do, and that the money they spend is justly their own. The sense of responsibility in the social rush would give them the intellectual poise that is so necessary to one's happiness, and the experience in real, boni fide housekeeping would be of very great value to them in fitting them to keep homes of their own. The amount of wage might not be so great as they could earn in some gainful occupation, but the work in the home would carry with it no sense, real or fancied, of degradation, nor would it serve to set them outside the pale of social life because of the mistaken notions held in general in regard to the status of the "hired girl." Then, too, the mother who has tolled and milled and saved, it may be, that her daughter should have the best there was to be had in the way of schooling, would be able to rest and take her rightful place among her friends and associates. The daughter's work in the home should be treated in a strictly business way, with no mistaken sentiment, and in this way, both the parents and the girl would be greatly benefited.

In many families there will be more than one daughter, and in this case, the work might be divided, each serving in the capacity most suited to her tastes and abilities. To those whose position in life forbids their going out into the world to become independent workers, some such an arrangement might enable them to do in the home other work than that of the necessary

housekeeping, by which much of their expenses as to clothing, pin-money, etc., might be met, thus greatly relieving the father in helping him to bear the burden of their support.

The Boy's Room

Be sure and make the boy of the family feel that he has a part in the home, and is one of its supporters. Give the boys a room, collectively, if it must be, but individually, if possible. Let the boy have his own "say" so far as convenient, as to how the room shall be furnished. Let him have one place in the house where he can be himself, in which he is reasonably sure of having a little privacy for his leisure hours. It may be only a room up under the eaves, but it should be his, absolutely and permanently. Give him a large measure of responsibility as to the care of it, and thus cultivate a taste for order, and the ability to bring it about. Let him collect and keep all his "traps" together here, and let it be to him a refuge to which he may turn at any time for privacy and relief from the worries which often beset him; for even the boy has worries, and there are times when nothing seems so desirable to him as to get away from every worrying thing.

A Woman's Worries

It is the fashion to scold the women. Sometimes I think a little of it is deserved—but not all, for many of us do such senseless, useless, silly things under the impression that it is our duty so to do, or that it is expected of us by our associates or demanded of us by our position. But is it, really?

It is safe to say that every woman knows her own complexities. The same things do not press with equal weight upon us all; but it is not to be denied that there is too much worry goes to the matters of housekeeping; there are too many preserves, pickles, canned fruits, cakes and confections; too many tucks and ruffles and trimmings that go to the elaboration of the gown that is in season so brief a while; these elaborations add but little to the beauty of the garment while adding immensely to the labor of the sewing woman and the laundress. But if we suggest such a thing to the average woman, she gives us a frightened glance and turns hurriedly to the latest fashion plate for defense, while she knows and you know that it is but the race with mothers to see which can transform her young into the most perfect imitation of the monstrosities therein pictured. Not a stitch less will be taken, for all your preaching.

Women's fetters are largely self-made. Carving, upholstery, draperies, brasses, bronzes, and other useless dust-catching things that cause frowns, backache, headaches, irrita-

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